

# The Value of Self Examination

By Tom Hill

**Bible Text:** 2 Corinthians 13:5

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“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

2 Corinthians 13:5

Nothing is more important than the eternal destiny of the soul. Nor is anything more glorious than salvation in Christ. Therefore, it makes good sense that you ensure the safe passage of your soul to eternal glory with Christ

In like fashion, I call these ancient words to your attention today. In preparation for this examination, I will answer two questions: What does it mean to "examine yourself?" and Why should someone undergo such examination?

In its literal sense, the word "examine" means to prove, test, or approve. (Vine 2:53) It conveys the idea of proving that something exists or is true. A clearer meaning emphasizes to try. A trial suggests a purposeful design to determine the true condition of something. (Vincent 3:360)

In other words, it calls for a thorough investigation and search into the truth or fallacy of a matter. It emphasizes the aim of proving a matter true. Thus, in the Scriptural context of our text, it invites all those who call themselves believers to the duty of proving it so. Granted, this experience brings offences. Although every one undergoes these ordeals, not every one is equal to the task. (Flavel 5:591)

A thorough examination of this sort, then, depends upon definite encouragement. I propose 7 of them to you. From this examination, you will:

- discover false faith in Jesus Christ
- lay the foundation for true faith in Jesus Christ
- identify true faith in Jesus Christ
- detect the presence/practice of sin
- produce joy
- recognize the works of the devil
- provoke repentance from sin

I will examine each of these benefits in detail, one to a chapter.

## Discover false faith in Jesus Christ

A thorough self-examination can identify a false faith, which would cause you to miss God's glorious salvation. The ease of deceit in claiming faith in Christ and the extreme danger of such deceit call for thorough scrutiny. (Henry 6: reference note on 2 Corinthians 13.5)

The call to self-examination does not make a prejudgment against true faith in Jesus Christ. You may, in fact, possess true saving faith. But, the mind is capable of excessive rationalization, especially in this subject. Frequently hearing the message of the gospel can produce a self-deceived assurance of its possession but not yield true knowledge of it. This false sense of assurance can cause one to cry peace, peace, when there is no peace. (Haldane 2)

Consequently, self-examination for saving faith in Christ concerns each of us, to ensure that He resides within us. To fail here yields eternal condemnation. Scripture warns us of this possibility in Hebrews 4:1:

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

Discern between the righteous and the wicked.

From this careful self-inspection, you will discern between the righteous and the wicked. Because of mankind's sinful nature, entire purity will never exist in this world. Corruption will continue to infect even the saints. Saints and hypocrites alike will inhabit the Church. Further, counterfeit Christianity will survive along with true holiness. (Edwards 1:235)

Yet, times of spiritual reviving can result from methodical spiritual inspection. A time of greater spiritual purity occurs. Consequently, the distinctions between the false and the true become increasingly apparent. Showy religion will pale before the true light produced by the Holy Spirit. (Edwards 1:235)

The devil has frequently used this confusion to dampen the cause of Christ. Therefore, careful scrutiny plays a significant role in the spiritual welfare of the child (ren) of God. It will enable you to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. (Edwards 1:235)

Uncover carnal self-confidence in external actions

These kinds of trials uncover carnal self-confidence in your life. They reveal sins of pride and self-assurance and expose your poor, weak condition before God. To this end, God led the Israelites through the wilderness, to prove them and to humble them (Deuteronomy 8.2). Without painstaking spiritual assessment, you could overestimate your holy

graces. It discloses the presence and extent of worldliness, the lack of faith and trust in God, and a lack of love for God. (Flavel 5:581)

In fact, if God left you to yourself, you might fall before the winds of temptation. Peter boasted before his hour of trial (Matthew 26.35). Angels, who knew more of God than you know, fell, too, because of self-confidence. You will stand more firmly when you learn your own inherent weakness. Leaning too much and too long upon your own arm will put it to sleep and render it worthless. (Flavel 5:590)

In another way, methodical investigation of your spiritual condition shows a false reliance upon partial obedience to God. A tendency to trust partial judgments of yourself will flatter you into a false sense of security. Reliance upon one or even several Biblical practices clouds your eyes from seeing the departure from complete esteem and affection for God. (Haldane 4)

By following Paul's admonition, you will discover the presence of carnal self-confidence in your religious practice. They could prevent you from possessing true faith in Jesus Christ.

Second, you can experience assurance of faith in Jesus Christ. It can come as a result of thorough investigation into your spiritual condition. Many assert that no one can apprehend the certainty of saving faith. They say that, at best, you can only conjecture or rely upon mere opinion.

Yet, in this passage, the Holy Spirit through Paul encourages believers to prove to themselves that they are in the faith. Thus, you can know the certain indwelling presence of Jesus Christ, Who indwells every believer. He communicates and manifests Himself and stamps His image upon every child of God. (Gill 8:849)

Third, you will stand before the Judge of all the earth one day. He will try your works with fire and search the secrets of your heart. His scrutiny will surpass all that you can design or imagine. If you cannot hurdle your own self-examination, you will most assuredly fail His final judgment. (Flavel 5:587-588)

Fourth, self-examination roots out hypocrisy. In the end, truth always reveals itself. Hypocrisy ultimately produces confusion. Hypocrisy always manifests itself. On the other hand, thorough examination produces honest, sincere, and hearty Christianity. (Flavel 5:588-589)

Fifth, this course uncovers carnal confidence. Saving faith does not rest upon self-confidence. You contribute nothing to your salvation. It rests entirely upon God's grace. Professing faith relies upon external actions.

If you have built your salvation upon the wrong foundation, you have a false assurance. You had better discover your lot now, rather than before that final judgment day. (Flavel 5:590)

Sixth, the difficult work of self-trial will yield joy. You will never repent nor regret your self-searching, with its sorrows, fears, and tremblings. You will make certain your title to Christ, which is beyond value. (Flavel 5:593)

I pray that you, too, will examine yourself, thoroughly, to see if you stand in the faith. Diligently study the Bible, which clearly declares the signs of those in the faith. Keep from excusing behavior which Scripture does not excuse. Look for those marks which God's word describes of His children. If your examination finds you lacking in saving faith, trust Christ today to the saving of your soul. If you find yourself standing in faith, rejoice and praise God for His grace.

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