

Subject: A Call for Self-Examination

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:5

We hear a lot about self-image and self-esteem, but we don't hear much about self-denial and self-examination. We are quick to examine the lives of others and slow to examine ourselves. In terms of the Christian faith there are three kinds of people:

- Some people are saved and know they are saved
- Some people are unsaved and know they are unsaved
- Some people are unsaved, but think they are saved

The last group is the danger zone. The Bible warns us about false converts and counterfeit Christians.

THE DANGER OF SELF-DECEPTION

Paul told the Corinthians that they should examine their hearts to see if they were in the faith. To be in the faith is a way of saying to be in Christ or to be a real Christian. Paul wanted them to be sure they had been truly converted. He used two words, examine and prove, to stress the need for self-examination. He also used the word "reprobate" which means not approved, failing the test, discredited, counterfeit. Paul didn't want any of them to be self-deceived.

Jesus warned about true and false converts. Many of His parables were intended to contrast true believers from counterfeit believers. The parables of the sower and the seed, the wheat and the tares, the dragnet, the wedding garment, the ten virgins, the talents, the great supper, and the two builders all have one thing in common. They all point out the difference between the real and counterfeit. In the strongest words Jesus warned the scribes and Pharisees of the danger of being hypocrites. In the Bible you find that every precious thing in the Christian life has its counterfeit version. There is real repentance and false. There is real faith and false. There is real holiness and false. There is real love and false. There is real humility and false. There is real worship and false. Jesus said in **Matthew 15:8** *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.*

How can a person deceive himself into thinking he is saved when he is not? I want us to think about some counterfeits that take the place of real salvation:

Salvation is not the same as conviction

Acts 24:25 *And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*

Salvation is not the same as outward morality

Matthew 23:27-28²⁷ *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*²⁸ *Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.* **Matthew 5:20** *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no*

case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus told Nicodemus, a religious leader, “You must be born again.”

Salvation is not the same as religious activity

Matthew 7:22-23 ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Salvation is not the same as a temporary response

Luke 8:13-14 ¹³They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. Paul spoke of believing in vain, **1 Corinthians 15:1-2** ¹Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ²By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. Jesus said that true believers would continue in His Word, **John 8:31-32** ³¹Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; ³²And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Real salvation involves perseverance and persistence. Real faith keeps on believing. Real repentance keeps on repenting.

Salvation is not the same as mental agreement

James 2:19-20 ¹⁹Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. ²⁰But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? **James 1:22** But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

It is possible to be in the church, but not in the faith, to be in a Sunday school class, but not in the faith, to be in a Christian family, but not in the faith, to be in the Bible, but not in the faith. We need to understand the danger of self-deception.

THE DUTY OF SELF-INSPECTION

The Bible says, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove (test) your own selves.” God has given us a tool to show us if we are genuine believers. It’s like a mirror, and it doesn’t lie. The apostle John wrote his first epistle with this purpose in mind.

1 John 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. The whole Bible is like a mirror or a spiritual MRI to show us if our Christian faith is real. The truth of Scripture won’t shake up genuine believers, but it will wake up counterfeit Christians. God has revealed the unmistakable marks of a real Christian and we will look at those in the next message.