

Examination if There is Faith

Preparatory

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Congregation, our children are going back to school this week so we also pray for the young people that the Lord will give them courage, a desire to go on the bus; it's something you have to get used to again, the children and also the parents. And then within a few weeks or months, you'll have exams, to write exams and you have to hand them in and the teacher marks them, marks the exams. Eventually, final exams, and those final exams are not exams the teacher gives you to mark, he didn't say, "You mark your own work." No, the teacher says, "I mark it and that's what decides it, not your opinion on your test but what I think." You know, the Apostle Paul also refers to that. There's a final exam but, you know, sometimes, I remember that from high school, sometimes we look in our books about exams of last years and at home we made those exams and we marked them ourselves to see how we are doing. Those are not weekly exams and the final exams but we test ourselves and we are knowledgeable, so that helps us to train ourselves, and so the Apostle Paul also is calling us to examine ourselves. It isn't a final exam but yet we must also examine ourselves in preparation not only for eternity but also for the Lord's Supper.

The text for this morning is from 2 Corinthians 13, stanza 5. 2 Corinthians 13:5,

5 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?

So far.

"Examination if There is Faith." Four thoughts. Examination commanded, commanded, it says in our text, "Examine." That's the command, examine and prove, two times a command, a prescription, a must. Examine, do it, and prove. Secondly, examination of ourselves. I found that three times in one verse, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves." Why? Why such an emphasis on "your own selves"? In the third place, examination if Christ is in us by faith, "prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you." Do you see that, Christ is in you, and before that whether you be in the faith, in the faith and Christ in you, that's connected. And in the fourth place, examination unless being a

reprobate, as the text also closes, "except ye be reprobates," damned ones, doomed ones. Examining if there is faith: the examination commanded; examination of ourselves; examination if Christ is in us by faith; and examination unless we are reprobates.

Congregation, the Apostle Paul is honest and he used the word "examine" and "prove," now let's talk about that, just a few examples, children, what that means to examine. We talked about school already, right? School, you write an exam, the teacher marks it, maybe someone in another school marks it as well in grade 12, I don't know exactly how that goes, you have nothing to say about the marks, those final exams, but you also prepare yourselves before that examining your own selves. We can also think of a doctor. You have something that is not right in your body, you go to the doctor and he examines you, he takes some tests, he examines you, what's the matter, and he sends you to the lab and he wants to know and they take some scans and MRI's, and he examines them, goes to the bottom of it, he wants to know what's the matter. So that's also what we have to do today in church. The Great Physician is kind of examining you and he's encouraging you to examine yourselves and to look at certain things. And you know what a relief when the doctor says, "We can't find anything wrong," but you know also when the doctor says, "It's serious. We have to send you to a specialist. It doesn't look good."

So we have to examine ourselves spiritually. I also thought of equipment. Would you like to go on an airplane that is not on a regular basis tested and examined by technicians? Have you seen those technicians checking an airplane before they take off? They look every time, all those things and they check-mark it. They have to examine the equipment, the plane before it can take off. So is that not important for us as well? How can we live without examining. You know, we need to know. It's dangerous to not examine yourself. You can also think of material, if certain materials are proper. It looks like gold but is it? It's shiny and yellow but you have to find out, you have to examine if it's the real gold.

So we think of school and we think of a doctor, we think of equipment, and we think of material. So those words "examine and prove" and in our text so we are commanded this morning hour to examine ourselves to see what's going on, to see what's in the heart yourselves. Why is that? Because we people are deceivers. We easily deceive others and ourselves. We don't deceive God, that's not going to happen. So what we need is that our heart and our deeds match, that it's not only the deeds, the outer things, not only how we feel, it needs to be matching because we read be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving your own selves, right?

You know, people can just have a beautiful profession and they can talk good and have a big story and look pious, but then the secret life, what they are doing, but be ye doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving your own selves. If any man among you seem to be religious and, for example, does not bridle his tongue, he deceiveth his own heart. That man's religion is vain, right? So someone can talk religiously but it needs to be true. If we say that we have no sin, for example, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. The way of a fool is right in his own eyes but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

So we need to be made wise and that's crucial because we cannot do it over, you know, like the final exam. Well, even a final exam when you fail you can still do it over, right? But regarding eternity, regarding God's work in the heart, then there comes a time of the final exam when we die, the final exam and the books are opened and the Lord marks our test, so to speak, and then it doesn't matter what you think of yourself. People say, "You know, I think he's in heaven. Oh, he was such a nice man. He was an example to others. He never did this and always did so on." But the Lord is marking the final test. There will be something like think of the parable of the five wise and foolish virgins, those five came too late, the five foolish ones, they came too late, they had to buy oil in town and the door was shut and they said, "Lord, Lord, open unto us," and then those words, "I know thee not. I know thee not." May I ask you to think about that, what it will be to have the final exam and then be at the door and then to hear it, "You failed." You failed. You thought it was good but you made a mistake. Then you shall begin to say, "We have eaten and drunk in his presence and thou hast taught in our streets, but he shall say, I tell you I know ye not, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth and you shall see Abram and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you, yourselves, thrust out.

So the stakes are so high. We must examine ourselves and we must do so continually and repeatedly because the Lord wants his people to persevere and to continue on and not to fall asleep and think, "You know, I have researched this 10 years ago and I came to the conclusion I was saved so I don't have to examine myself anymore." No, that's something on a continual basis like the airplanes are tested every time again, and we have to examine our own hearts time and again not only regarding justification but also regarding the close life we have or not, and regarding sanctification. But is it not dangerous to always examine your own heart? I mean, is that not creating doubt? Is that not too negative you're always wondering, always testing, always busy with that, "Is it true? Is it true?" Well, I see the point and yet I don't think it is so harmful. You don't have to throw everything away and start again, you don't have to think, "You know, it was all nothing," per se, and yet examine your own heart because that generates hopefully something new, makes things alive, refreshed, not so stale, not so automatic.

So that's why we read in Psalm 26, "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." So David is asking the Lord, "I have to examine myself but thou has need to examine me. Lord, tell me, examine me." And if I may just insert this, I think that is a mark of grace. What is? It's a mark of grace if you say, "Lord, Lord, please examine me. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me. I don't want to miss thee. I don't want to see myself. I implore thee, examine me, O Lord." And then to examine yourself that way.

It's serious and, as I said, we should not only examine ourselves regarding justification, if we are saved, if it was true, if it was the Lord's work, yes or no, but also examine how close we are now, if we have left the first love, if we are still dependent and decreasing and Christ increasing in our lives. But also examine our own hearts regarding sanctification and also regarding the Lord's Supper. This word "examine" is also used in 1 Corinthians 11 and in 1 Corinthians 11 we read about the Lord's Supper. Let me quote it to you, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord,

unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." So every time at the Lord's Supper examine, let the man examine himself and so let him eat. Do you see that? So to have a preparatory service before the Lord's Supper, encouraging the congregation to examine themselves is proper and biblical, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.'

Examining is needed, is commanded. Let's go to the second thought: examination of our own selves. You know, at first I didn't even see it, that it was three times in our text. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves." Why? Well, what's the matter? Well, the Apostle Paul was criticized and questioned and people said, "Are you an apostle? Are you sure? We don't know. We're not so certain about that." And they were critical and questioning him and the Apostle Paul said, "You are examining me? Examine your own selves. Examine your own selves. Examine your own selves."

Matthew Paul, one of the old commentators, writes, "It is most common that those who desire after proof of Christ in others are tardiest in making an inquiry of Christ in themselves." [unintelligible] But he says it's kind of common that people are busy with others. "Would he be a child of God? Does she belong at the Lord's Supper Table? I doubt it. I question it because..." You know, and it is most common that those who desire after a proof of Christ in others are tardiest, meaning late, right, and slow in making an inquiry of Christ in themselves.

So I think Satan will like it if you are busy with others, right? And you may have a point, and you may be right, and you may have a proper biblical concern, do you know what I mean? It can suck up so much time and take the focal point away, and you don't think of yourself so much anymore and you condemn that fake faith and you're not ashamed for your own unbelief. Is that the case? Satan will like it. Satan would like it if you're so concerned about others and you say, "Well, I'm unconverted. I don't have to find out that anymore. I know that of myself already. I don't need to examine my own heart if I am saved or not. I'm not but they deceive themselves, that's worse." Is it? So where is the shame? I thought about the word "shame," where is the shame for your unbelief, the shame for resisting the Holy Spirit? So I can't help it, this text puts so much emphasis on that, that I have to do it as well, right? Your own selves. Your own selves. Your own selves.

Now it is true that if someone is deceiving himself, that that person does not seek conversion anymore, right? So that's dangerous. I agree with that. If someone says, "I'm saved and I don't even examine myself anymore, I just know it." That person is really deceiving himself, herself. That's so dangerous because you are not open to questioning and examination. You know, some people even don't want to examine themselves like there are people going to the doctor, no, rather people refuse to go to the doctor. "I have something on my arm. I have kind of a growth here, for example, but I'm not going to the doctor because who knows, maybe he would say it's cancer. I don't want to hear that so I'm not going." They kind of don't dare to face the reality and just deceive yourself and

not going to the doctor because you're afraid of the outcome. And so some people don't examine their own selves, they're afraid of the outcome because you might have to come to the conclusion that you are a fake, and if you don't dare to do that, that's dangerous, right?

But as I said, it's also dangerous when people are happy themselves that they would never ever deceive themselves. Feeling good about that, "I won't do that. You think I'm going to the Lord's Supper that way, like those? Oh, absolutely not. I will never do that. That's stealing. That's deceiving yourself. That's eating and drinking unworthily. I would never do that. I know that for sure." Being proud of it. That's also dangerous, right? Also dangerous because you don't feel shame for unbelief.

So "your own selves," because someday there will be judgment day and then we must appear before the judgment seat of God and give account. So yourselves, yourselves, but then the third thought: examining, examination whether you be in the faith, whether Christ is in you. Third thought. So what are the marks of grace? There are many of them and I would love to mention a few of them to know what are you looking for, what do you need to know, what needs to change, right?

Well, let's first have a look at the text, what is in the text, the focal point for examining yourselves. You examine yourself whether ye be in the faith. That reminds me of John 6, "Then said they unto [Christ], What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" What shall we do? "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." So that faith, you know we need much more than faith, right? We need to know of sin and love and humility and many more things, we'll talk about that but the focal point here is on whether ye be in the faith because there is no justifying humility, there is no justifying love, there is no justifying knowledge. We only speak of a justifying faith. Faith is the heart of it. You know, people can be very concerned and busy and emotional and you name it but if the faith is missing, then everything is missing. They can be emotional and be busy and seriously-minded and cry and be depressed and be encouraged and you name it, but if their faith in Christ is missing, that's the first thing mentioned here, right?

And that's connected to know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you? I know that the Holy Spirit is in God's people, they are the temples of the Holy Ghost, do you know about this, that Christ is in his people as well? That he dwells in them by faith? John 14, "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." So when the Lord comes with the Holy Spirit, God the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, all three dwell in them. They are in them by faith.

That's quite something. Ephesians 3, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." That's a text that really belongs to this text, Ephesians 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love. Because he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him." So if something is in you, that's such a closeness, that's such an appropriation, that's such a fellowship, right, if you

eat something and he dwells in you. So the thing is if Christ is in the heart and if he dwells in us by faith, "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect and one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." You know, and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin but the spirit is life because of his righteousness, and you see it in a number of more texts in the Bible, that Christ is in his people. "I am crucified with Christ and I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."

So is Christ precious to you? Do you love it? For example, in his invitations, that they are so powerful sometimes, so sweet, so beyond comprehension that you kind of receive it and that it's alive in your heart, that Christ dwells in your heart by faith. So then you know something of him. He's precious to you because there's no other way than that way. "I am the way," that has become so precious to you. "I am the life. I am the living water." So you have been stripped from all your self-righteousnesses and Christ has become the one, the one you need, the Savior. Do you see?

So by faith sinners begin to appreciate him and desire him and believe in him, not only see him but also believe in him, by faith believe in him, and that's not the only thing, right, because we can also when we compare this to other texts in the Bible, we can also say there is something behind here because how can a sinner believe in Christ and treasure him if that person does not know himself? "Know ye not your own selves," right, that's what it says in the text? "Know ye not your own selves?" You know, we have mirrors, right, in our houses. Let me say 200 years ago there were no mirrors. Really? No. So people have never seen themselves in a mirror. They had maybe seen something of a reflection in the water or in a piece of metal maybe but they never saw themselves so clearly in a mirror. But you know, when the Holy Spirit works, the Lord shows us the mirror and we begin to come to ourselves and we begin to see self, and we begin to discover the ugliness of sin and we come to the conclusion that my state of death is my own fault, and that I have despised the Savior, that I have lived my own life, that I have preferred this life over God.

And the shame, I mentioned shame before. Shame that you see what you have done to God as you grieved him to the heart, and that you have no excuses anymore. Then when people would say, "Are you unconverted?" And you say, "Yes, I am." And they say, "How come? Who has made you unconverted? Who is keeping you unconverted?" And then you have to say, "That's me. I keep myself unconverted. I resisted the Holy Ghost in his common work like the fathers also did." And then you are lower than the people who have deceived themselves and took the bread and stole it. You're under there. You say, "You know, I don't like what I see and maybe you're right," but you take the lowest place. And then the whole picture changes, right, when there is the Lord's Supper. The whole picture changes because then I sit in the pew and I feel, "I may not go. I don't belong there and it's my own fault because I have just wasted my time." And you have not much time left for others. Examine yourselves, your own heart, and then you plead for and there's that cry to the Lord, "Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner." No pretenses. No presumption. Nothing left. And all your things are like filthy rags.

So do you know about that? Have you come to that place of being only guilty? Only guilty and that you have not one good work for the Lord? That you are stripped from all of that and that you are an ungodly wretch? Because the Lord is a jealous God of his honor and he does not like it when people have something they can be proud of. The Lord takes it all out of their hands. Oh, then you begin to see that final judgment, you know that in the books that will be opened, then you know that you are not saved and you're going to hell and you must agree with the Lord and say, "Lord, I deserve that." And yet they cry to God for his mercy. Yes, that you know your sins but especially this sin, the sin against the first commandment, right? "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." And then to realize that you have so many gods before him and you, yourself, are the biggest idol, serving self. "It's all about me."

You know, we are all religious, we all have feelings, we all sometimes feel jealous of God's people, we all sometimes feel kind of that there will be something and we are afraid of hell and sometimes panicky, so how come? How come that sometimes people are really emotional? Is that not the work of the Lord? Can people be so seriously-minded of themselves? Yes, they can because we felt deep and we still have a conscience, we still have feelings and an idea of God, and sometimes by upbringing and character we can have tears in the eyes and that is not per se a mark of grace.

So we need more but, you know, the Bible speaks about that Christ must be in our hearts by faith, without that it's not well. You know, the seed that fell in stony places, it sprung up and receive the word of God with joy, "Man, that looks so good, that sounds so beautiful." They receive the word of God with joy but it was not saving. And some seed fell on the thorns and just germinate as well but was choked. So that's serious. You know, you remember of King Herod? King Herod sometimes sent that John the Baptist get him out of prison, let him come to the palace. "I want to hear it. I want to hear a sermon of him. I love his sermons." He heard him gladly, the Bible says. Heard him gladly but no salvation. So it is possible that you gladly hear certain sermons and that it's not saving faith. You know, King Agrippa was talking to Paul and he said, "Thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian." It was this idea, very close.

So we need to know those things. We need to know our sins, that sin of unbelief and shame and having no excuses and against the first commandment, against all the commandments, and knowing that we are prone to all evil, having the lowest place in that nobody in church is lower than me, that I become the chief of the sinners. If you don't know what it is, the chief of the sinners, then don't come to the Lord's Supper Table because then you don't know anything. And against that background, Christ becomes so precious, right?

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ," the Savior, the Lord says Christ the anointed one, the prophet, priest and king, "is in you, except ye be reprobates?" And then, you know when two young people start dating and begin to love one another, she says, "I don't like that. I don't like you smoking. Can you please stop that?" And his mom has said it 100 times, he never quit, but now his girlfriend is saying it and it has an impact. He

quits smoking, right, because he loves that girl. He doesn't want to lose that girl. He does not want to ruin his relationship. And if someone has received love in his heart for God, you begin to read that Bible and say, "Lord, what is it that thou wants me to do?" Maybe you don't like it but you want to obey the Lord and not grieve the Lord. That is sanctification, right?

"Except ye be reprobates." So is Christ in us by a true faith? You know, I would not be too concerned about finding out that you were never saved. I won't be too concerned about that because there is still some time left, right? Still some time left just to admit it. I miss it. I think I miss it. I have to start all over. Whatever. That's fine. But the fourth thought: examination unless we are reprobates and then those last few words in our text, except ye be reprobates. Is he threatening them? What is he doing? I think the Apostle Paul wants to apply some pressure. He does not want to believe that they are reprobates. He kind of trusts they are not. He wants to be positive but yet there is that possibility. There is that possibility that they are reprobates. Why do I say it so carefully that he is trusting they are not? Look at the next verse, verse 6, "But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates." Do you see that, verse 6?

So he is not too negative and judgmental but he just has to say it. It could be that you are reprobates like, children, Cain and Abel, both sacrificing, right, and Abel sacrifice was accepted, received by the Lord, and Cain's was not, not as Cain who was of that wicked one and slew his brother and therefore slew him because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. Or think of Esau and Jacob. Esau was a reprobate. "I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob." Do you see? So are we a Cain or an Esau or like the wife of Lot having left Sodom, right? They left Sodom and, "Don't look back. Don't look back." But she did. She yet did and turned to a pillar of salt. Remember Lot's wife, "Whosoever shall seem to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. For I tell you in that night there shall be two men in one bed, the one shall be taken, the other shall be left; two women shall be grinding together, the one shall be taken, the other left; two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, the other left." Do you see that? So that is a possibility to be a reprobate, to be a damned one, to be a lost sinner.

So, "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," or are you a reprobate, unless you are or if you are. But you know, if someone is a reprobate, then it's the opposite of being a chosen one, right? So if someone is a reprobate, rejected by God, passed by by God, there is no hope for that person, right? Well, that's right. If someone is a reprobate, he will not be saved but how I look at this verse is if someone looks like a reprobate, if someone has no reason to believe he's not, if someone must conclude, "I look like a reprobate," that person can yet be saved. You know, that is not hardening the heart but salvation comes from inside, he is found of them that sought him not but you're partly right, there are scary texts in the Bible like from Hophni and Phineas, priests, priests in the temple and the Lord wanted to slay them because they were not listening to their father's warning. We know about Saul, right, King Saul, such an example and the Lord told him that he

had rejected him and Samuel said unto Saul, "I will not return with thee for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord has rejected thee." You know, them that are rejected and are reprobate, do you know why it is? Because we resist. And if someone is not a reprobate, do you know why it is? Because God did a work.

So salvation is God's work and unbelief is all our work. Do you know that? Do you know that unbelief is your work? That resisting is your work? And that gift of God is believing? So all the good things are God's gifts and all the other things are ours. You know, someday there will be the final exam. Not yet. We don't know how close. Yeah, final exam and therefore examine for now yourself and be ashamed of your unbelief, and don't ever think that Satan will not deceive you because if you think that, he is deceiving you. And if you attempt, attempt in a worthy way, examine your own heart before and may the Lord giveth that if you come to the Table, that you may come in the faith, that faith might be exercised. Prove your own selves. Know ye not that your own selves, how that Christ Jesus is in you? Think about that and meditate on that, in you. He was willing to get in you. And don't you know the testimony of the Holy Spirit is also God's crucial thing? Romans 8, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, he testifies with your heart that you are a child of God. Oh, those moments that you just know it, the Lord tells you, that you hear it from his own mouth so that is Christ dwelling in you and he's so precious.

For all them that believe, he is precious in his invitation, in his birth, in him being the prophet, and the king, and the high priest, and the advocate, and so much more, and in the course of time the Lord makes it even more precious to his people so that he dwells in them and they are grounded in the love. So therefore the Lord has also instituted the Lord's Supper to increase the knowledge of Jesus in their hearts, to make the church more humble, and to let them eat and drink to that joy in God's glory. Amen.