

Day 111, 2 Corinthians 13

by David Servant

David Servant emphasizes the importance of self-examination and the evidence of Christ's transformative presence in believers' lives as outlined in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:11

Topics: "Self Examination", "Holy Living"

Description

David Servant emphasizes the importance of self-examination in the church, drawing from Paul's letter to the Corinthians where he urged believers to test themselves to see if they are truly in the faith. Paul expressed concerns about the presence of sins like strife, jealousy, and immorality in the Corinthian church, indicating a lack of genuine faith. The sermon highlights the transformation that should occur in believers as Christ lives in them, leading to a desire for obedience and holiness. Despite criticisms of preaching salvation by works, Paul's admonition to examine oneself for evidence of Christ's indwelling remains a biblical principle.

Transcript

The somewhat foreboding and even threatening tone of this final section of Paul's letter set the stage for his eminent return to Corinth. Imagine if your church received a letter that ended this way from the apostle Paul. I bet there would be some serious self-examination!

Indeed, self-examination was precisely what Paul prescribed for Corinth: "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you---unless indeed you fail the test?" (13:5). Obviously Paul had some doubts that all in the Corinthian church were "in the faith," that is, true believers. He had good reason to doubt, as he wrote in the previous chapter about his fear of finding "strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes...impurity, immorality and sensuality" (12:20-21) on the occasion of his next visit.

Sadly, it could be said that those sins are found in a majority of churches today, and it seems few are concerned. The bumper sticker that says, "Christians aren't perfect, they're just forgiven," summarizes our theology and at the same time advertises our excuse for acting no different than the world.

Yet Paul believed that the sins of "strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes...impurity, immorality and sensuality" (12:20-21) were sure indications that those who practiced them were not truly born again. Read what he wrote to the Galatians and see if you notice any similarities in his list of "exclusionary sins"

there and those sins which he feared he would find in the Corinthian church:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions...and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21, emphasis added).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that Christ lived in them---unless they "failed the test" (13:5). The test of whether or not Christ lives in someone is if he acts like Christ. It is just that simple. Christ was holy and when He comes to live in people by His Holy Spirit, He transforms them. Immoral people become moral. Hot-tempered, factious people become gentle and kind. This is not to say that Christians attain instant perfection, but there is no escaping the repeated teaching of Scripture. Christians are not "just forgiven." They are new creations in Christ, filled with His Spirit. Their lives are characterized by a sincere desire to please God, a desire that is lived out through daily obedience and holiness.

One of the most frequent criticisms that is leveled at those of us who hold to a biblical gospel is that we are preaching salvation by works. If we mention anything about the necessity of righteous conduct, or if we encourage people to examine themselves, we are branded as legalists. We are told, "When you tell people that they can determine if they are saved by examining fruit in their lives, you are encouraging them to trust in their works, rather than in Christ, for their salvation."

Yet 2 Corinthians 13:5 is still in the Bible! Paul admonished unholy people to examine themselves for proof that Christ lived in them. And there is a vast difference between trusting your works to merit your salvation and gaining assurance that Christ lives in you because of the outward evidence of His indwelling.

What did the unrepentant in the Corinthian church have to fear from Paul's eminent visit? They faced the prospect of excommunication, the very same treatment Paul called for regarding the immoral and unrepentant man whom we read about in 1 Corinthians 5. Paul had instructed the Corinthian believers "not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one" (1 Cor. 5:11). You can be sure that any who followed Paul's instructions were branded as "holier than thous." And they were, as are all true Christians! "Holier than thou," but hopefully humble, because our holiness stems from Christ in us!

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