

What Does 'Examine Yourselves' Mean?

by Staff

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"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith." —II Corinthians 13:5

From time to time, it is desirable to examine or prove ourselves to *know* we are in alignment with God's mind and will. We check ourselves, as it were, to ensure that we are walking worthy of our calling. Passover is only a short time away. As Christians, we need to consider the self-examination process God's Word says we should be undergoing as the spring festivals approach.

The apostle Paul writes in I Corinthians 11:28-30:

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

It is obvious that, because of the times in which we live, self-examination is necessary so that we correct ourselves on a regular basis to make certain we continue to bring honor to God and Christ. The apostle suggests that problems and trials, leading even to death, among the members of the church may have their sources in our unexamined conduct.

Getting to Know You

In considering the process of examining our lives, one verse, also written by Paul to the same congregation, expands on this concept, providing four areas for contemplation. Other scriptures will help to provide God's perspective on each point. The verse we need to spotlight is II Corinthians 13:5:

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

As indicated, this scripture can be broken down into four major points:

One: *Examine yourselves*

Paul advises in Galatians 6:3-4: "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." The Greek word for *examine* here is *dokîmázô*, which means, according to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, "'to test, prove,' with the expectation of approving." It can also indicate "to discern" or "to distinguish," suggesting proving whether a thing is worthy or not.

The Living Bible adds clarity to Galatians 6:4: "Let everyone be sure that he is doing his very best, for then he will have the personal satisfaction of work well done and won't need to compare himself with someone else." We realize it is unwise to compare ourselves with others (II Corinthians 10:12), but there is no *need* to compare ourselves with anyone else if we seek God's help in making the inner

secrets of our hearts plain to us through His Spirit! Then, we can work on changing what God reveals that He is concerned about in us.

In other words, if we sincerely, with our whole hearts, ask Almighty God to make us understand the depths of our beings, *He is faithful* to do it. It is then our responsibility to be prepared to repent fully of what God makes plain to us. This is an easy process to describe, but often hard to follow through on. Nevertheless, it is part of a continuing process in the life of any Christian who wishes to draw closer to God; it is our work. We are required to exert effort—sometimes a great deal of effort, even painful effort—to assure our entrance into God's Kingdom (see, for instance, Philippians 2:12; Colossians 1:23; II Peter 1:10-11). We cannot leave this labor undone!

Two: *Do you not know yourselves?*

We have all learned many things through trial and suffering over the years, but it has not been all pain and agony. At various times, we have abounded with joy, contentment, peace, and growth as well, and we should thank God who has engineered and authored these blessings. However, beyond honestly identifying how far we have come, we also need to recognize and acknowledge the stony parts that are still in us, repenting before God with our whole hearts.

As Paul says in I Corinthians 6:19-20, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." To paraphrase, do we not realize the magnitude of our relationship with God and the obligation this puts us under to live every second as an example of God's way of life? God's people are not ordinary in any sense!

Solomon writes in Proverbs 4:23, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." The heart, the mind, is the storehouse of our character. We must spend time in meditation and in prayer asking for insight from God to reveal to us exactly who we are—*inside*—where normally only God can see. We must implore Him for understanding about who we really are right now in His eyes. We need this information to understand properly our relationship with Him.

This is a solemn and sobering process, but it should not be something we fear. Still, we must come to God in this process with humility and a heart ready to repent immediately of flaws that He shows us. This process is not superficial by any means, but one designed to reach to the very heart of our being.

Remember, God may be a consuming fire to His enemies (Hebrews 12:29), but to His own children, He is a boundless provider and loving Father (Ephesians 3:14-21). He is quick to forgive if we freely confess our sins to Him (I John 1:9).

Three: *[Do you not know] that Jesus Christ is in you?*

Paul exhorts these same Corinthians:

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be

a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (II Corinthians 6:16—7:1)

Because we are God's children, we are special, but nothing of our own makes us special. It is only God dwelling in us by His Spirit that separates us from others. But what a difference that makes!

Jesus says in John 14:23, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." This should make us think, "What kind of home am I providing for the Sovereign God and His glorified Son?" Our desire to give God nothing to judge as unworthy of His presence should run the gamut from our physical health to our most secret thoughts.

Clearly, every one of us falls short. But this is why Paul exhorts us to cleanse ourselves, continually maturing in holiness *in the fear of God*. We are to scrub deeply out of deep reverence for Him who dwells in us.

Four: *Unless indeed you are disqualified*

Disqualified ("reprobates" in the King James Version, *Strong's* #1384: *adókimos*) means, according to *Vine's*, "not standing the test, rejected." It suggests "unacceptable," "disapproved," "unworthy," "spurious," "worthless," "cast away." This word's meaning is illustrated by the following verses:

Romans 1:28: And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased [*adókimon*] mind, to do those things which are not fitting.

Titus 1:16: They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified [*adókimoi*] for every good work.

Hebrews 6:7-8: For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected [*adókimos*] and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

Being disqualified or rejected is the opposite of having Jesus Christ dwell in us; it is being unfit or unworthy of His presence in us. In other words, a disqualified person is cut off from God! This is the worst possible outcome of a Christian's life: to return to a life of sin and have so much pride that he or she rejects salvation and all that comes with it! God's Word clearly shows that it can happen (see Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31)!

Regular self-examination is a proven way to make sure that it does not happen to us!

Accentuate the Positive

God intends for us to discover the reality of our nature. Of course, it is impossible to fathom it entirely, but we can and must come to grips with the potential for evil that exists in every one of us. We must at least annually measure the extent that we have overcome the evil in us and the sincerity of our commitment to our relationship with God. As we examine ourselves this and every year, God expects us to prepare ourselves as mature Christians to rededicate ourselves to Him afresh at

Passover and to put sin out of our lives diligently and actively, which is the lesson of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

As mentioned earlier, if we sincerely ask God in faith, He will reveal our inward, hidden faults to us (see Psalm 19:12-13; 51:6; 139:23-24). It is important that we not be overly discouraged by what He reveals. It is human nature. It has lived and grown within us for as long as we have lived, and it takes long years to overcome its influence. In fact, we cannot entirely escape it in this flesh, a compelling reason Christians long for the resurrection at the return of Jesus Christ.

Rather than wallow in discouragement, we should channel our energies in eradicating its power over our lives (see II Corinthians 7:9-11). Paul tells us in Romans 7:14-23 that, to his shame and regret, he often did what he hated, sin, and conversely, he did not do what he really wanted to do. Yet, the same apostle also writes in verse 25: "I thank God—[I am delivered from my sinful flesh] through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." As long as we are "in the flesh," we will sin, but we must continually—daily—repent and ask God for help in fighting our carnal nature.

God has promised the overcoming if we do our part. Although every imaginable wrong influence in this age besets us, we must remember that God has promised to stick with us and give us the help we need: "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord *is* my helper; I will not fear'" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

In Psalm 119:57-60, David intimates that it is a Christian's obligation to turn again, day after day and year after year, to God, saying:

You are my portion, O Lord; I have said [declared, promised] that I would keep Your words. I entreated Your favor with my whole heart; be merciful to me according to Your word. I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies. I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments.

By doing so, we will, due to God's help, succeed in attaining eternal life.

As the Passover season approaches, we would do well to fast, dedicating a whole day to searching the Scriptures and ourselves. We need to make sincere inquiry of God regarding our sins and shortcomings, so that God will never need to reveal them to us in condemnation.

Let us recall I Corinthians 11:28-30:

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

Now notice verse 31: "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not [need to] be judged." Christ is the righteous Judge. He would much rather we judge ourselves and turned to righteousness than have to point out our faults to us.

In II Timothy 4:7-8, Paul speaks of his life's accomplishments. He knew he had run the course of his life in a way that was "pleasing" to God. He described it this way:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

He is speaking about us!

We have no need to be discouraged at Passover time. It is our opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to Almighty God and renew our dedication to putting on the new man. As James says, sometimes we have not because we ask not (James 4:2). We need to ask God for a clean heart before Him, as well as for hope, joy, peace, and a close, personal relationship with Him and His Son.