

### 3,26,26 2 Cor. 13:5-12 Final Exhortations and the Importance of Light Received

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified. Now, I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. Therefore, I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction. Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

We'll look at the issue of "examining ourselves" and then we'll spend some time on Paul's comments about "disqualification".

But first, we need to clarify what Paul means by "do you not know Christ is in you?" If we ignore the context, we'd conclude that he's telling them to question their salvation, but as we've seen throughout Paul's letters to them, their salvation is not their problem, it's their walk as Christians that needs "examining".

So, again, based on the context and Paul's frequent use of sarcasm, as well as his need to defend himself to them, this explanation by Ironside is a more accurate way to look at Paul's statement in vs. 5;

If you take this fifth verse out of its connection you lose the meaning of it. Many people take it as though he meant that we are to examine ourselves to see if we are real Christians, but that is not what Paul was saying. They questioned his apostleship, whether the Spirit of God was in his ministry. If you will look at everything after "speaking in me," verse 3 down through verse 4, as parenthetical, then you get his exact meaning. "Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, examine yourselves." In other words, he is

saying, "Are you Christians? How did you become Christians? Was it not through my ministry? Well, then God was working in me. If you are hypocrites, if you are *not* real Christians, then Christ did *not* work in me. If you *are* real Christians, if you have the assurance that you are the children of God, you received that as a result of the testimony that I brought to you at Corinth. Therefore, you ought to be the last people in the world to question whether Christ has worked through me."

As a final reason I do *not* believe Paul is asking the Corinthians to "examine themselves" in the way we would normally interpret a request like that is explained in these comments by Sparks;

We must never come before God saying, "I have had pure motives; I have been very honest, earnest and conscientious, and my intentions have all been the best." Let us stop talking nonsense. It is utter folly to talk like that. We do not know ourselves. Only God knows the truth about us. The point is, have I recognized that the Cross of the Lord Jesus was the ending of me, good *and* bad, so that I am not holding up anything praise-worthy before the Lord? I am as capable of the worst as any being in God's creation. For anybody to take the attitude that they are not capable of the worst is an attitude of the deepest deception. We do not know the power in our beings until we are put to it. If we have never committed the worst, it is because we have never been put to it in the mercy of God, but it is all there. The Lord puts His finger upon it in principle when He says, "He that hates his brother is a murderer." It is the same spirit. You only have to extend that, provoke that anger enough, put that nature into certain circumstances, and you will discover that you are capable of things of which you would have stood in utmost revulsion of at one time.

In other words, there is a 99.9% chance that if we decided to sit down and "examine ourselves" by looking inward to see how we're doing, our conclusions would be wrong. As Sparks said simply, "We don't know ourselves".

Now, as we've already seen in our study of Philippians and 1<sup>st</sup>. Cor., "disqualification" is related to the loss of rewards or to the honor of reigning with Christ in the life to come, but *not* to the issue of our salvation;

(1 Cor. 9:24-27) Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore, I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become *disqualified*.

(Phil. 3:13-14) I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

First, here's a lexical expansion of the meaning in the original of "disqualified";

Not standing the test, not approved (properly used of metals and coins as that which does not prove itself such as it ought); unfit for its purpose, unproved, spurious, reprobate.

We've seen in the prophetic passages in the Bible that in our generation most believers will be Laodicean, most will have been disqualified. But something I discovered in this is that it's likely that for the majority it won't be sinfulness that disqualifies them; not that sustained sin can't do that, but the Bible actually teaches that there is something which is seen as a greater rebellion in God's eyes that immorality.

As I was looking at various passages which showed God's response to nations and individuals in this area of examination or accountability, I realized that it's not as much the level or depravity of sin that sabotages our growth; it's the rejection of light.

One quick qualifier; since many of the passages I'll quote use the word "repent", I want to make sure we are using that word in the same way the Bible is. The word

itself simply means “to change one’s mind”. Even though it may be related to turning from sin; it can also refer to changing our mind about who Jesus is, or changing our mind in relation to truth we’ve heard, but initially rejected.

So, don’t let the seemingly universal meaning in our generation of “turning from sin” be the *only* grid you look through when you see the word “repent”; consider the context also. There’s always some specific issue that the writer wants his readers to change their mind about, and it’s not always sin.

(Matt. 11:20-24) He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.”

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he grew up in Nazareth, but he lived in Capernaum. Matt. 4 tells us that He when He left Nazareth, He (quote) “Came and dwelt in Capernaum”. Capernaum became His home.

While there He healed the centurion's servant, the nobleman's son, Peter's mother-in-law, and the paralytic. He cast out a demon, and in the synagogue he gave His appeal and message on the bread of life.

But for all that they did not “change their mind” about Him and receive Him, they “repented not”. So, he pronounced judgment. They didn’t violently oppose him and cast him out of the city like they did at Nazareth. They didn't crucify him; they did that at Jerusalem.

They simply refused to repent. Jerusalem is still standing, and so is Nazareth, but Capernaum isn’t. As one commentator on the passage in Matt. 11 wrote;

There is more hope for outright opposition to God than for polite indifference. I'm sure you've read that poem that somebody in Birmingham, England wrote.

When Jesus came to Golgotha, they nailed him to the tree. They drove great nails through feet and hands and called it Calvary. They crowned him with a crown of thorns, red were his wounds and deep, for those were accrued in cruel times, and human life was cheap. When Jesus came to Birmingham, they simply passed him by. They never hurt a hair of him; they only let him die.

For men had grown more tender, they would not cause him pain. They only passed on down the street and left him in the rain. Jesus prayed, forgive them for they know not what they do, and still it rained the winter rain that chilled him through and through.

The night grew dark, the streets were still, and there was none to see, as Jesus leaned against the wall and cried for Calvary.”

So, again, why was Capernaum’s judgment so severe? Why did Jesus say it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum? Sodom was by far a more sinful and evil city. The word (Sodom or Sodomite) is a synonym for moral corruption.

We’ve all know John 3:16 since we are new Christians, but what about John 3:19? “*This* is the condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. . . .”

The word “condemnation” in the original is “crisis”. John 3:19 tells us what *the* crisis is. The Lord initiated a crisis when He came into the world, because men had to receive or reject Him. There was no middle ground. Regardless of a person’s personal level of immorality, ultimately it would be receiving the “Light of the world” or remaining in darkness that determined their final destiny.

Humanity is judged by their response to the light. In John 8:12, Jesus said He was the “Light of the world” and in Mat. 5:14-16 He said;

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men. . .

By the life of Christ “manifest though our mortal flesh” (as Paul phrases it) and by the message of the gospel, the “Light” continues to be offered to humanity.

The gospel is the offer of Christ, not an appeal to personal, cultural or national moral reformation. But people would rather promise to do better than admit that Christ is their only hope. They find a million reasons to do anything *except* bow their knee to Him.

As another example of our Lord’s warning on this;

(Matt. 11:16-19) To what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not lament.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ . . .

Here's some comments by Vance Havner on this passage;

They didn't like John the Baptist; they didn't like Jesus. And so today this generation plays at living, plays at religion. Nothing's real. It's all make-believe. We're just acting. Some of it is religious acting. But Jesus called the Pharisees, Play actors, hypocrites, a pious masquerade, a facade of godliness without the power thereof. Congregations sit in church on Sunday and listen to the word of God, and their attitude seems to be, I believe that we should accept this as information and be dismissed. We hire church staffs and then come on Sunday to watch them do their thing.

All right, preacher, get up and perform. Let's see what you've got. It's not an experience, it's a performance.

I heard Dr. Edmund of Wheaton College say something years ago in Winona Lake. He said, I used to go to the old Bible conferences, and I got under such

conviction after the sermon, I didn't want to speak to anybody. I wanted to go home and get alone with God.

Now, he said, you come out, and they say, well, how'd you like him? And I said, well, he's not as good as the one we had last week. But, you ought to hear the one that's coming next week.

Fussy, petulant children. Babies, Paul calls them, 150- and 200-pound church babies. They keep the preacher busy running around with a milk bottle. No wonder when a new preacher comes, they say, I don't like him, he changed my formula.

America is not going to repent, beloved. Some think God may use Russia as the rod of his anger, His instrument to bring America to repentance in an hour of disaster.

But if New York City disappeared tonight in an atomic blast, this nation would not turn to God. Revelation tells us that after the fearful judgment was poured out in the sixth seal and the fifth vial, still men repented not. When London huddled in the bomb shelters during the blitz of World War II, they endured it, they joked about it, but they did not repent. They returned to same mindset they had before the bombs fell.

And we are not exempt. When we sit in church and hear the word of God and don't do it, we deceive ourselves. We turn our back to the light. And remember that the light shines not only in the Savior, it shines in the scriptures. If we are not judged in the last analysis by how many sins we have committed, but by how much light we've rejected, my friend, that puts everything in a different light, does it not?

This is the disqualifier in the Laodicean generation, our generation. For the majority, the problem is not primarily immorality like we saw in some of the other letters in Rev. 2 & 3; immorality is not even mentioned in the Laodicean letter. Instead, it's a rejection of light, of "seeing". "You say you are rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing, but you do not know (you do not see, you are in darkness) you are blind."

This is why, when we look at contemporary Christianity, we don't see as much blatant sin as we do a nearly global lack of hunger for the light of God's Word; the desire to go deeper and enter more fully into an understanding of all the Lord has offered to reveal to us. Minimal light is seen as more than sufficient, because Christians are perfectly content as long as the music is inspiring and upbeat, and the messages are inspirational.

Paul closes his appeal to the Corinthians with both an exhortation and an encouragement. It's not unusual for the New Testament writers to close their letters by providing a brief summary of what they felt were the most important principles they had written to the church. So, Paul is basically repeating and reinforcing what he wanted them to know in his closing.

So, I felt it would be good to take Paul's approach and close our study with a summary of what Paul communicated as a reminder to us in case any of those instructions apply to us and need to be revisited on a personal level. Also, to save you some time, when I send out the recording and the notes, I'll attach a one-page listing of each of the principles we'll be covering so you can run through them and think about whatever any personal application might be needed.

The two reasons I believe Paul did this with the Corinthians was first, just to bring back to their memory what the Lord told Paul to tell them so they wouldn't fold his letter and put it away without making sure they seriously considered what he wrote. And the second reason is because of the danger we all face that James brings out in Jas. 1:21-22; "Receive with meekness the engrafted word . . . be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

The word "engrafted" implies received, believed and acted on. We want the Word of God to take hold in our souls like an anchor and be a light to the path we walk in. If it's acted on, we move forward and more light will be given to us; if we ignore it, we end up in a place of self-deception. Unlike the unbeliever who faces the Lake of Fire if he rejects God's Light; Christians face what is described in James (self-deception) and also what the Lord brings out in Mark 4:24-25;

(Mark 4:24-25) Then he said to them, “Be diligent to understand the meaning behind everything you hear, for as you do, more understanding will be given to you. And according to your longing to understand, more will be added to you. For those who listen with open hearts (with the word ‘engrafted’) will receive more revelation. But those who don’t listen with open hearts will lose what little they think they have.”

So, in 1<sup>st</sup>. Cor. the following are the things we saw; and as I briefly review each, an easy way to know where you are would be to simply see if you can check each box and move on – or to see if you need to see what the holdup is.

First was 1 Cor. 1:10; “I appeal to you brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.”

When we studied that verse, we saw that there are times when “divisions” *are* necessary; Christ Himself said Lk. 12:51-52; “Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. . .” Or from Paul in 2 Tim. 3:5; “. . . having a form of godliness but denying its power. From such people turn away!”

Paul is encouraging a mindset, a desire and a priority, of unity in the body of Christ, just as Jesus prayed for in John 17. And if you’ve ever been in a fellowship of like-minded believers, you know how precious that can be; just as you know how painful it is to be in a church that is filled with believers judging and criticizing one another.

Second, 1 Cor. 3:18 “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.”

Paul spent a lot of time throughout both letters explaining the importance of humility when it comes to attaining true spiritual knowledge. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Next, 1 Cor. 5- Avoid associating with sexually immoral believers. This is where church discipline would come in. As to a personal application, the first obvious one

is to not be sexually immoral, and then if certain individuals become identified as immoral, it's vital that Matt. 18:15-17 comes into play;

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

These passages emphasize the need for privacy when possible. We don't start any disciplinary process with first gossiping and then dragging the individual up in front of the congregation and excommunicating him. There are passages that talk about things like the need for two or three witnesses, etc. The point being, we are to focus on the goal, which is reconciliation and restoration, not making sure we feel the self-satisfied sensation that so-called "justice" has been done.

Now, in 1 Cor. 9 Paul talks about a specific form of giving; one that differs from what he discussed in 2 Cor. 8 & 9. This form of giving has nothing to do with what pastors usually call "tithes and offerings". Partly because there *is* no tithing in the Church Age and partly because it's very personal; so much so, that if anyone asks what you are doing about this exhortation, telling them that it's none of their business is scripturally justified. *You* know whether you are doing this or not (i.e. hearers vs. doers) and God knows. But that's as far as this is intended to be published. The Mormons require 10% of your income and they not only know whether you're doing it or not, they'll confront you vigorously if you don't. So, this particular act of service is private – between you and the Lord.

Also, the practical expression of this is not based on what church you attend, or what other believers want you to do. Paul made it clear that there is a giving that applies to corporate help when needed (as seen in 2 Cor. 8), but this giving Paul's speaking of refers to the financial support we give to the Bible teachers we believe are the ones who are giving us a helpful understanding of God's Word.

We might be receiving instruction from numerous sources and we can support as many as we want, but there is usually one or two that we feel is helping us the most. Just because a man is in a pulpit or has an online presence doesn't automatically mean he *should* get your support. If what he's teaching is helping you grow, then (and *only* then) we should respond with financial support.

Next, in 1 Cor. 12-14 there's nothing complex in Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts as long as we never forget that Paul put his main emphasis in chapter 13 on the driving motive of love over showmanship that should characterize the use of all gifts, no matter what they are. We also saw the reason Paul spent so much time on the gift of Tongues in chapter 14. If that's not clear, I'd recommend reviewing that study when time allows – if you need me to resend it, let me know.

Now, in 2 Cor.: And sidenote, I'm not covering literally every piece of advice Paul gives them. I doubt any of you are getting drunk during Communion or that any of the guys out there are sleeping with their step-mothers. I'm focused on the exhortations that have far-reaching implications and could easily apply to us as well as to the Corinthians. These are "Church-Age" instructions, not just Corinthian issues needing to be addressed.

First, 2 Cor. 5 deals with reconciliation; 5:20; "We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Whenever we sin, whether personally or against someone else, our first action should be 1 Jn. 1:9. And if others *are* involved, we go to them and do all we can to restore a broken relationship. I know this doesn't need a lot of discussion, it's not difficult to understand; but it's sometimes difficult to do. So, I wanted to include it in our "reminders" because as we all know, causing unnecessary divisions in the Body of Christ is one of the primary works of the enemy because he knows that a house divided can't stand. So, whether it's difficult or not to do, it's definitely one of the boxes we need to be able to check off.

2 Cor. 6 & 7 talked about sanctification – about being separate from anything and anyone that could influence us in a way that could potentially pull us away from a life of purity and spiritual advance (as seen in 6:17 and 7:1) "Come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing. . . Since we

have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”

These are examples of the kinds of exhortations that are focused on the individual making decisions about what to do with their personal time and activities, as well as with their relationships with others. In some ways, these are harder to identify because as we grow spiritually over the decades of our lives, we may either tighten up our holiness depending on what we were doing when we were younger spiritually; or we might loosen some things if our early Christian lives were involved in a legalistic, Law-based Christianity.

These decisions are very personal, and even though the goal is to move toward Christlikeness in everything, the steps needed to reach that goal are going to be different in application to each of us depending where we are along the spectrum of infancy to maturity. This is one of those areas of consideration that depends heavily on the depth of our personal walk with the Lord that allows for discernment and sensing His guidance.

2 Cor. 8 & 9 are about the gift the Corinthians had promised to give to the persecuted saints in Jerusalem. Paul’s focus is on helping those in poverty or under persecution.

Finally, in chapter 13, Paul had an interesting way of bottom-lining all of this in vs. 9, “And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.”

For those rare individuals among the Corinthians (and among us) who can honestly check all (or at least most) of the boxes, they can be classified as “complete”; not “perfect”, no one reaches that place until we are glorified at Christ’s return, there will always be more light to receive and more ground to take. But “complete” is the goal our hearts are set on.

The word translated “complete” is *katartisis*; and here’s what that word means;

“Training, disciplining, instructing, strengthening, perfecting (as in the maturing unto perfection) of the soul.”

The soul is our mind and emotions. And as we grow in our obedience to the instructions of our training, our mind is renewed. A “mature” mind sees everything through the grid of reality as shown to us in God’s Word. Paul is telling us to set our hearts on that goal and move toward it so we can go as far as possible in that direction while we are still here.

So, as with all the letters and books of the Bible we study, don’t let this one just move into a folder or drawer without reconsidering, one last time, the overall message and the specific exhortations the Holy Spirit has given to us through Paul.

Hopefully this last study helped with that, but I’m sure for each of us, examining our own application of what we learn will be unique and personal. I thought it might be interesting to have, sitting in front of us, a listing of the ‘boxes’ we looked at earlier, drawn from *both* Corinthian letters, to give us a visual of what is, and what isn’t, checked off. Not in order to discourage us on the one hand, or to make us feel like we’ve ‘arrived’ on the other, just to give us an idea of what we might want to be in honest prayer about and then move toward.

When I was prepping this, I saw some things in my own life that I thought were Ok, far from perfect, but not a disaster; but I saw other things that needed some attention and some action. That’s probably true for most of us, and obviously the Lord understands, as shown in the seven letters in Revelation. Most of the churches had things that were commended and other things that definitely needed adjustment. That’s normal in this life.

One last thing I need to mention so that we won’t be off balance in our approach to this. In all Paul has written there is a great deal of personal responsibility. That can be crushing if we don’t keep it balanced with passages like “Learn of Me and I will give you rest”.

I thought that a good way to reinforce that *internal* viewpoint as we attempt to faithfully execute the directives God has given us would be to remember Who it is that’s asking this of us. Our obedience never meant to qualify us for His acceptance, love or for eternal joy in His presence. That’s already absolutely

guaranteed. It's only meant to move our lives from "life" to "abundant life". It's always designed *for us*; never *against us*.

Interestingly, this *foundational* reality of our relationship with God was laid at the very beginning of the Bible in Gen. 1:2 and was visibly manifested unmistakably at the Cross. Here is Watchman Nee's comments on Gen. 1:2 which says, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

"Moved" in the original means hovered" or "brooded" over. This meaning reveals a picture of loving-kindness and sensitivity. It is the same word used in Deuteronomy 32:11 in describing a mother eagle with her eaglets; and how God is the same: "As an eagle that stirs up her nest, that flutters over her young, spreading out its wings, catching them, He bearing them upon its pinions." How His heart does desire after us! And who are we? Nobody but sinners—nobody but fallen men! Yet He is not angry at us, nor does He despise or forsake us. He does not consider us as being unworthy for the Holy Spirit to brood over every moment of our lives.

Well, that's it for what I believe are probably the two most personal letters Paul wrote. So, as I mentioned in the beginning, in order to help us be "doers" and not "hearers only" of what we've seen, I'll attach the summary listing of what we've covered when I send the link to the recording.

At this point, my plan for next time is to begin a study of the epistles of John. So, please be in prayer that I'll have ears to hear the meaning of what I study.