Message for WEDNESDAY NIGHT PRAISE & WORSHIP
Christian Hope Church of Christ, Plymouth, North Carolina
by Reggie A. Braziel, Minister

TOPIC: Christian Living

“The Call To Self-Examination”
II Corinthians 13:5,6 (NKJV)

Please open your Bibles to tonight’s scripture text in
II Corinthians the thirteenth chapter. And let’s read verses 5,6.

II Corinthians 13:5,6 (NKJV)

5 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.

6 But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

**PRAYER**
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Introduction

“Testing” is a normal part of our lives. In fact, if you will stop and
think about it we have been undergoing “tests” or“examinations”
most of our lives.

- All through our “school years” we had to take “academic tests”
to demonstrate we had grasped the knowledge our teachers
were teaching us.

- When we turned sixteen, probably most of us took our
first **DRIVER’S EXAM** to be able to get our driver’s licenses.
- Perhaps some of you have worked or are still working in an occupation that requires you to take examinations to keep your certification in your respective field. Every three years our son-in-law has to take the State Boards or State Exam to keep his plumbing license.

- And if you're like me, you have to have an annual check up or a physical examination by your doctor each year.

In tonight's text, the apostle Paul is admonishing you and me to take a “test” or “an examination” of a different kind. It has nothing to do with academics, or professional skills, or our medical condition. This “examination” has to do with our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ......or our “spiritual condition.”

**Verse 5** “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.”
**TEST YOURSELVES!”**

If you are a student of the Bible you know that the Corinthian Church was filled with all kinds of spiritual problems. In fact, it is sometimes called “Paul's Worst Church,” or “The Worst Church in The New Testament.”

Throughout Paul’s First Letter to The Corinthians he addressed a number of their spiritual problems.

- For one thing, they had a problem with DIVISION IN THE CHURCH. Some were following Paul, some were following Apollos, some were following Cephas, and some were following Christ. (I Cor. 1:10-12)
-They also had a serious problem with **PRIDE, and BOASTING, and SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS**. There were some members who claimed to have the ability to **speak in unknown tongues** who believed that made them spiritually superior to those who didn’t speak in tongues.

-Something Paul mentions a number of times throughout **First Corinthians** is that the Church had a very serious problem with **sexual immorality. Adultery, and fornication, and promiscuity were widely practiced in the Church.** In fact, one situation Paul specifically addressed in **I Corinthians 5** involved an immoral relationship between a **step mother and her step son.** Everybody in the Church was aware this immoral relationship was going on, but the majority of the congregation chose to turn a “blind eye” to it.

-Their **worship services** were disorderly and chaotic.

-Many of the Church members at Corinth were **partaking of the Lord's Supper in a careless and reckless manner** without considering the seriousness of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

-Also a large number of their members were still **worshiping the heathen idols they worshiped before they came to know Christ.**

Now, as if this wasn’t enough, when you come to this **thirteenth chapter of II Corinthians** we learn that some false teachers had infiltrated the Corinthian Church and through their false teachings they had sown “seeds of doubt” in the minds of the Church members as to whether Paul was truly an apostle of Jesus Christ.
So in the first four verses of this thirteenth chapter Paul reluctantly defends himself, not for his own sake, but for the LORD’S sake, so the Corinthians won’t just completely reject his preaching of the Gospel.

But after Paul defends his apostleship, he now “turns the tables” on the Corinthian Church. In essence, Paul tells them, “Ok, you have challenged my legitimacy as an apostle of Jesus Christ, I now challenge you to examine whether or not you are “true followers” of Jesus Christ.”

Paul says in verse 5, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith, test yourselves.”

Is Paul trying to get the Corinthians to doubt their salvation? No! But he does want them to be soberly aware that it is possible for one to “profess to be saved” and “profess to know Christ,” and not truly be saved.

Remember those sobering words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)?

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he, who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

Its one thing to deceive others; but there is no deception as dangerous as “self-deception” especially when it comes to a matter as critical as one’s salvation.
**The call to self-examination** that Paul issued to the Church at Corinth applies to each of us as well.

It is critically important that we grasp what Paul is saying here.

- He doesn't command us to **“Examine our neighbor to see if they are in the faith.”**
- And he doesn't say **“Examine yourself by your neighbor to see if you are in the faith.”**

He says, **“Examine YOURSELVES as to whether you are in the faith, test yourselves! I am to examine MYSELF; and you are to examine YOURSELVES. It is a PERSONAL examination!”**

Like King David, our prayer should be......

**“Search me, O God and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”** -Psalm 139:23,24 (NKJV)
As we focus on this matter of “Examining ourselves” for a few minutes this evening, first of all I would like for us to consider....

I. Some Things That Don't Necessarily PROVE One Is IN THE FAITH

illustration: One of the hit movies of 2002 was “Catch Me If You Can” starring Leonardo DiCaprio. The movie was based on the true story of Frank Abagnale who was employed as a doctor, a lawyer, and a co-pilot for a major U.S. airline all before he reached his 21st birthday.

When Abagnale worked in the hospital he “looked like a real doctor.” When he worked in the courtroom he looked like a real lawyer.” When he worked for the Air Line Company he “looked like a real pilot.” But in reality he was NONE OF THOSE THINGS! He was nothing more than a con-artist playing a role.

1. Spiritually speaking, many people try to pass themselves off as “genuine Christians” by using “spiritual ID” that makes them look like “the real deal!” But just because someone may have some “genuinely Christian characteristics” doesn't necessarily mean they are genuinely a Christian.

(A) Good MORALS don't necessarily prove one is in the faith.

You and I know lots of good, decent, moral people who are NOT Christians. I'm talking about those people who are just as nice as can be.....those people who would give you the shirt off their back .....those people who are just as honest and trustworthy as the day is long.
The truth is there are some non-believers who live more moral lives than a lot of Christians. But herein lies the problem. Good moral people are the hardest people in the world to win to Christ because they are trusting in their own goodness to save them, rather than trusting in the saving blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Good morals don't necessarily prove one is “in the faith.”**

(B) Regular Church ATTENDANCE doesn't necessarily prove one is in the faith.

Well doesn't the Bible command us to faithfully attend Church each week? Yes it does!

In **Hebrews 10:25** we are commanded “*not to forsake the assembling ourselves together as some are in the habit of doing, but to encourage each other all the more as the Day approaches.*”

Regular Church attendance is vitally important to our spiritual growth, nourishment, and health, but just because one sits in a Church pew every week doesn't necessarily prove that he or she is truly in the faith.

As the late Vance Havner used to say, “*Sitting in Church every Sunday doesn't make one a Christian any more than sitting in a hen house makes one a Chicken.*”

Regular Church attendance doesn't necessarily prove one is “in the faith.”
(C) Having a **HEAD** knowledge of the **BIBLE** doesn't necessarily prove one is “in the faith.”

It is possible for one to know everything there is to know about GOD and about CHRIST and about the BIBLE, and yet not truly be in the faith.

Illustration: In one of the Churches I ministered in there was a man who regularly attended our Sunday morning worship services who was very knowledgeable of the Bible; in fact he could quote scripture better than I could. But despite all that knowledge of the scriptures that man never walked down the aisle to give his life to Jesus Christ. In fact, he left this world as a self-proclaimed “agnostic.”

**Having a head full of scriptural knowledge doesn't necessarily prove one is “in the faith.”**

(D) **INVOLVEMENT in the WORK of the CHURCH** doesn't necessarily prove one is “in the faith.”

The scriptures admonish us all to be actively involved in the Lord's work and the work of His Church.

**Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)** says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
While we are to dedicate our lives to doing God's good works, we are never to trust in our good works as proof that we are truly in the faith.

Remember those people Jesus spoke about in Matthew 7 that I read earlier. They said, “Have we not prophesied in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And do you remember what Jesus will say to them? “I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.

Religious involvement doesn't necessarily prove one is “in the faith.”

GOOD MORALS.....REGULAR CHURCH ATTENDANCE.....KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE......INVOLVEMENT IN THE WORK OF THE CHURCH.......all of these things are important and each one has its proper place in our spiritual growth and maturity.......BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS IN AND OF THEMSELVES NECESSARILY PROVES THAT ONE IS TRULY IN THE FAITH!
The second thing we want to consider is......

II. Some Things That PROVE One Is In The FAITH

1. When we look for “proofs” that our faith is a saving faith, we must look far beyond “outward appearances,” we must look inside our own heart.

For example..............

(A) LOVE for GOD is “a proof” that one is “in the faith.”

Matthew 22:37,38 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your GOD with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.”

When you and I examine ourselves, the very first question we need to ask ourselves is “Do I truly love God?” Do I love God's nature? Do I love God's glory? Do I love God's name? Do I love God's kingdom? Do I love God's holiness? Do I love God's will? Do I truly love God's Son Jesus Christ? Do I love God's Holy Spirit? Do I love God's Church?

It’s all about our heart! What do I feel for God in my heart? How much room have I made for God in my heart!

NEXT.........................
LOVE for God's PEOPLE is “a proof” that one is in the faith.”

Let’s go back to Matthew 22. Jesus has just said “The first and greatest commandment is to love the LORD your GOD with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

Now in verse 39 Jesus goes on to say, “And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

John 13:34,35 (NKJV) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

I John 4:20 (NKJV) If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

When we “examine ourselves” we need to ask ourselves: “Do I truly love my neighbor?” “Do I truly love my brothers and sisters-in-Christ? “Do I love others enough to put their welfare above my own?” “Have I forgiven those who have wronged me?” “Have I shown kindness to those who have not shown kindness to me?”

NEXT.........................
(C) **REPENTANCE** of **SIN** is “a proof” one is “in the faith.”

A true love for GOD must also involve a true hatred of sin!  If I say I love GOD, and at the same time I also love sin, that invalidates my love for GOD.

**Romans 8:7 (NKJV)**  The carnal (sinful) mind is enmity (hostile) against God........

**1 John 3:9 (NKJV)**  Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

When you and I “examine ourselves” we need to ask ourselves the “tough questions” like....

- Do I hate sin like God hates sin?
- Do I hate sin because of what it cost God to save me from my sins?
- Do I still cling to old sinful habits?
- Do I confess my sins or conceal my sins?
- Do I take ownership of my sins or do I blame others for my sins?
- Do I sense the Holy Spirit convicting me when I sin?

NEXT..................
(D) **Bearing Spiritual FRUIT** is a proof that one is truly “In the faith.”

**Galatians 5:22-25 (NKJV)** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

When we “examine ourselves” we need to go through “the fruit of the Spirit” and ask ourselves, “Do I see in myself evidence of Christ-like love......Christ-like joy......Christ-like peace...Christ-like longsuffering....Christ-like kindness....Christ-like goodness....Christ-like faithfulness.......Christ-like gentleness.....and Christ-like self-control?”

NEXT............

(E) **OBEDIENCE** to God's **COMMANDS** is “a proof” one is truly “In the faith.”

**John 14:15 (NKJV)** “If you love Me, keep[a] My commandments.

**Luke 11:28 (NKJV)** But He said, “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”
When we “examine ourselves” we need to ask ourselves: “Do I obey God's commands or do I pick and choose which ones I will obey?” “Am I obediently walking in the ways of the LORD”......”Do I live by “THY WILL BE DONE” or “MY WILL BE DONE?”

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CONCLUSION

The story is told about a goat who wanted more than anything else in the world to be a lion. He told himself that if he could learn to walk like a lion, talk like a lion, and go where lions go, he would be a lion. So he practiced stalking through the jungle and tried to swish his stubby little tail majestically. Then he tried to turn his pitiful little bleat into the deep, awesome roar of the king of beasts. He worked and worked on it. Finally convinced that he looked and sounded like a lion, he said, "Now, all I have to do to be a lion is to go where lions go." Well, the goat wondered into lion country around lunchtime, and as they say, “The rest is history!”

There are a lot of people who want to look like a Christian and talk like a Christian, and go where Christians go, but inwardly they are no more of a Christian than that goat was a lion.

Brothers and sisters it is extremely important that we practice the discipline of “Self-Examination” in our spiritual lives. We must routinely check the spiritual condition of our hearts. And when we learn to be truthful and transparent before GOD we can have the confident assurance that “we are truly in the FAITH!”