

SELF-EXAMINATION AND ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

September 15, 2019

I John 2:1-27

“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?” II Corinthians 13:5

In this message we consider two difficulties that face the visible church of Christ. One is the difficulty of regenerated people, individuals who've been saved from their sins, who lack an assurance that their sins are forgiven. The other is the problem of unregenerated people, individuals who've not been saved from their sins, who are carelessly confident that they will be in heaven. The latter appears to be more prevalent, and is certainly more damaging to biblical obedience. A potential corrective is for church attenders to heed the exhortation of II Corinthians 13:5: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.”

The Apostle John offers three reasons why he wrote this epistle. First, “These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1:4). Second, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (2:1). Third, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (5:13).

To fulfil these purposes, John relates qualities that will be found in those who have truly been saved from their sins. Those who manifest these thereby can “know that ye have eternal life.” By contrast, one who does not have these characteristics has no warrant to claim that he or she has been saved from sin.

John writes to saved people exhorting them not to sin. But because we do sin, he adds the blessed truth that we have an advocate with God the Father, even Jesus Christ—the only one who is righteous. Christ's advocacy on our behalf rests upon the work that He accomplished for everyone who will ever believe on Him. That work is His crucifixion, His bloody self-sacrifice as a substitute for sinners.

Three items for self-examination and assurance follow:

1. Obedience to God's commandments will characterize those who are truly saved (2:3-6).

What is your response to God's commands? Do you violate any of the Ten Commandments? Do you lie? Do you steal or cheat others, twisting the truth in order to gain a personal advantage? Do you commit adultery? Do you dishonor your parents? Do you use God's name carelessly? Are you troubled when you do? If you are not troubled, you have no reason to assume that you've been saved from sin. If you are troubled by your transgression, confess your sin, for God is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from sin, and Christ is your advocate with the Father (1:9; 2:1). And, consider your zeal to confess and forsake sin an evidence that you know God.

2. Those who are truly saved will love the people of God (2:7-11).

With whom do you desire to associate, people who pray or people who live as if God doesn't matter? Do you want the company of God-fearing people, or of those who ignore God? Do you love those who desire to live in obedience to God's law, and unto God's honor? Do you hate? Are you holding a grudge or bitterness toward another? God's people will confess and forsake hatred and grudging, and will desire fellowship with believers.

3. Those who are truly saved will not love this world system (2:15-17). Consider three areas of your life:

IMAGINATION: Are your thoughts directed toward how you might fit in with this world, or how to please God?

PRESENTATION: Do you endeavor to look and sound like those who are unconcerned about God, to fit in with the godless culture? Do you want to be “with it” in the world's eyes, or to develop the beauties of godliness?

RECREATION: What do you do for leisure, relaxation and recreation? Is God included in your leisure thoughts and actions, or is it as if He doesn't exist? Those who love the world do not have God's love within, and should not take any comfort that they have been saved from their sins.