Examine Yourselves
2 Corinthians 13:5

Objective: Encourage and enable folks to examine themselves to see if they are really living in the faith.

Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:1-10.

Memory: 2 Corinthians 13:5, “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”

Introduction:
1. Judgments come. Remember Acts 5? Ananias and Sapphira are being spiritually dishonest and they are struck dead. A depiction of where their life really was; though they were up and breathing, they were in reality, separated from God and therefore dead.
2. Here, in 2 Corinthians 13, there are spiritual problems in the church. The Apostle has written letters. He has even been back in person to visit and try to fix the problems, but some persist. Paul is soon to return for the third time. When he does, he will fix things! 2 Corinthians 13:2b, “On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me.” What He will do, I am not certain, but it will be clear!
3. He doesn’t want to be harsh with any of them, but will if he needs to, in order to protect the sanctity of the church — that is, that others not be led astray, that God not be misrepresented by Christians. In the meantime, before he gets there, he urges them to examine themselves to see whether they are really in the faith. To test themselves!
4. Ultimate judgment will come when we stand before God. We don't know when that will be. Anytime! Meanwhile there is always the chance of some interim judgment. What would it be like if God determined to somehow render judgment on you right now? Where would you be? What would He find? What would be the result? Folks, we need to be ready.

We should routinely check to see if we are “in the faith”. (HOW?)

Here are some things we ought to consider to test whether we are in the faith

Honestly and forthrightly, very candidly.

I. Look to see if you are abiding in sin and error.

A. Ask; are you acting in “fleshly” ways?
   1. “Fleshly = our natural way of responding to things, and the way most of us were trained to handle situations and people. The way the world generally does.
      a. If it feels good, do it. If others are doing it, it must be okay.
      b. Just follow your natural impulses as if you were an animal instead of a spiritual being. Take what you want, do what you want.
   2. Paul describes some of this in 2 Corinthians 12:20; “For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder.”
      a. How many of these characterize you? Maybe not in church, but maybe at home? At work?
      b. These are UN-Christ-like and depict NOT being in the faith. If these are rampant in your life, or acceptable in your life, you fail the test!
   3. The Corinthians had been guilty of despising one another. It showed up in their communion services. Are there people you despise, look down on? People for whom Christ died and in whom Christ currently lives?
   4. We are supposed to operate out of love for one another. John 13:34-35. “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”
   5. Christ even loved His enemies, and if we are in the faith we will too!
   6. Instead of abiding in sin, we should each readily and earnestly repent of sin as soon as we see it? 2 Corinthians 12:21, “I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.”
   7. They had been guilty of harboring sins. Putting up with heinous behavior from Christians. They were harboring one living in sexual immorality. Proud of it! Folks, in whatever conservative vs. liberal debate, that's too liberal! They were told to have nothing to do with such a one.
   8. Take courage and earnestness and diligently look to yourself. Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O
God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

B. Ask; are you exhibiting the very nature of Christ?
   1. From a positive action concept. The fleshly sins we just spoke of we might call “negative” exhibitions, but are you also doing positive Christ-like things?
   2. Do you exhibit the same reverence toward God that Jesus did?
      a. In the worship assembly? In your commitment to be in the worship assembly?
      b. In your everyday conversation – is reverence evident?
      c. How often do you skip out on a worship service? Do you really think this is the same attitude that Jesus would demonstrate? Do you approach it with the joy and earnestness He would?
   3. How concerned are you to be Holy as God is Holy?
      a. Are you willing to live with some evil that Jesus would not? Honest now! Do you really care when you do something that dishonors the name of God or defiles you?
      b. When you do slip and do something Christ would not, are you filled with godly sorrow; 2 Corinthians 7:11 says, “See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.” Does this characterize you and show you to be living “in the faith”? Do you openly demonstrate such repentance?
   4. Do you step up and forgive others as Jesus did, seeking out those with whom He has become estranged, working, sacrificing for unity, ( or are you content to be separated?)
   5. And where does “doctrine” fit in? People sometimes talk about having the right spirit when they are not concerned with doctrine. Or even the spirit as opposed to doctrine. Truth and Spirit are not in opposition to each other. They really do go together; if I have the spirit of Christ, I must be concerned with true doctrine. “Doctrine” is teachings. True doctrine is true teachings. Jesus was always concerned with truth. We need to be concerned about doing the right things in the right ways for the right reasons. Otherwise we are not “in the faith”
      a. “Faith” is often used to refer to a body of teachings; a list of doctrines to follow!
      b. Are you doing things your way, or are you checking diligently to see that you are doing them HIS way?
   6. Are you striving to be morally / spiritually faithful to Christ’s image in all your ways?

The Apostle suggests another aspect of examining ourselves to see whether we are in the faith, in 2 Corinthians 13:5. He says, “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you— ...” In your examination,

II. Look to see if Christ is at work in you.

A. And you see it in changed lives?
   1. Amongst those who’s lives your life touches? Do the folks you spend time with and fellowship with still do the same things they used to, or can you see changes in their lives? Are they becoming sanctified?
   2. Amongst those to whom you have taught the Gospel? Are they living the same raunchy lives they had, or can you see the power of Christ at work reforming them?
   3. Paul tells to the Corinthians that they should look at themselves – partly, to see whether Paul is in the faith; they are the proof that Paul is really “in the faith” because his influence has changed them and they can see it! Their changed lives prove Paul’s validity.
   4. How about your own life; has it changed? Would your spouse or your co-worker tell you they have noticed a big difference in the last year, or are you just the same? If you are “in the faith” you should have grown and changed in noticeable ways.

B. Ask; is Christ like-ness evident in all your life?
   1. Are your actions and motives pure? Does the Spirit convict your conscience when you do something wrong? Are you imitating Christ in all you do?
   2. Do you step up and uphold the Truth, even when it is detrimental to yourself? Even a white lie is a lie. Will you tell the truth even when it hurts you?
   3. Do you always deal in sincerity and holiness?
4. Are you always about the business of building up others and the church? Even when hard measures are called for, even when someone in church or in your family or even at work needs to be disciplined? 2 Corinthians 13:10, “This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.” Even when needing to use authority, Paul wants to do it with a gentle, building up approach.

5. Feel the impact of Ephesians 5:1-12, “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.” Is this evident in your own life? Really?

C. Are you sustained by the power of God?

1. Do you see His power in your weakness? Do you work everything our by your own strength and wisdom and power and foresight, or do you let God work through you? Staying faithful to His standards and His image no matter what, and being amazed at how He works?
   a. To rescue you. To provide for you? To open doors for you?
   b. To reach other’s hearts that you never could by your own eloquence or wisdom?

2. Are you surrounded by “coincidences” that can only really be explained as the spirit of Christ at work, watching out over you, guiding you, governing little bits of history around you so that you are either blessed, or used somehow to God’s glory!

3. Is it evident that Christ is operative within your and your life?
   a. Does the word of God go out from you?
   b. Do you proclaim freedom to the captives and Good News to the poor?
   c. Paul describes this in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.” Things happening that can’t be explained other than by the presence of God in your life.
   d. Can folks see that the spirit of the Lord is upon you? And working through you? That you are “in the faith”?

So What?

With all the problems they have in the church at Corinth, Paul expresses confidence that they are, in fact, “in the faith”. I believe that we are too. But the hazard remains that any of us might get lax from time to time and/or drift. It is a good thing and a spiritually healthy thing for each of us to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith. We may find shortcomings. Don’t be discouraged by them, but don’t ignore them or accept them either! Test yourself! As the Apostle concludes in 2 Corinthians 13:11, “…Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”

Closing Prayer:
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2 Corinthians 13:5

Reading: 2 Corinthians 13:1-10
Memory: 2 Corinthians 13:5

"E_y_t_s_w_y_t_t_y_."

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B. Ask; are you exhibiting the very nature of Christ?
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2 Corinthians 13:5
II. Look to see if Christ is at work in you.
A. And you see it in changed lives?

B. Ask; is Christ like-ness evident in all your life?
   2 Corinthians 13:10  Ephesians 5:1-12

C. Are you sustained by the power of God?
   2 Corinthians 4:7-10

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