

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Pattern of Sanctification, Part 2: Authenticity

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 13:5-6

Code: 47-94

The Pattern of Sanctification: Authenticity, Part 2

I want to have you open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 5 again, as just initial foundation for the message tonight, which is a continuation of what we were discussing this morning. Second Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 5 where Paul says, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!"

This is a very, very important call, to test your spiritual authenticity. In his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians, he said in verse 28, "But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup." There couldn't be a more appropriate time for self-examination than right before you partake of the Lord's table, the bread and the cup. The Lord in His wonderful providence has brought us to this moment, a communion service planned long ago at strategically the point at which we're looking at this passage about self-examination, and that is fitting because we are to do that before we come to the Lord's table.

Examine yourselves to see if you're in the faith. Test yourselves to see if you're a genuine believer. And the question that we posed this morning and gave you a brief answer to is, during that test what am I looking for? What are the evidences that I am genuinely a Christian? What are the marks of true salvation? What do I look for?

And I reminded you that you don't look for an event in the past, a past prayer, walking an aisle, responding to an invitation, being baptized, attending church, having good feelings about Jesus Christ. It has nothing to do with past events. It has nothing to do with feelings. It has nothing to do with church ordinances or attendance.

If you want to truly take a spiritual inventory and find out whether you're genuinely and authentically a Christian, I want to suggest five marks that you look for. Number one is penitence--penitence. And we have been studying the Beatitudes and so it's familiar to us to be reminded of Matthew chapter 5 and verse 3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." People in the kingdom of heaven are poor in spirit. And we remember that that basically means they have a sense of their own bankruptcy, a sense of their own spiritual poverty, a sense of their own overwhelming sinfulness. It causes them, according to the second beatitude to mourn and according to the third beatitude of Matthew 5, to be meek, or humble.

There is then in the heart of a true believer a humility, a certain grief about sin, an attitude of penitence, a desire to confess sin. In 1 John chapter 1 that same matter is discussed by the apostle John when he says, "If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

In other words, it is characteristic of a Christian to acknowledge sin and confess sin. That is evidence that he is one being forgiven and being cleansed. One who doesn't deal with the sin in his life is evidently not a transformed individual. The first thing that occurs in the transformation of salvation is a recognition of one's sin, one's separateness from God, one's spiritual bankruptcy. And that really never goes away. In fact, in Romans 7 Paul says it lingered right on in through his spiritual life in which he could see sin in his flesh and he hated it to the degree that he called himself a wretched man.

If you want to come to grips with your true spiritual condition, you start by doing an inventory on your attitude toward sin, and most notably your attitude toward your own sin. A lot of people get upset about social sin. A lot of people are outraged when they see crimes, devastating social sin, venereal disease, etc., etc. And it's easy to get upset about the sins of other people that somehow negatively effect you. That's not the issue. The issue is your own personal iniquity. True believers have a true recognition of their spiritual condition and they recognize that their problem is not a lack of self-esteem, their problem is not the fact that they are mistreated by other people, or they've been somehow wounded in their childhood, they recognize their problem to be sin, their own sin which has put them in that bankrupt situation and they have come to cast themselves on the grace and mercy of God and beg for His forgiveness. And that doesn't change. As a true believer there will be an ongoing resentment of sin in your own life as well as other sins that dishonor the God whom you love. Look for an attitude of penitence.

Secondly, righteousness. In those same Beatitudes in verse 6 Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied." In the true believer there is not only an aversion to sin, but there is an attraction to righteousness. And you not only are attracted to what is right in the world around you, whenever there are things are right, you're not only attracted to what is noble and good and God-honoring in people around you, but you pursue it in your own heart. You love righteousness. And your righteousness is inside, not outside. That's what Jesus meant when He said in Matthew 5:20 you must have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. Theirs was external. They wouldn't kill somebody, but they would hate them venomously. They wouldn't outwardly commit adultery, but they would have lustful, wicked adulterous thoughts in their mind. They wouldn't violate some statement with regard to God outwardly, but they violated it in their hearts. They would say they worshiped God but in their hearts they were far from Him.

The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, the righteousness of superficially religious people is...is external and your righteousness must exceed that.

Second Timothy 2:19 says, "Nevertheless the firm foundation of God stands having this seal, the Lord knows those who are His." And who are they? "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." There is an aversion to wickedness and a love of holiness.

Titus 1:16 says there are people who profess to know God but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable, disobedient and worthless for any good deed. It's not a matter of what you say, it's a matter of what you pursue, doing what is right from the heart. Do you have a desire for what is right? Do you have a longing in your heart to honor God? Do you love what is right? What glorifies Him? What honors Him? That's the issue.

Thirdly, this is a test that I think is very, very important. It's the test of submission...of submission. Is there a compelling in your heart to submit to divine authority? Do you find yourself a willing servant of God, an eager servant of Jesus Christ? Or are you like that rich young ruler in Matthew 19 to whom Jesus said, "Sell everything you have and give the money to the poor?" And because he loved his money so much, he turned his back and walked away. He wasn't about to come under such demands. And, of course, he was not converted. He was left in his sin because he wouldn't submit to the authority of Jesus Christ in his life.

It isn't that Jesus asks everyone to give up what they have and give their money to the poor. But it is that Jesus asks everyone who comes to Him to recognize His sovereignty in their lives and where there is a true sense of one's spiritual bankruptcy and a real hatred of sin and a true attraction to righteousness, there is an eager submission to the lordship of Christ because we understand that He has our best in mind.

I want you to turn in your Bible to Luke 14 for a moment. Great multitudes were going along with Jesus and He was drawing tremendous crowds because of His miracles. And the crowd heard Him say some things, starting in verse 26, that didn't sit too well with most of them. Here He has this huge crowd and, in effect, He's going to thin it out. "If anyone comes to Me and doesn't hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he can't be My disciple." Boy, he's talking about singular submission. You can't be concerned about the demands and the expectations of your family...that's what He means by hate, He doesn't mean a vitriolic attitude. He means hate in the sense that you give no place to their wishes as opposed to those of Jesus Christ. You are willing to submit to Him if it costs you your family. You're willing to submit to Him if it costs you your own life.

Verse 27, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." The cross was the symbol of death. If you're not willing to follow Christ at any cost, even death, you're not worthy to be His disciple. I can't think of a stronger test of true salvation than to affirm the lordship of Christ over your entire life, no matter what the cost.

And then He illustrates that in verse 28. "For which one of you when he wants to build a tower doesn't first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?" You're going to go into a construction project, you want to calculate what it's going to cost you before you go into that project. Otherwise, verse 29 says, "You will lay the foundation, not be able to finish, and all who observe it begin to ridicule him because of his inept planning, saying...This man began to build and wasn't able to finish." Or another illustration in verse 31, "What king when he sets out to meet another king in battle will not first sit down and take counsel whether he's strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?" You're not going to go into battle and put the lives of people on the line without a strategy. "Or else while the other is still far away he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace." Either he counts his troops and their capability, and his battle plan, he goes to war, or he pleads for a truce.

"So therefore...verse 33...no one of you can be My disciple who doesn't give up all his own possessions." It doesn't mean that you have to become poverty stricken, it simply means you yield up the sovereignty over everything. You're willing to give it up. That's...that's an affirmation of the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord. And when you come realizing your spiritual bankruptcy, and when you come mourning over your sin, and when you come humbly, and when you come hungering and thirsting for righteousness, there's such a level of desperation that you're really willing to follow whatever the cost...submission.

Now I don't think at the moment of salvation you understand all the implications of submission. But as they unfold you embrace them. And the more you mature in Christ, the more wonderful His will becomes to you no matter what the price.

There's a fourth mark that you look for in your life... penitence, righteousness, submission...and that's obedience--obedience. I need to have you turn to James chapter 1 where this issue is addressed. In James 1 verse 21, James says, "Putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness in humility receive the Word implanted which is able to save your lives." And verse 22, "Prove yourselves doers of the Word and not merely hearers who delude themselves."

If you are only a hearer and not a doer, you are self-deluded, you're deceived. No, a doer is one who hears the Word and obeys it. "If anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer...verse 23...he's like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror, once he's looked at himself and gone away he's immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty...that's the Scripture...and abides by it, having not become a forgetful hearer, but an

effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does." Those who are hearers only are self-deceived if they think they're Christians. It's a matter of receiving the Word and doing it.

Jesus said that in Matthew 7, didn't He? "The people who hear My Word and don't do it are like somebody who built his house on...what?...on sand. And the people who hear My Word and do it are those who build their house on the rock." Their salvation is genuine, it has a foundation.

In John chapter 8, another very important text on this regard, John 8 says in verse 30, "Many came to believe in Him." Jesus was teaching and people were listening, it says, "He spoke these things and many came to believe in Him." But Jesus was going to test the character of their faith. Was it the real thing? Were they authentic? So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed in Him, "If you abide in My Word then you are mathetes alethos, in the Greek, real disciples of Mine and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." That's true salvation. If you hear the Word and you abide in it, that's again indication of obedience.

In 1 John chapter 2, again the same emphasis, in verse 3, "And by this we know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments." Jesus said the thing in the upper room when He said, "If you love Me you'll keep My commandments. If you belong to Me you'll obey My Word and My Father's Word." Verse 4 of 1 John 2 says, "The one who says I have come to know Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His Word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected and by this we know that we are in Him." You want to know you're in Christ? You're going to know it when you obey His Word.

Chapter 3 of 1 John, verse 24 says the same thing. "And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us by the Spirit whom He has given us."

You look at your life and you see an aversion to sin, a penitent attitude, a willingness to confess your sin, a recognition of your spiritual bankruptcy, you look into your heart and you see a love of righteousness, a desire to do what is right and honor and glorify God, something beyond the superficial righteousness of the Pharisees, a true love for the right from the heart, you look at your life and you see a desire to submit in every area of your life to the lordship of Jesus Christ who is the sovereign over your life, you hear the Word and you respond with a desire for obedience, those are things that mark a true and authentic Christian.

And number five in this brief list is love...love. What do you love? That's a fair question. We're in 1 John, look at chapter 2 verse 15, "Do not love the world," the wicked system that Satan operates on this planet, "nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." It can't be more clear than that. If you love the world, God's love isn't in you.

In James chapter 4, very similar statement, chapter 4 verse 4, "You adulteresses," that's metaphoric, you say you're the true wife of God but you are not, you're an adulteress, "do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God. Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." You can't do both. You can't love Satan's system. I'm not talking about a sunset, and a beautiful mountain, or a pretty picture, or a good meal, or a comfortable chair, I'm talking about the system, the kosmos, the wicked world system. If you love it, the love of God isn't there. You can't be the friend of that system without becoming the enemy of God.

And then back again to 1 John, there are some other issues of love. First John 2:9, "The one who says he's in the light, says he's a believer, and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now." You...first of all, you love the kingdom and not the world. Secondly, you love other believers. "The one who loves his brother, verse 10 says, abides in the light and there's no cause for stumbling in Him." In verse 11, "The one who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in the darkness, doesn't know where he's going because the darkness has blinded his eyes." It's the test of love.

For whom do you have the greatest affection? For God's people? Do you love to be with the Lord's people? That's the issue.

Look at chapter 3 of 1 John, verse 14, here again very, very clear, "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren. He who doesn't love abides in death." Verse 17, "Whoever has the world's goods and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue but in deed and truth. We shall know by this that we are of the truth and shall assure our heart before Him." I mean, it's that simple.

If you believe in Him and you've been genuinely transformed, you will love the kingdom not the world, and you will love the brother hood...to say nothing of loving Him. John said, "We love Him because He first loved us."

That's the right approach to the inventory. The question to ask yourself is...do I have a penitent heart over sin? It's not as penitent and repentant as it ought to be, but is that my character? Is that the longing of my heart, to turn from sin? Do I have a desire for righteousness? To do what is right? To honor and glorify God? Do I love to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ? Even though my flesh battles against that, do I have a desire to submit to His will no matter what it is? And do I hear the Word with eager ears, wanting so much to obey it? And do I love the kingdom and not the world? Do I love believers? Do I love the Lord? Those are the issues.

So, any spiritual inventory is a matter of now, it's a matter of those issues present in my life. And I have to say that if you hate sin, love righteousness, eagerly submit to the lordship of Christ, long to

obey the Word of God, and love what is righteous and holy, God has changed your heart. You're a transformed person because that is not normal. That's not just plain humanity.

To see these tests perhaps cast in a different light, turn to 2 Peter chapter 1...2 Peter chapter 1. Now he says in verse 5 here, "Apply some diligence in your life, pursue moral excellence," that's another way of talking about righteousness. "Pursue knowledge," that's another way of talking about obedience, to know the truth that you might respond to it. "In your knowledge pursue self-control and perseverance and godliness," and there's that love, "brotherly kindness, and then love itself." Pursue these issues, and these are just...this is another way to frame the very same things that I've given you. Moral excellence, that's the pursuit of righteousness; godliness, that's turning from sin; self-control, obviously bringing yourself under the control of the lordship of Christ; perseverance means obeying no matter how difficult it might be, and brother kindness and love, of course, refer to the category of love.

And then in verse 8 he says, "If these qualities are yours and you can see them developing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." They give evidence that your knowledge of Christ is a true knowledge. It's a true knowledge. In verse 10 he says, "If you do this, you will make certain about your calling and God's choosing you, and as long as you see these things, practice these things in your life, you're never going to stumble in to doubt, but rather you will give evidence that some day entrance into the eternal kingdom of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

The key to think about is verse 10, you can make your calling and election, as the NAS, as the KJV says, you can make your calling and choosing, or your calling and election sure. When you look at your life and you see these things, then you're going to know. If they're not there, verse 9 says, if you lack these qualities, you're going to be blind, short-sighted and you will have forgotten that you've been purified from your former sins.

You know it is possible for a Christian, according to Peter here, to get confused if he's not continually pursuing these issues. These are the marks of true salvation. If you have fallen in to some spiritual doldrums or followed patterns of sin as a believer and you start doing an inventory, you may have some real doubts. But if you are pursuing these things, you will have none...you'll have none. It's these spiritual tests that convince us of the genuineness of our salvation. They are God-wrought works in our lives.

One other text demands some attention, James 2...James 2:14. It's not enough to say you believe. James says, "What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but he has no works. Can that kind of faith save him?" And it doesn't do any good to say, I believe, I believe, I believe, it doesn't do any good to say I made a decision, I walked an aisle, I responded to an invitation, I prayed a prayer, I signed a card, I felt emotional, I was baptized, I was confirmed, or whatever else...it doesn't do any

good. What use is it to say you have faith if it's not evident in works that demonstrate penitence, righteousness, submission, obedience and love?

For example, let's take the love issue, verse 15. "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" It doesn't mean anything if there's no demonstration of love. That kind of faith without works, he says in verse 17, is dead because it exists in isolation. It's not a saving faith.

Someone in verse 18 may well say, "You have faith and I have works, show me your faith without the works." How can you do that? You can't. Show me your faith? If somebody says to you, "Show me your faith without doing anything," what are you going to show him? You're not going to show him anything. You can't see faith, it's an invisible thing. So James says, "I will show you my faith by my works." That's the only way true faith can be demonstrated. "Oh, you say you believe in the oneness of God, you believe that there is only one true God. Good, you do well, the demons also believe and they go one better, they shudder. Are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?"

Isn't it interesting that he says the devils believe, the demons believe? Not only do they believe, but they believe enough to be frightened, which means that it's a genuine belief. And what they understand is that damnation awaits them in a lake of fire, they believe that. They have a kind of non-saving demon faith.

They tell us a lot about saving faith by providing an opposite. Let me just take you through that for a minute. What is...what is the faith of demons that doesn't save? Well, let me look at this way. First of all, it has knowledge...it has knowledge. The demons know God's nature better than any men do because they know God. They were there in heaven before they fell. They're far more intelligent than men are and therefore they have greater capacity to grasp the greatness of God, so they have not only from experience but from the sheer power of their intellect more to bring to the table of knowledge than we do. Furthermore, they've been alive since they were created at the time of creation so they're very old which means they've accumulated a massive amount of experience...both by personal knowledge having been in heaven, by intellectual capacity, and by millennia of experience, they understand God's nature. They have seen more of God and more of God's works than all humanity combined.

Furthermore, they have knowledge of the saving power of Jesus Christ. They've seen that too. They have seen the power of Scripture. They understand that what the Bible says about holy angels and fallen angels is true. They understand what the Bible says about man is true, what it says about heaven is true, what it says about hell is true. Some of them are already in an abyss. They understand all of that. In fact, I've often said this, all demons are fundamentalists. I want to quickly

say all fundamentalists are not demons, but all demons are fundamentalists. They're all Bible-believing fundamentalists.

Furthermore they have a supernatural knowledge of the invisible and eternal realm, which makes the first point. No amount of knowledge is proof of salvation. No amount of knowledge is proof of salvation. Secondly, no amount of belief in that knowledge is proof of salvation. The devil is orthodox. He believes all of it because he knows it's true. The devil has the right theology. Thirdly, no amount of fear of God's judgment and wrath is proof of salvation. The demons are afraid. You remember when they were cast out of the swine by Jesus they said, Please, please, please, don't send us to the...the pit." They live in fear, that's why it says in this chapter of James that they shudder, verse 19, or they tremble.

No amount of knowledge, no amount of belief in that knowledge, no amount of fear of God's judgment and wrath is proof of salvation. Fourthly, no amount of guilt for sin is proof of salvation. You can feel bad about your sin, you can feel convicted about it. I believe the demons feel guilty, that's why they shake. And they know they are justly condemned to hell, that's why they said to Jesus...don't send us to the abyss...they know they're going there, they know they deserve to go there. They understand completely their revolt and their rebellion. They deserve punishment and they know it. But even that guilt is no proof of salvation.

And I would suggest to you perhaps a fifth thought. No amount of desire for salvation is proof of salvation. I would imagine the demons in hell, in torment, bound would cry out for deliverance. But according to Revelation 1, only Christ and Christ alone has the key and He will not unlock the place of their eternal torment and let them out.

No amount of knowledge, no amount of belief in that knowledge, no amount of fear of God's judgment and wrath, no amount of guilt for sin, and no amount of desire for salvation is necessarily proof of salvation.

I'll go one beyond that. No amount of religious experience is proof of salvation. You want to know who are the most experienced creatures in the universe in religion? Who are they? Demons. All the gods of the nations are demons, the Old Testament says. Wherever you have false religion you have demon authorship and demon involvement. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Every time you go back to these idol feasts, you go to the table of demons," that's what he says. You can't come to the table of the Lord and then go to the table of demons. He was saying all that idolatry is demonic. Satan is disguised as an angel of...what?...light and his ministers appear disguised as angels of light. They work in the area of religion. They are disguised as ministers of light. They're very experienced in religion. No amount of experience in religion is proof of salvation.

And I suppose I could add this. No amount of knowledge of the superiority of Jesus Christ is proof of salvation. They know He's the King. They know He's superior. They know He is the Lord. That's a demon faith that doesn't save.

Now we can take that and transfer it into the human realm. A lot of people who have knowledge, some people have so much knowledge, Hebrews 5:12 says, you should be teaching by now. Hebrews 6, as we saw this morning, says, "You've tasted the heavenly gift, you've been partakers of the Holy Spirit, partakers of the Word, you've heard it all, seen it all, signs, wonders, miracles, you've heard the gospel, you have the knowledge, you're not saved."

And secondly, there are many who believe the truth. John 8, I just read it to you. "Many believed on His name but they weren't real because they didn't abide in it." They're not saved. There are many who fear God's judgment. A lot of people fear God's judgment. A lot of people are afraid to die, scared to death when they come to the time of their own demise. Listen to Revelation 9:20, "The rest of mankind," this is during the time of the Tribulation in the future when the Lord unleashes judgment on the world, "the rest of mankind who were not killed by the plagues did not repent of the works of their hands so as not to worship demons." They kept worshiping demons, they didn't repent. "And the idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk, and they did not repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their immorality, nor of their thefts." God's judgment in the future will be unleashed on the world, they will fear it, they will cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of His fury. Repent? No.

They're afraid but they're not saved. They believe the truth but they're not saved. They understand the truth but they're not saved. And there are many who feel guilty. Guilt is a major problem in the world in the lives of people. Many people who feel guilty...I think about Felix in Acts 24, arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul...he was a Roman authority. And heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. Here's this pagan Gentile listening to Paul speak the gospel. And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened. Why was he frightened? Because he was wicked and his sin was being exposed.

And what was his reaction? "Go away for the present and when I find time I'll summon you." He felt conviction and guilt, he wasn't saved. And there are many who desire salvation. They're not saved. The rich young ruler comes running up to Jesus, Matthew 19, says, "What do I have to do to inherit eternal life?" And when Jesus told him, he went away without it. He wasn't willing to pay the price.

There are many who are very religious and they're not saved. Like the scribes and Pharisees who had an inadequate self-righteousness. There are many who exalt Jesus Christ as superior and they're not saved. That's right, they exalt Jesus Christ, they lift up Jesus Christ. Matthew 21 verse 9, Jesus comes in to the city on Palm Sunday and they say, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. This is the prophet Jesus." And a

few days later what did they do? They crucified Him.

When the leaders of the Mormon church came to see me, they said, "We're drawn to your material, we're drawn to your preaching, we're drawn to your teaching." They said, "We're drawn there because you have a knowledge of Scripture. We're drawn there because we believe, too, in the Scripture like you do. We're drawn there...they said...because we understand that God has spoken and we desire the salvation that He offers." And they said, "We're drawn especially to your writings because you exalt Jesus Christ and we do too. Christ is our Lord and Christ is our Savior," they said, "and we love Christ." And they said, "We're concerned because there are many people in the Mormon church that don't have a passion for Jesus Christ like we do. They're very nominal, second, third, fourth, fifth generation Mormons, very apathetic and indifferent toward Christ and we...we want to see a renewal in the Mormon church where people come again to really confess Jesus as Lord and really love Jesus Christ."

Boy, that sounds good, doesn't it? They believe the Bible. They have the knowledge. They believe in it. They understand God's judgment. They feel conviction about sin. They desire salvation. They're very religious. And they acknowledge the superiority of Christ. And they're not saved.

That became evident to me when I asked them, "Who is God?" And they told me, "Well, first of all, God is not a trinity." I read the Mormon theology this last week, just to brush up, a new book has been written by the Mormons and they've got their whole theology in it. God used to be a man and somehow evolved into a spirit being. He's not a trinity. Somewhere along the line He created Christ who is a created man. And so it goes.

What makes the difference? How can you tell a transformed life? Well first of all, when you're dealing with somebody in a cult like that you've got to come down to accurate biblical facts about Christ. But what you look at in the life is evidence of internal transformation, penitence, a real hatred of sin that comes from the heart. It's not just Pharisaical or superficial. Righteousness, a profound longing for what is right from the heart. Glad submission and yielding to Christ's lordship. A love for His sovereign leadership. Eager hearing and complying with everything in God's Word. And a passionate love for God, disdain for the world, and love for believers. Those are the evidences. It's those things that show your life has been changed...transformed inside out.

Jesus gave the ultimate invitation along this line in Matthew 20...Matthew 7:21. He said there's going to be a time when not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven. It's not the sayers, but the doers. "He who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name and in Your name cast out demons? In Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you workers of iniquity, literally'" People are going to say...Oh, we're there, we're...we're...we belong to You. And He's going to say...I don't know you at all. He said it's the difference between

somebody who hears these words of Mine, and acts on them, he's like a wise man who built his house on the rock and the rain descended, and that speaks of judgment, the flood came, the winds blew and burst against that house, it didn't fall because it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and doesn't act upon them, will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand and the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and burst against that house and it fell and great was its fall. It's not what you say, it's what you do that gives evidence of the transformation in your life.

So, when you do the test, do your spiritual inventory and look at the outside, not what you say, look at the inside. Has your life been changed so that it is characterized by penitence, righteousness, submission, obedience and love.

To the church at Sardis, Revelation 3, Jesus said this, "I know your deeds that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." Boy, what a statement. You have a name that you're alive, but you are dead.

I'm reminded in closing of the words of Isaac Watts, the great hymn writer, "How helpless guilty nature lies, unconscious of its load. The heart unchanged can never rise to happiness and God. The will perverted, the passions blind, in paths of ruin stray, reason debased can never find the safe the narrow way. Can ought beneath a power divine, the stubborn will subdue? 'Tis Thine, almighty Savior, Thine to form the heart anew. O change these wretched hearts of ours and give them life divine. Then shall our passions and our powers, almighty Lord, be Thine."

No amount of resolution, no amount of religious activity can transform the heart, only Christ...only Christ.

So, back to where we started. Test yourselves to see if you're in the faith, examine yourselves. If you're genuine, you'll know unless you're living in a pattern of willful sin for a time so that as Peter says you're calling and election is in doubt to you. In that case you need to repent of those sins. In any case you need to repent of those sins so that you can become a true believer or as a believer enjoy the assurance of your salvation.

Father, we thank You for the Word which lightens up the darkness. And, Lord, for this time of heart searching we would not want to be unaided by Your blessed Holy Spirit. Show us the truth of our spiritual condition that we may know that we're authentic, genuine, truly Yours.

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