

2 CORINTHIANS 13

Examine Yourself

Student Guides

Daily Bible Reading

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Henry Martyn was a great, effective missionary to India and Persia. Most of what we know of his ministry comes from his personal journal. On one occasion, he wrote, "My object in making this journal is to accustom myself to self-examination, and to give my experience a visible form so as to improve my soul in holiness." Reflecting on our beliefs and behaviors has a way of forging our character, or, in Martyn's words, "improving our soul in holiness." Thus, Martyn believed in self-examination.

1. Is There Ethical Purity in My Life? (vv. 1-4)

It was Socrates who said, "the unexamined life is not worth living." Paul was much clearer and far more precise. He argued for *moral* purity and *moral* self-examination in the believer's life (vv. 3-4). It was time for the Corinthians to check up on their own life. The first question that must be asked: Is there ethical purity in my life? The answer contains two necessary parts.

The first part of the answer describes the *problem of pollution* (12:20-21). Paul lists *sins of disposition* (v.20). He also lists *sins of the flesh* (v. 21). The second part describes the *promise of solution* (v. 4). How does the Christian conquer sin in his or her life? There is one and only one answer: *the cross*.

As we consider the cross from the human standpoint, the cross is a place of weakness. However, the reality is, the cross is the place of power. Sin was put to death at the cross (cp. Romans 6:6).

2. Is There Extraordinary Reality in My Life? (vv. 5-8)

The next question to ask pertains to whether there is reality in your life. Ask yourself if the measure of your life is the real world. Are you truly in the faith? Are you authentically saved? Indeed there exist those who are counterfeit believers. Are you one of them? How do you know? There is only one way to be sure: you must examine yourself by the Word of God.

The first test is our relationship to Scripture (1 John 2: 3-5). We should have a fundamental desire to obey the Word of God.

The second test is our relationship to sin (1 John 3: 6-7). John does not imply a person who is saved never sins. He is saying that a true believer does not continually practice sin; he or she cannot live in known sin.

The third test is our relationship to saints (1 John 3:14). Do you have a fundamental love for God's people? Have you a fundamental love for God's church? Jesus is never seen as divided from His church. The church is God's church, no institution will ever take its place.

The fourth test is our relationship to the Savior (1 John 4:7). Jesus is God in human flesh. God with skin on. The love we have for Him should reflect our reverence for Him, our honor to Him, and the deserved glory for Him. It is never hard to love a Savior like Jesus!

3. Is There Explicit Maturity in My Life? (vv. 9-13)

Paul's final concern revolves around whether the Corinthians had matured in the faith. Recall in Paul's first letter, he expressed his uninhibited fear that the church at Corinth lacked a healthy spiritual level of Christian maturity (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Paul now revisits that subject again (vv. 9,11).

Just because sin is found in the believer's life is no proof the person is unsaved. Again, we insist Christians are not perfect — morally or spiritually — and will not be until Jesus Christ returns. The fundamental problem Christians face is maturity. Just how does a disciple of Jesus Christ gauge his or her maturity.

First, the believer's spiritual maturity is gauged by *spiritual nourishment* (1 Peter 2:2). Getting into the Word of God daily will produce healthy growth leading to maturity in the believer's life. In fact, without the daily spiritual sustenance the Word of God affords, believers will naturally dry up.

Second, the believer's spiritual maturity is gauged by *spiritual exercise*. While trends in our culture seem always fanatical toward the latest new gimmick to promote physical exercise, the truth remains: bodily exercise benefits our health. It is no less true for spiritual development.

Third, the believer's spiritual maturity is gauged by *spiritual communication*. No healthy marriage ever survived a communication void. No business possesses a healthy customer base which refuses to practice positive communication with the customer base. Similarly, Christians have prayer by which we spiritually connect with our God (Eph. 6:18).

WRAP UP

Peter said it like this, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18a). Pressing on to maturity in Christ, in the end, is a command we must obey, not an option one may consider. Maturity stands at the threshold of Christian effectiveness and global evangelism. An immature Christian is a weak Christian and cannot minister Christ to a hurting world, nor can a church. We must move on to maturity in Christ.