

“Examine Yourselves”

(2 Corinthians 13:5)

Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians is another passage used for a litmus test of genuine conversion “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownelves. Know ye not your ownelves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” Lordship Salvation advocates commonly mention the requirement for a Christian to look inwardly to see if they are a true believer, bearing fruit and doing good works (again, subjective in quantity and frequency).

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One of the first rules of biblical interpretation is identifying the audience. In 2 Corinthians 13, looking at the immediate context, we see that Paul calls these people beloved (12:19) and brethren (13:11). high-

lighting the fact that he is writing to Christians, for these terms are not typically used in Scripture to refer to unbelievers. More proof of this is seen by Paul’s address in 1 Corinthians 2:5, 3:5, 15:2,

11, 14, 17, 16:13; 2 Corinthians 1:24, 10:15. Additionally, the very letter is addressed to “them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Therefore, in verse 5, Paul is admonishing these believers to determine, not if they are *in Christ*, but whether they are *in the faith*; there is a difference. A believer is said to be “in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 3:28) upon salvation/conversion. However, this same believer can also be weak “in the faith” (Romans 4:19, 14:1), should stand “in the faith” (1 Corinthians 16:13), continue “in the faith” (Colossians 1:23), be established “in the faith” (Colossians 2:7), and be sound “in the faith” (Titus 1:13). Christian’s are not admonished to remain *in Christ*, but only *in the faith*, pointing to the fact that a Christian will always be *in Christ*, but they may not always be *in the faith*.

The word “reprobate” used in verse 5 is an interesting word *adokimos*, and is the same Greek word that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 9:27, about his not wanting to appear as a “castaway:” disapproved, or unfit, in his ministering. The antonym of this word is *dokimos*, found in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to shew thyself *approved* unto God” [italics mine]. This approval or disapproval will be visible at the Judgment Seat of Christ with either the reception or loss of rewards based upon faithful Christian service. Dr.

Wilkin points out that Paul, who had no doubt of his assurance of salvation, was concerned with possibly being disapproved of God at times in his walk.¹

Regarding 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul is admonishing the Corinthian Christians to look inwardly and see if they are living holy and godly lives (“in the faith”), bearing fruit for God’s honor and glory, or if they are living carnal (1 Corinthians 3:3-4) or immature (Hebrews 5:13) lives as Christians. It is the same idea that James tells the “brethren” (15 times in his epistle, speaking to Christians), that faith needs to be active and operative, a Christian should not have a dead, or lifeless (inactive) faith.

Peter brings a similar point home that a Christian should be looking up for the return of Christ, and be diligent serving so we might “be found in him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14), so we can hear “well done good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23) rather than rebuke and admonishment at the bema seat. And this is consistent with Paul’s epistles (Romans 14:10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21, 6:7-9; Ephesians

¹ Robert N. Wilkin, *Confident in Christ: Living by Faith Really Works* (Denton TX, Grace Evangelical Society: 1999), 66.

5:5-7; Philippians 3:11-14; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 2:12, 15).²

A believer should regularly examine their walk with God, their relationship, similar to how one examines their relationship with their spouse, parents, or children (close, distant, hindered, fractured, etc). Blessings and fruit come from abiding in Christ, and abiding is a result of communion and proper relationship with God. But know that this examination is not to determine one's standing in the family, but rather one's relationship in the family.

*this is an excerpt from "Investigating Lordship Salvation"
by Daniel Weierbach*

² Ibid.