Examine yourselves

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[0:00] Let us now turn to the person which we read in the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. Not being forgetful of these verses which we read in chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians, particularly the words, let a man examine himself.

The fifth verse in chapter 13, the first part of that verse. Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.
Prove your own selves. Examine yourselves. It is quite plain from the word of God that the just and the righteous that they live by faith.
But Paul tells us that we walk not by sight but by faith. And I would suggest to you therefore that the word faith is in a sense the most important word in the whole Bible.
Because without faith we cannot please God. For he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
[1:42] Those who believe that he is and that he is the reward. Now there are many millions who believe that there is a God.

The Mohammedans believe, the Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormons and many others. They believe in the being of God. They believe that there is such a being as God.
But they have never heard God. They have never seen him. They are completely ignorant of him.
Because they deny that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.
They know nothing of the mediator. And because they know nothing of the mediator. They know nothing of faith. That is the faith which pleases God.
Because God, the second person, he is the author and the finisher of faith. And therefore the faith which pleases God is God's gift to the sinner.
[2:49] It is the grace which the Holy Spirit implants in the soul. Which he himself regenerates.

Now we were trying to preach today or this morning on a little on faith. And particularly on repentance.
Now some people would argue as to what comes first. Whether it is faith or repentance. I don't know if anyone can clear to know what comes first in the order of time.
But I think it is quite obvious that faith must come first in the order of nature. Because we cannot see, we cannot hear God without faith.
But as I mentioned before, without faith, we cannot be saved. You recall the Philippian jailer when he was brought under conviction of sin.
[4:07] And when were it not for Paul and Silas, he would probably have injured himself. Perhaps have committed suicide.

And he came with a cry. What must I do to be saved? And the answer was given to him. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.
And I shall be saved and I hope. But then they preached the word to him. They would explain to him.
And show what faith is. And so then it is most important that we should examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.
For no one has ever been saved without faith. Oh, but that doesn't mean to say, nor do I intend anyone to think that I'm saying, that faith of itself saves anyone.
[5:16] Because there is only one man. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. But the name Jesus, the Saviour and Lord.

But no one can be saved but by the grace of Christ. That is by faith. Now, the apostle here, lays stress we believe on the duty to which the believer is subjected.

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That is, the believer is duty bound to examine himself. To examine himself, particularly in the light of what the believer here intends, if God wills, to do on the coming Sabbath, to sit at the Lord's table. So then it is surely necessary, exceedingly necessary and essential, that we examine ourselves. And I would suggest to you first that we, first of all, examine our faith.
Examine ourselves as to whether we be in the faith. Ask ourselves the question, do we have really the faith which is pleasing and acceptable to God?
[6:53] Do we really believe that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure? And is it in consequence of God's work in our souls that we work out our own salvation in fear?

That is, in God is here, in fear and in thrumbling. For we believe that faith is from God and cannot be attained to by anyone.
For how is it possible when the Bible teaches us that we are by nature dead in sins and in trespasses?
How stupid it would be of any man to think that it is possible for the dead to hear or to see or to walk or to do anything whatsoever.
Well, as surely as the person when the soul is separated from the body is dead, literally by nature we are dead to God.
[8:16] We are dead to the claims of God. We have forsaken God. We come short in all things.

We come short of his glory. And also some people would have us believe you see that faith is as some say faith is a leap in the dark.
Well, I cannot think of anything that is more contrary to the word of God than to speak of saving faith as a leap in the dark.
Surely if we believe with a natural faith if we believe that the weather is going to change tomorrow or we believe that something is going to happen to that person or that this or that or the other person we must have some knowledge.
We must have some evidence. We must be convinced by the evidence revealed to us before we can believe.
[9:39] That is to say faith is not without knowledge and saving faith is certainly without knowledge because it is a living faith and to know God and Jesus Christ this is life life eternal and the faith of which our text speaks is therefore we believe a living faith.

Now there are many types of faith or religions in the world I am not going to enlarge but simply to say that there are only in the highest sense two kinds of faith a faith that is dead or the faith that is a living faith and the apostle and the apostle and interprets and differentiates between the faith that is dead and the faith that is a living faith if we but read from the second chapter of his epistle and the 18th verse down to the end that faith without works is dead now then let us examine our own faith how did we first come to believe that
Christ is the savior of our souls I am speaking specifically just now to Christians how did we come to believe well the gospel we read is the power of God and to salvation we hear people describing their conversion in this way it reminds me of a godly man I heard many years ago telling of his conversion and he was a simple man and yet there was a lot of sense in what he said he was telling us that there was a day in my experience and it was to my knowledge the darkest day that I ever knew and I was constrained he said to enter into my closet and he went on to tell us that it was an old thatched cottage this was assumed and there was nothing very beautiful about these houses and he said
I was constrained he said to cry out to God for mercy and it seemed to me that a man spoke to me and when he spoke to me it seemed to me that he came to be a man that the word which he spoke came to stand beside me and I saw the words as if a man stood beside and he has never left me yet he is my friend and I always speak to him and I always find comfort and consolation in him that is how he described his conversion now the Bible tells us that Christ is the eternal word that the word was made flesh that he dwelt among us and that those who are the Lord's redeemed they saw his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the father full of grace and truth they came to believe now the question is what is the foundation of our faith well surely the foundation of the faith of the elect of
God can be none other than the person and the work the eternal person and the finished work of Christ Jesus this is the sure the surest foundation it is a foundation which is different from many other foundations on which we may rest of faith it is the foundation of which Paul speaks when he

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tells us in the second chapter of the epistle to the Galatians he loved me and gave himself for me is that the foundation of your own faith is it the foundation of mine well unless and except this is the foundation of our faith we are still destitute of the faith once delivered unto the saints let a man examine himself examine yourself whether you are in the faith can you really say that [15:17] Christ is precious to you can you say that there is none other foundation on which you rest your soul but the foundation that he loved us and that he loves us and that he gave himself for us and how did we come to rest our salvation on the person and the finished work of Christ well he is God manifested in the flesh and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal the Christ of God it is he the comforter it is he who works in the heart who reveals Christ who enables the sinner to imprison that is the Lord Jesus as he is freely offered in the gospel is this the foundation of our faith now what again is the nature of our faith

Paul exalts the Colossians to set their affections on the things which are above and not on the things which are here below on this earth the child of God is a spiritual man you see his his mind has been enlightened in the knowledge of Christ and he is exercised in his mind in relation to eternity and to the things of eternity to the things of the spirit of God so that the nature of the believer's faith is a spiritual nature his mind and heart operates as it were in the spiritual kingdom of Christ he sees things in a different way to the way in which he saw before he came to believe in Christ he finds and feels himself a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth but apart from that that is true of everyone we are all pilgrims and sojourners in this world but moreover the child of God you see he has a desire his desire is for another country that is the heavenly country and he is united by faith to the Lord in the church he is united to other believers and when it pleases God to separate them from those to whom they are united and let us remember it is a faith which worketh by love when this union is broken by death then their thoughts go out to that place which the Lord has prepared for his people and they think of the things of eternity very often more so than they think of the things of time that is the nature of their faith but this faith also has a role different to any other faith and I am sure that you will all agree with me when I say that the role of the believer's faith is the only role which God has given us that is his own word it's our only role of faith and manners and so as there is such a thing as growth in grace the disciples prayed for an increase in faith and as our faith grows then we make the word of God more so than perhaps before that is as our faith grows so we come to realize more and more that the word of God is the only role of faith to put in another way you see a person who is quickened by the Holy Spirit is a living person he has feelings feelings that he never had before or she had before and there is a tendency for the believer to give way to their feelings and often they do but they realize more and more that the role of faith can only be the word of God and so they do not then give such a place to their feelings as they grow in faith they come to realize that their experience must be proved and tested by the teaching of [21:16] God's word that faith rests on God's testimony or on divine testimony and any other revelation out with that which God has been pleased to give us in his word is irrelevant and without foundation revelation now this faith cannot but bear fruit because it is written that without holiness we cannot see the Lord and holiness means it means among other things to be holy unto the Lord is to love the Lord with all our hearts and souls and minds and our neighbor as ourselves

I cannot understand I cannot see perhaps others can how can anyone divorce or separate holiness unto the Lord from that love which we have mentioned for after all this is how we fulfill the law of God this is the whole law and to love is to care to be concerned to be burdened in a spiritual sense bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and it is managed to find as the catechism tells us to glorify God and to enjoy him forever we ask ourselves then the question whether we have this faith and then we seek to examine ourselves to examine ourselves by faith how else can we examine ourselves but by faith when faith alone the faith of which we spoke of is that which pleases God now it is possible for the Christian to examine himself for as we read and sung together in the 139 Psalm he here is one whom the Lord himself has examined and proved he has searched and proved there was no doubt in the psalmist mind about this when he prayed to God that he would search and examine and prove it because we have the person who believes is the person who knows himself as a sinner before God as we mentioned this morning the prodigal came to himself and the believer examining himself whether he is in the faith he cannot do so out with the word of

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God believing that the Bible not only contains the word of God but that the Bible is the word of God and he must if he is to fulfill this duty of examining himself he must prove his own self he must prove his own work in the light of the role of faith namely the word of God for the heart of man is deceitful it is more wicked than any man can ever realize and only God knows the heart of man and we are reminded by the Lord himself to judge not because we are duty bound to judge or to examine ourselves it is examining our own spirits to say it is examining first of all what it says to serve the Lord we are here gathered together in the attitude of worship as the question arises are we gathered together in the name of the Lord first we all know that preparation is necessary for whatever we seek to do in this world when you get up in the morning you must prepare yourself for the day's work you put on different clothes from the clothes you wore when you were in bed the same thing applies when you go to bed at night when you go on a journey you prepare for that journey in various ways and so life then is a preparation for eternity and to examine ourselves is to prepare ourselves for whatever duty lies ahead of us and this was commanded by the
[27:32] Lord himself in relation to his supper examine yourself and so eat and without this preparation then we may eat and drink condemnation to ourselves not discerning the Lord's body but you will recall that in the first epistle of Corinthians especially in chapter 3 the apostle writing there to the Corinthians he reminds me of the first chapter that there were divisions among them they were not united in the faith as they ought to have been and in the third chapter he calls them carnal are you not carnal he says I cannot speak to you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal even as unto babes in

Christ and he goes on to explain the carnality of the Corinthians for while one saith I am of Paul and another I am of Apollos are you not carnal who then is Paul and who is Apollos but ministers by whom ye believed even as the Lord gave to every man how different the spirit of first Corinthians to that of Paul when he writes to the Galatians he says God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and again writing to the Corinthians he that glorious let him glory in the Lord therefore let us examine ourselves and see as to whether we really honor and glory in the cross or whether we are glorified in other things let us examine what motivates us you see there are I believe two classes of Christians there are those who are more spiritually minded than others and I think that perhaps the distinction comes to light in relation to Abraham and Lot now they were both redeemed sinners but we read of Abraham that he was strong in faith giving glory to God I have never read this of Lord although he was a believer and in the 19th chapter of Genesis and first in the 18th chapter the Lord appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day now this perhaps typifies or symbolizes what we have been trying to establish that
Abraham was of a different spirit to Lord he was waiting on the Lord and he recognized and acknowledged the Lord when he lifted his eyes and the three men stood by and he sat in the tent door and the tent signifies the pilgrim spirit and sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day it speaks to us of a man who was burdened a man who was concerned and this is the difference then between Abraham and Lord who when two angels came Lord said unto them and he said behold now my Lord but when Abraham addressed the tree it wasn't the plural used but the singular and said my
Lord if now I have found favor in thy sight pass not away I pray thee from thy servant and where do we find Lord well we find him in the gates of Sodom we find Abraham in the plains of Mam now the gate was the place where the judges met in the evening this was the custom to judge and criticize the inhabitants of the town or the village and you see there are Christians who are too apt to find fault with others but they never seem to find fault with themselves or anything they seek to do they are continually happy in justifying themselves and in condemning others now this shows that they are not exercised in relation to the truth to the doctrines of the faith it teaches us that being of such a spirit we are not examining ourselves to see as to whether we are in the faith proving to ourselves we must examine ourselves must examine our repentance our obedience and all we do in the name of the
[33:35] Lord we must ask ourselves the question whether our greatest and deepest desire is to honour Christ to seek the good of our fellows are we constrained to pray for the salvation of never dying souls now faith has its seat in the heart and it is the heart that God requires us he says son give me your heart prove to ourselves whether we are in a situation or in a position to sit at the Lord's table that is it does not mean to say that we are not fit to come to the

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Lord's table when we feel utterly unfit ourselves and unworthy to do so that is clear evidence very often of one's fitness and worthiness to sit at the Lord's table when we are convinced in the light of the teaching of the word of God that we are utterly unfit and unworthy this was the testimony of Jeremiah of old it is he said of the Lord's mercies that we are it is of the Lord's mercies that we are here today it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not cast aside utterly and forever it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions they fail not they are new every morning and can we really say that we examine ourselves and prove to ourselves that of ourselves we can do nothing that is acceptable to God do we really believe what Christ tells us in the fifth chapter of the gospel of John without me ye can do nothing and I remember reading or hearing of the godly Dr.
Duncan or Robbie Duncan that he said concerning this verse that for him it was the most difficult verse to understand in the whole Bible without me he can do nothing we must always come as it were Asperger's to the foot of the cross Moses tells us that this is where they sit they sit at thy feet and there they receive of thy words let us then examine ourselves the work of faith is to search and to time it is to turn to the Lord you will remember that woman with the issue of blood she had consulted many physicians over many years but she finally knew that there was no help or hope for her in any of them so she came to the
Lord and she knew that if she could but only touch the hem of his garment she would be made whole you see that is the function of faith it is coming to the Lord it is as it were refusing to be refused when we examine ourselves we cannot but cast our burdens on the Lord our hope and confidence is in him alone and I shall conclude shortly now if we really examine ourselves we have we must have the evidence of self examination and perhaps the best evidence is to seek above all else to be found in
[38:39] Christ not having your own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith this is proving to ourselves that Christ is in us as our hope for glory that he is in us by his word and spirit and the question then arises do we love Christ more than we love ourselves the question was asked of Peter do you love me more than thee more than what or who more I believe not only than the disciples but more than the boards more than everything do we love Christ more than wife or father or mother well the

Bible exhorts us to hate but of course that does not mean to hate them in the sense in which we think of hatred but it means that we must love Christ more than we love anyone else and this is what we have to prove to ourselves and I believe the church had no difficulty in knowing that she loved Christ more than anything or anyone when she could say my beloved is mine and I am his the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely one may he be so to each and all of us here now and always let us pray O Lord our gracious
God we give thee thanks for thy mercy in Christ Jesus and we thank thee O Lord that not withstanding our shortcomings our forgetfulness of thee we can come to thee with boldness and we can attain to the assurance by thy grace that thou wilt provide for us according to thine own will and Lord grant them that we may be found waiting on thee and acknowledging thee in all our ways believing that thou wilt direct our paths for we ask it with forgiveness in all our sins in Jesus name and for his sake Amen

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