

A TEST NO ONE WANTS TO FAIL II Corinthians 13:5-6

“5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you...unless indeed you fail the test? 6 But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.”

Yourself (vs. 5)...is *emphatic*. It's *yourself*, not others, whom you should *examine*.

Fail the test (vs. 5)...*Not members* of the *household of faith*.

Three Key Misunderstands Regarding Salvation:
Matthew 7

1. That there are many ways that lead to salvation.

The Narrow and Wide Gates...Matthew 7:13-14

13 “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.”

~I Timothy 2:5-6

“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

~Acts 4:12

“Jesus said... ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me’.”

~John 14:6

2. That there are many false teachers and false teachings that deceive.

A Tree and Its Fruit...Matthew 7:15-20

15 “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So then, you will know them by their fruits.

3. That works can earn salvation.

Zealous Religious Activity...Matthew 7:21-23

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’

“...Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”

~I Peter 1:18-19

The Rich Young Ruler...Matthew 19; Mark 10; Luke 18.

Not saved by good works...saved for good works!

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BE TRULY BORN AGAIN...

Those legitimately *born again* are *indwelt by the Holy Spirit* (**John 3:5**). What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit living within us? Fundamentally, it means that *the Holy Spirit is communicating a conviction about Christ's moral beauty... His character, holiness, and integrity...to the eyes and ears of our hearts*. This communication has four important distinctives.

- First, is *a growing conviction (evidence) of faith*.
- Second, *a new and changed heart* (not the *head*).
- Third, *a hunger for the Word of God*. The *knowledge of truth* communicated is *a growing grasp of Christ's moral and spiritual goodness*.
- Fourth, the effect is *changed behavior motivated by a growing desire to be holy as God is holy*.

1. Have You Experienced Real Conviction?

First, is a growing conviction of faith. Remember, “*Faith is...the evidence (or conviction) of things not seen*” (**Hebrews 11:1**). *True faith* empowers us to increasingly see *truth through God's eyes*...from a divine perspective. We “*taste and see that the Lord is good*” (**Psalms 34:8**). *New birth* equips us to increasingly *discern, know, and experience* spiritual truth. The primary way we *taste* is through *conviction...our faith*.

The thought that God *loves* me, even in this *condition*, overwhelms me. The result is a *new, deeper conviction* about the *depth* of God's *love* and *mercy*. My soul soars in *gratitude*, and I feel a heightened desire to *serve* and *live* for God.

This is what takes place when the Holy Spirit speaks to us. We *see spiritual truth* with *God's eyes*, and *conviction* and *faith* is always a byproduct.

Many have experienced similar encounters with God. It can take place while *reading Scripture*, *listening* to a *sermon*, or just *living everyday life*. To the degree that this communication happens, everything changes.

2. Has Something Happened in Your Heart?

The location of this interaction with God is the heart, not simply the mind. In the work of *sanctification*, God *never bypasses the mind (renewed mind)*. The *intellect* is *crucial*. Although the *conviction* that *points to new birth* passes through the mind, however, it *occurs in the heart*. “*With the heart one believes and is justified*” (**Romans 10:10**). Charles Spurgeon noted that...“*Faith is the candlestick which holds the candle by which the chamber of the heart is enlightened.*”

We use the expression “*from the heart*” to describe something done *sincere* and with *enthusiasm* and *joy*... something done because we want to. By contrast, we say “*my heart wasn't in it*” to describe behavior done strictly from a *sense of duty*. Although some *duty* always characterizes Christianity, fundamentally it is a *heart* religion.

Before conversion, our hearts might be into *material wealth, popularity, entertainment, or career success*. *After* conversion, we are increasingly into God Himself (not just His gifts). *Increasingly*, He becomes our *heart's delight*. John Bunyan described the Holy Spirit's *heart conviction* as God *branding our hearts* with a *hot iron*.

3. Do You Have A Hunger For God's Word? *Is Christ more and more precious and glorious?* (John 1:1, 14)

You cannot have a *conviction* about the *moral beauty*, the *utter glory* and *trustworthiness* of Christ, without the *inward presence* of the Holy Spirit.

That is why Paul described new birth as the shining forth of “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” in our hearts (II Corinthians 4:6). It is a *growing heart* conviction that God's Word is *truth*, that He can be *trusted*, that I can *spend my life* in His *service* and will *not be disappointed*. This conviction about God's *goodness* frees me to take the *risks* that always accompany *obedience*. It is a down payment on our *eternal inheritance* (Ephesians 1:13–14).

The more we gaze at the *light* of God's Word, the *brighter* it gets. For example, at conversion my knowledge of God's *glory* was *basic*. I trusted that God *forgave my sin* and *loved* me. Over the years, however, God has increasingly *turned that light up*. It now includes the *excellence* of His *justice*, the *depth* of His *righteousness*, and the *majesty* of His *sovereignty*. With each communication, the capacity to *delight in His goodness* has grown, and *joyful obedience* has increasingly followed.

4. Has Believing in Christ Changed You?

This transformation has one consistent effect: it motivates us to be like Christ in holiness and righteousness. New birth and spiritual fruit cannot be separated.

Our hearts cannot feel a growing conviction about “*the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” and not long to imitate what we see. This is what **Paul** meant when he also wrote, “*We all, with unveiled face, beholding the*

glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (II Corinthians 3:18). We will *always imitate* the *object* of our *worship*. That is why **John** inexorably *connects new birth* with a *changed way of life*. “*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers*” (I John 3:14).

Am I Truly Changed?

Tragically, some *legitimately born again* will hear this and *doubt their salvation*. That is *not my intention*. It is possible for us to *experience assurance* that we have been born again. Do you *love* and *trust* Christ *more today* than *ten years ago*? Yes, I know you have doubts. All Christians do at one time or another. But has your view of Christ changed? Do you increasingly want to *imitate* Him? Has He become the *treasure* in the field for which you would *sell everything* (Matthew 13:44)?

Second, are you *changing*? I'm not asking if you are *perfect*, but are you changing? “*You may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him*” (I John 2:29). Do you *handle your money*, your *time*, and your *gifts* differently? Is your *speech* becoming more godly? Are you more willing to *forgive*, to *love* an enemy, to *push yourself out of your comfort zone*? Are you changing how you *relate to your spouse*? Your *roommate*? Your *parents*?

“*No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God*”

~I John 3:9

Third, there will be a *spiritual oxymoron*. People born of God feel *increasingly* (and *joyfully*) *unworthy*. They *feel their sin more acutely*, and therefore are *more dependent* upon Christ and His *grace*. That is because their *knowledge* of Christ's *perfections grows much faster* than their *ability to change*. Even though they are *forgiven* and *growing* in Christ, the *contrast* makes them feel increasingly *unworthy*.

Born Again for Good Works

From the data gathered from his many surveys, George Barna concludes that when “*evaluating fifteen moral behaviors, [those who profess to be] born-again Christians are statistically indistinguishable from non-born-again adults.*”

This will not be true of those who possess the *reality* of *new birth*. Just the opposite...they will *increasingly enjoy* communion with God. And a believer enjoying this communion will begin to change. “*Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world*” (1 John 5:4). That is because God saves purposefully. “*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them*” (Ephesians 2:10).

When the Holy Spirit *indwells* us, He communicates a *growing conviction* about Christ's *moral goodness* to the eyes and ears of our *heart*, and it *slowly changes* everything. John Hannah writes in To God Be the Glory, “*The core of conversion, is the gift from God of a new indwelling principle in the heart of mankind. That principle is the very life of God; it is the love of God. This alone is the ground of true virtue and morality and is the exclusive means for glorifying God.*”