

Sunday, June 26, 2016

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

We have a duty to examine and prove ourselves, whether we be in the faith. It is a thing of utmost interest and importance to people who have made a profession of faith. The question is, “Am I really saved? Or have I deceived myself?” And hence we have admonitions like the verse above, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10) and “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). “With fear and trembling” means we should not be boastful or presumptuous in this matter of salvation:

“But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” (1 Corinthians 9:27)

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12)

However, I would like to have full assurance of hope and faith (Hebrews 6:11, 10:22) in my own heart that I am not the man who shows up to the wedding without a wedding garment (Matthew 22:8-13). I know our lives are filled with times of doubt and even despair, and we can all relate to, and probably spend a good amount of time in the same state as, the father of the son who had a dumb spirit: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” (Mark 9:24). But I want to prove myself and have some level of confidence within myself so that I can join my brethren and say “I KNOW whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12), “we KNOW that we have passed from death unto life” (1 John 3:14), “we KNOW that we are of the truth” (1 John 3:19), “we KNOW that he abideth in us” (1 John 3:24), “we KNOW that we dwell in Him” (1 John 4:13), “we KNOW that we are of God” (1 John 5:19), and “I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25). This is a work that we are called to do diligently; it is not a one time event, but rather is a way of life. The dictionary defines diligent as “constant in effort to accomplish something; attentive and persistent in doing anything; done or pursued with persevering attention; painstaking.” This is how we’re supposed to make our calling and election sure.

To “prove” is to put it to the test. When he went up against Goliath, David had not proved the armor so he refused to go fight with it (1 Samuel 17:39) – he saw it, he wore it, he gird his sword upon it, but he hadn’t put it to the test yet. One of the commentators says that you don’t prove an axe by looking at it, or reading about it – you take it out into the woods and you use it to chop wood. If it chops wood, and it doesn’t break or dull quickly, then you have yourself a good axe. Likewise, we have to put ourselves to the test. And of course, the standard for examination is Scripture. Evidence of being saved is not some subjective feeling

that you have. There are practical, observable signs and fruit, and we find those things in Scripture.

There is a lot of Scripture on this subject, but in today's sermon, I'm going to focus on 1 John. John is a very clear writer – he tells us why he's writing to us. Among other reasons for writing his epistle, he gives us this one:

**“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”
(1 John 5:13)**

Before I get into this, I'd like to get a few things straight up front.

1. I am not introducing a doctrine of works righteousness. As I discussed in my last sermon, being born again is 100% a work of God. If you're saved, then you have been regenerated (Titus 3:4-7), you are led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14), and God has changed your heart to WANT to follow Him. “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10). Good works are the result, not the cause, of being saved. There is quite a chasm between being forced to do a work, and wanting to do a work. Only you know in your heart of hearts if you want to do something. As I go through this sermon, keep in mind that if the “want to” isn't there, that should be a major cause for concern.
2. I am not introducing a doctrine of sinless perfection. (Sinless perfection is a heresy that teaches that you can attain moral perfection in this life, that is, that you cease to sin while you are alive on earth). Your sanctification will not be complete in this world, because there will always be a fight between the spirit and the flesh – “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Galatians 5:17). But if you look over the course of your whole life, after you've been saved, there should be some discernable progress: “But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” (Proverbs 4:18). Remember the sermon we heard a few weeks ago about the gradual enlightenment of the elect. Sometimes you'll see this referred to as “progressive sanctification.” You become more and more sanctified as you grow in the Lord, but we don't become sinless while we're alive on earth.
3. I am not introducing a doctrine of free will. It is our job to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, but the reason that we are supposed to do that is given in the very next verse: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13). You have to understand that the only way we can do the work is because God is working in us both to will and do of His good pleasure.

So, in 1 John, I've pulled out a few major things that should give us evidence that our calling and election is sure, which we should diligently, constantly, painstakingly examine in ourselves.

Walking in the Light

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:5-7)

“Light” is a common metaphor in Scripture. It is often compared to darkness, as it is here. When we see light vs. darkness, we think of good vs. evil; purity, holiness and righteousness vs. sin; wisdom and understanding vs. ignorance; clarity vs. obscurity, etc. One nuance of this metaphor that has eluded me in the past is that “being light” means that He is knowable. He has revealed Himself both in nature, and in His Word, so that the people in this earth are without excuse (Romans 1:20, 2 Peter 1:19). And He has, in a special way, revealed Himself to His people, while simultaneously blinding wicked men (1 John 5:20, Matthew 11:25).

When we say that we have fellowship with God, that means that we claim to be saved. We profess that we have communion with Him, we are His followers, and we are partakers of His gifts. You can't be claiming that you have fellowship with God if you are walking in darkness. This is the state of nearly 100% of so-called Christians. They walk in proud sin, and they walk in proud ignorance of what the Bible teaches, all while claiming to be in fellowship with God. They are liars.

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is because there is no light in them.*” (Isaiah 8:20)

Of course, a “walk” denotes your manner of life. It's not a one-time event. If you walk in darkness, the overall tenor of your life is evil. You might do something that looks like it might be good from time to time, but you're evil. If you walk in the light, the overall tenor of your life is good, by the grace of God. You still sin, and you might fall into grievous sin from time to time, but you are made just by God and you will be delivered. If you look at your life from the time that you've made a profession of faith to now, are you seeing that there has been a growing conformity to the will of God, an increase in spiritual light and knowledge, and an increase in love towards God and His people? Is your path actually like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day? (Proverbs 4:18). If so, this is evidence that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7).

Confessing our sins

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8-10)

To confess our sins is to acknowledge our sins, to be aware of our sins, to admit that we have sinned. The Greek word for “confess” is “homologeō” which literally means “to speak the same thing.” It means that you say that you agree with what God has said on the matter – that you have sinned, and that sin is a great evil.

If you want to see an example of Biblical confession, turn to Psalm 51. I’ll quote part of it:

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.” (Psalm 51:1-4)

And I would encourage you all to read the whole of that Psalm. You will see that David acknowledged and despised his sin, recognized that God was just and holy and it was David who had done wrong, and recognized that only God could cure his condition. Please note that David didn’t run from God – he ran to God.

Confession also isn’t a one-time event. It continues to be necessary through our whole lives. The more we spiritually mature and learn of the holiness of God, the more we realize how evil sin is, and how sinful we are, and our response becomes more and more filled with humility, repentance, mourning and contriteness.

We are called hypocrites because we preach against sin, while at the same time we confess that we are sinners. But there’s a difference between the two types of people. The natural man delights and rejoices in sinning. They “rejoice to do evil, *and* delight in the frowardness of the wicked.” (Proverbs 2:14). They find it hard to go to sleep at night unless they have engaged in some kind of mischief during the day (Proverbs 4:16), and when they wake the next morning they begin to practice the iniquity that they’ve devised while they were in bed (Micah 2:1). They are workers of iniquity, where their occupation is proud sin.

The spiritual man, on the other hand, has had his heart and affections changed by God. Sin is no longer delightful, and is no longer a cause for rejoicing and boasting. We now “hunger and

thirst after righteousness” (Matthew 5:6). We continue to struggle with the flesh vs. the spirit (Romans 7:13-25), and will continue that struggle, daily, until the day we die. If you can’t say the following with every fiber of your being, there’s something wrong:

**“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”
(Romans 7:24)**

But the fact that we struggle against sinning is not evidence against our faith – it rather confirms our faith. We may fall into grievous sin, but the fact that it is repugnant to us and we don’t desire to stay there long is evidence that our faith is real. The fact is, we can’t survive for long periods of time in habitual, proud sin (1 John 3:9).

“For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” (Proverbs 24:16).

So the question is, are you proud of your sins, whatever they may be, and making provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof (Romans 13:14)? Or are you confessing your sins? Remember, God will not despise a broken and contrite heart. (Psalm 51:17).

Keeping God’s Commandments, Doing Righteousness, and Purifying Yourself

**“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him... If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him... Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”
(1 John 2:3-4, 29; 3:2)**

You cannot run your mouth about being saved, and how faithful you think you are, if you are not going to follow the commandments of God, do righteousness, and purify yourself. You cannot be hearers and not doers (James 1:22). Again, good works are not the cause of being saved – they are the result. We have to be careful that we don’t go to the one extreme and become legalistic and start to believe that we have some works righteousness going on. We also have to be careful that we don’t go to the opposite extreme and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 1:4), thinking that because we’re saved, we can sin with abandon.

Paul tells us that we are justified by faith without works (Romans 3:28). He is addressing the cause of salvation. James tells us that we are justified by both works and faith (James 2:24).

He is addressing the result of salvation. You can't claim to be saved without the accompanying evidence of good works:

**“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”
(James 2:17-20)**

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” (Titus 1:16)

As mentioned earlier, God has changed our wills so that we WANT to follow His commandments. It's a great burden to a wicked man to follow the commandments of God, but for those people who are saved, “his commandments are not grievous.” (1 John 5:3).

Righteousness is a simple obedience to the moral law of God. It is a continuous action. Grace teaches us that we ought to live holy lives (Titus 2:11-12). Grace does not dethrone the Lord Jesus Christ and give us a license to sin – He is a King and He requires obedience: “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). And “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21). And like everything else, the more we are enlightened by God, the more we desire to be obedient, and the more we mourn over our disobedience.

This is very simple – one of the ways that you determine if you are a child of God or if you are a child of the devil is by examining your works. If you do righteousness, you are righteous, and are a child of God. If you do not do righteousness, you are not of God, and are a child of the devil. (1 John 3:7-10). So the question to ask yourself is, are you following the commandments of God and doing righteousness because you desire to, out of a fear of God and because you want to please Him? Or are you putting on a show because you believe that's what people expect to see? If you desire to, that is strong evidence that God has changed your heart and that you are saved. If you don't, you have either backslidden, or you were never saved in the first place.

Purifying yourself is a requirement. We are talking about the pursuit of being holy, chaste, godly. There should be a constant striving for it, and we desire it all the more when we consider the return of Christ and that “we shall be like Him.”

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.” (James 4:8).

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Note that this is a duty on our parts, but don't forget that the fountainhead of this is God. Compare Ezekiel 18:31 (“Make you a new heart and a new spirit”) to Ezekiel 36:26 (“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.”)

Walking As Christ Walked

“But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:5-6)

How is this, that we should walk as Christ walked? He was perfect, sinless, righteous, holy. How can we ever attain to that? Even so, we have commandments like this through scripture. “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16). “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48). Christ is our example of how we ought to behave. We should strive to follow His example. I don't think we do this well enough; I know I don't.

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” (1 Peter 2:21-24)

This is a weak metaphor, but consider a little boy who tries to imitate his father. He might try to walk, or act, or dress, like his father. He might try to do the things his father does. He'll never do it the same way, but nobody can question his earnest desire and sincerity in trying. Likewise, we should pattern our behavior and our thoughts after the example we see in Christ, and strive to walk as He walked. So the question here is, are you walking “according to the course of the world, according to the prince of the power of the air,” or are you walking as Christ walked? Are you seeking to imitate the world, or Christ? Do you look at your behavior compared to Christ's and find that to be a cause of shame and mourning, or does the thought never even cross your mind? Remember, we're not talking about sinless perfection here; but we need to continue to press on towards the mark:

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12-14)

Loving Our Co-elect

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.” (1 John 2:7-11)

This love here throughout 1 John is talking about our love of the brethren, and it is a major theme through the epistle. We frequently hear these verses being perverted, where the word “love” has been redefined to mean “tolerate, coddle, embrace and promote sin.” In other words, it’s been redefined to mean “hate.” There are other verses that talk about loving our enemies, but this is brotherly love here. No doubt that we are supposed to love our neighbor and our enemies, but this is a special love reserved for our co-elect. It is called both an old commandment and a new commandment. It’s an old commandment because it’s always been there. This isn’t some new thing that he’s talking about here. Love of God and love of our neighbor is the sum and substance of the law and prophets (Matthew 22:40). Here is one example from the Old Testament:

**“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I *am* the LORD.”
(Leviticus 19:17-18)**

It’s called a new commandment because it has been more perfectly revealed to us in Christ. We have a better understanding of God’s love, and how we ought to love one another, by seeing Christ:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:34-35)

This love of the brethren is not just some emotion, although nobody can deny that that’s part of it. But it has to be a practical love, that is, a love accompanied by actions. It requires work:

**“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”
(1 John 3:18)**

In order to do this, you actually have to enter into interpersonal relationships with the people of God. You have to know what’s going on with people, you have to know what needs people have, and you have to look for opportunities that will allow you to be a servant to them. You can’t show up to church every Sunday, but otherwise be a stranger, and have any legitimate claim to be following these commandments. If this is the state you’re currently in, you should be concerned and get down to business to change that. And I say all of this knowing that I’m not the most sterling example of this, and that I have much work to do here myself.

Ask yourself this question: who do you prefer to spend time with? Your coworkers? Your schoolmates? Or the people of God? Are you embarrassed or ashamed to be identified with the Lord’s people, or do you count it all joy to be associated with them, even if it means the world hates you?

“These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:17-19)

Not Loving The World and Overcoming The World

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever... For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith*. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 2:15-17; 5:4-5)

This is a scary thing here. It says if you love the world, and the things in the world, then the love of the Father is not in you. That means both that you don’t love God, and that He doesn’t love you. So please examine very carefully how you think about the world. Most so-called churches think that it’s a badge of honor to be worldly. They boast of it. They want to become relevant. They want to change as the world changes. They want to look like it. They want to sound like it. They want to be like it. And this is why the world hears them:

**“They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.”
(1 John 4:5)**

But the world hates the true churches of God (1 John 3:13), and we are called to “come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing” (2 Corinthians 6:17). That doesn’t mean that we are immune from being enticed by the world, but there should be an ever increasing disdain for the world, and a desire to be separate from the world. Those people who are truly saved will certainly overcome the world, because we are more than conquerors through Christ (Romans 8:37). He is not only the author but is also the finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), and the promise is that “he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:13). God is not going to work that supernatural work of the new birth, and then abandon us. It is not His will “that one of these little ones should perish.” (Matthew 18:14). He sends His Spirit to lead us, and to “bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” (Romans 8:12-17). The outcome is certain, because the same God that began a good work in us will finish that work, and do everything along the way to ensure that it is completed (Philippians 1:6). But all of that only applies to people who are truly saved. If your walk in life is desiring the world, and the things that are in the world, and longing after those things, then that is a problem. “Remember Lot’s wife.” (Luke 17:32). If you forsake God and His Church to pursue the world and the things that are in it, you are an antichrist, you are like a dog returning to his vomit and a sow returning to the wallowing in the mire, and you are giving evidence that you were never saved in the first place (1 John 2:18-19, 2 Peter 2:22). That doesn’t mean that God can’t recover such a person (and He certainly will for every one of His sheep, because not one will perish), but the evidence does not look good for you if that is your condition.

Now, this text in 1 John breaks the things that are in the world down into three categories: The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. I’ll go over these very briefly. The lust of the flesh is the wicked desires or cravings of your depraved nature. The natural man indulges his lust, but the man of God walks in the Spirit and “shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” and has crucified the world to himself (Galatians 5:16, 6:14). The lust of the eyes is referring to the fact that the things we see excite our lusts. Eve saw the tree and it was pleasant to the eyes (Genesis 3:6), Achan saw the accursed thing and coveted it (Joshua 7:20-21), David saw Bathsheba washing herself (2 Samuel 11:2), and all it takes to commit adultery is to look on a woman and lust after her (Matthew 5:28). This is why David said “I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes” (Psalm 101:3) and Job said “I made a covenant with mine eyes.” (Job 31:1). The pride of life is the vain boasting of your life, and all of those things in your life, as if you have achieved those things by your own vast wisdom and strength. “Look at all of the wonderful things that I have accomplished by my own hand” is the idea. “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God*: God *is* not in all his thoughts.” (Psalm 10:4). Every one of us is susceptible to being enticed to the world by these things.

Confessing Christ

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: *(but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also...* Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit of antichrist*, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world... Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God... If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” (1 John 2:22-23; 4:2-3,15; 5:9-12)

This is almost so basic and obvious that you might think that it doesn't even bear mentioning. But it is so easy for heresies to enter a church that is not on guard (and the world is not running low on strange heresies concerning Christ), and it is so easy for us to forget Christ. John felt it necessary to drive the point home again and again in this epistle. You must believe that Jesus is the Christ (that is, the Messiah), you must believe that He came in the flesh, you must believe that He is the Son of God. Pretty basic, foundational stuff. But when your sins become so important to you, and you become wise in your own conceit, suddenly you're smarter than God and you think you can change and remove this and every other ancient landmark. You can't just glibly say "oh yes, I believe He's God, and the Messiah, and He came in the flesh." You have to believe everything about Him – you don't get to just pick the parts you like. You have to believe in Him as the scripture portrays Him – you don't get to decide how you'd like Him to be and then proceed to believe in that perverse "god" that you've created in your own image. You have to believe all of His doctrines – again, you can't pick and choose just the ones you like.

Too many people have low thoughts of Christ, as if He's not worth our time. Please don't let Him become too common or ordinary in your heart.

Now, God has testified of His Son throughout all of the Scripture. Every day, we receive the testimony of men. The legal system of this country relies heavily on the testimony of men. We have to receive testimony of men in our jobs, in our schools, etc. We know men have evil hearts and are liars (Jeremiah 17:9, Psalm 58:3), but we receive their testimony anyway. How much more should we believe the testimony that God, who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18), has given of His Son in the Scripture? To doubt someone's honesty is an attack on his character

(think of how you feel if someone believes that you are a liar). How much worse is it to doubt God? We should (and do) believe it simply because God gave testimony of it. Noah believed and built the ark based solely on the testimony of God. Abraham believed that he would have a son in his old age based solely on the testimony of God. And we should likewise believe based solely on the testimony of God. We frequently run into people who say “I will not believe that unless I have proof”, and sometimes even good people fall into this sin (think of Thomas), but the Scripture generally doesn’t cater to such demands, with the message being “here is the testimony, believe it or perish” (John 3:16-18).

And what is the testimony? It can be summarized like this: “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John 5:11). Remember that the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:9), for eternity. Eternal life is not just a length of time, though; it is also characterized by an intimate knowledge of Christ:

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3)

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20)

“This life is in His Son,” meaning that it is exclusively in Him. Without Him, there is no salvation; there is no eternal life. (Acts 4:12, John 14:6, 1 Timothy 2:5). It’s not a joint effort between us and Him. So here, evidence of being saved is that we believe this testimony. We agree with it, we love it, and we protect it so we don’t pervert it. We have the written testimony, but we also have an inward testimony of the Spirit of God, and He has given us assurance that we are the sons of God, which He gives us to one degree or another at different times in our lives. We have an intimate knowledge of Christ, and are growing in that knowledge of Him on a daily basis. And the more we learn of Him and His attributes, His doctrines, His words, His providence, etc., the more we love Him. I said several sermons ago that there are people sitting in the pews today (and certainly people listening to or reading this on the Internet) that don’t have any interest whatsoever in Christ. So if you have gone down in the water and made a profession of faith, you should give all diligence to make sure you’re not one of those people.

I love you. Amen.

Lord’s Supper Scripture

Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Isaiah 52:13-15, 53:1-12; Psalm 22; Genesis 22:3-14; John 18-19.