

2 Corinthians 13:5-6

Tests of authentic faith

2 Corinthians 13

“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.”

Observations

1.

Paul cleverly ties the Corinthian’s authenticity to his own credibility as he defends his Apostleship.

*“You are examining me?
You should be looking at yourselves because it is your authenticity that is at stake. If I am not authentic then neither is your faith because your faith was birthed through my Apostolic ministry among you.”*

Observations

1.

Paul cleverly ties the Corinthian’s authenticity to his own credibility as he defends his Apostleship.

2.

**The question is raised -
What does it mean
to be a Christian?**

How do you
frame
the question?



Two different
responses!

The issue for some -

The issue for others -

*Christianity is defined by
your faith relationship
with God and eternity?*

*Christianity is defined by
the impact of your
actions on this world?*

Theological
eternity
“in Christ”

Sociological
this life
“a Christ follower”

Shift

The Gospel = The
teaching of Paul

*What glorifies Christ by
reconciling people
to God?*

Atonement

the word
of the cross

what you
believe



The Gospel = The
teaching of Jesus

*What glorifies God by
promoting the values
of His Kingdom?*

Incarnation

the way
of the cross

how you
behave



Some signs and implications of this shift

1. **Certain things are MINIMIZED.**
 - distinction between “saved” and “lost.”
 - the offense of the Cross.
 - the offense of personal sin and guilt.
 - the Word of the Cross in Paul’s Gospel.
 - the 1st commandment.
 - exposition of Scripture to & for believers.
 - exclusive nature of Christian community.
2. **Certain things become EMPHASIZED.**
 - selective reading of O.T. Prophets and Gospels.
 - outreach through community service
 - social justice and reform

Why the Shift?

Pragmatism

- Down play the “offensive” parts of the faith.
- Reaffirm a common ground with the world.
- Affirm the dignity of those outside the faith.
- Bring people back to the church.

Embarrassment

- Reaction to faith without faithfulness in the church.
- Desire to change the image of “Christian culture.”
- Revive attention to the teaching of Jesus.

What is the necessary object of saving faith?

Jesus Christ (The Son of God, Messiah) **God** (who can be called by many names)

2 Timothy 3:15

“and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is **in Christ Jesus.**”

What is the necessary content of saving faith?

Atoning sacrifice on the Cross, and Resurrection of Christ **The ethics of the Kingdom as modeled and taught by Jesus.**

I Corinthians 15: 1-8

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ **died for our sins** in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was **raised** on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,”

What is the nature of saving faith?

Heart felt inner commitment to the Word of the Cross **Heart felt behavioral commitment to the way of the Jesus**

Romans 10:9-10

“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for **with the heart a person believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

What is the necessary expression of saving faith?

Repentance (from a false hope, confession, baptism) **Repentance (from a self-centered life style)**

Acts 2:38-39

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.’”

What is the relationship between faith & faithfulness?

Faithfulness is distinct from as well as the fruit of authentic faith.

Faithfulness is the flip side of authentic faith.

Ephesians 2

“⁸ For it is by **grace you have been saved, through faith** — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

John 3

“¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life**. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Some observations

1. The Gospel was about **eternal life not social reform**.
2. The issue was **faith not faithfulness**.
3. The object of faith was **Christ not God in general**.
4. Christianity is **exclusive not inclusive of everyone no matter what their faith**.
5. Judgment is real and on the basis of **faith not works**.
6. **Paul’s emphasis** is not surprising or unbalanced.

Lessons

1. **Avoid toxic extremes and defensiveness.**
 - Don’t pit **Jesus** against **Paul**.
 - Don’t pit **faith** against **faithfulness**.
 - Don’t pit **personal** against **social** ethics.
 - Don’t pit the **1st commandment** against the **2nd**.
2. **Seek Christ** with a view to know & follow his Spirit, values, and purposes as explained and modeled by the Apostles.
3. **Read the Scripture with care.**
 - **Context** - cultural, theological, literary.
 - **Emphasis** - major / minor, argument.
 - **Listen** to others who have studied it.
 - **Consistency** - don’t “cherry pick” only the texts that fit your system.

4. The church service should be -

- ministering to the spiritual health of **believers**.
 - **sensitive** to those outside the faith.
 - respecting **all the seasons** of life in worship.
 - adopt worship language that is sensitive to the **diverse styles** of believers.
 - focused on **Jesus**, the King and His Kingdom.
5. **The church’s purpose.**
- Adapt a **philosophy of ministry** that respects the whole Body of Christ, the whole purpose of God, and the whole counsel of Scripture.
 - To become a **responsive, maturing**, Bride to Christ.

What should a healthy church provide?

