

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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Considering Ourselves

Regardless of what we do in life or how hard and rigorously we serve God; regardless of how many good works we amass, we cannot earn our way to heaven. If there is something that we can all agree on, it is that we are saved by grace. As a result, we have no right to boast about salvation. Paul said, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith" (Romans 3:27). Boasting about salvation is foolish since salvation is something given by grace rather than earned by meritorious works.

While we are saved by grace through faith, there is a type of work that plays a part in determining whether we enter into and maintain our fellowship with God (Philippians 2:12; Acts 2:40). The work under consideration is the work of faith, and works of faith are essential to salvation (James 2:17-26). Furthermore, we must accomplish this work for ourselves. Some day we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of our own works (Romans 14:11-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Clearly, the religion of our Lord is a religion that involves personal obligation. We must, from time to time, consider ourselves if we want to meet that obligation. In the rest of this article, let's consider self.

Self-Examination

When we start considering the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged, inventory of self is crucial. Paul said, "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). The faith mentioned in this verse is equivalent to the gospel. One should examine himself to be sure that he has properly obeyed the gospel, i.e., that he is in the faith. The gospel is God's plan of salvation (Romans 1:16), and there are specific requirements involved in obeying the gospel. One must first hear the gospel and believe its message concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Then God requires one to repent, confess, and be baptized for the remission of sins. Have you taken those steps? That is what the Lord requires of one to get into the faith.

Once we obey the gospel, we must walk in the light of God's word (1 John 1:7). The faithful child of God is the obedient child of God. One can leave the faith if he so chooses (1 Timothy 4:1-3). In fact, it is possible to leave the faith without even realizing that it is happening (Hebrews 2:1). This is why self-examination is so important. It is often the first step back to God when one falls (Luke 15:17). Also, we should always keep in mind that the Bible is the standard by which we should examine self (John 12:48).

Self-Denial

Jesus often spoke of self-denial. He knew that being a follower of Him would demand such. "If any man will come after me, let him, deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Jesus has a right to demand this of us, not just because He is the Son of God, but because of His own self-denial. Jesus gave up the riches of heaven so that we, in time, might experience those same riches (2 Corinthians 8:9). He suffered on Calvary's cross for no other reason than to condemn sin (our sin) and secure for us the hope of eternal life. As Paul put it, Jesus "pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me" (Romans 15:3). In view of this, does Jesus not have the right to demand some self-denial of his disciples? Of course He does! Self-denial, though, is just that — self denial. Jesus demands that we deny ourselves if we are to follow Him, but He will not force us to do it. We must enforce it ourselves. Friends can't make us do it. Family can't make us do it. We must see the value and importance, as well as the Christlikeness, of self-denial, and then implement it into our lives.

Self-Control

One of the great problems with our society today is the lack of self-control. The result of this is clearly seen. Teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, profanity, and adultery are just a few of the self-indulgent behavioral problems that plague this country. People now believe that there is no need for self-control. "If it feels good, do it" is the prevailing attitude among kids and adults alike. Nevertheless, as Christians we must be different. Do not conform to the world is the exhortation of the Spirit (Romans 12:2). Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection" (1 Corinthians 9:27). The words "I keep under" describes the rigid self-discipline imposed by Paul on himself. He exercised a great deal of temperance in his life because he did not want his salvation to slip away.

We too should exercise temperance. Peter said that temperance is one of the things that we should add to our faith (2 Peter 1:6). This characteristic is essential because Satan is real, and he is always on the attack. We are all going to be tempted by our adversary from time to time. Self-control, then, is necessary for our spiritual survival. As Paul before us, we must bring ourselves into subjection.

Self-Deception

The last self we want to discuss is one from which we should want to stay away. It is self-deception. There are many who are walking down a path that is leading to destruction, yet they think they are heading towards glory. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of

death” (Proverbs 14:12). This confusion is caused by deception — self-deception. Some deceive themselves into thinking they are right with God even though they do not live by the Word of God (James 1:22). Others deceive themselves into thinking they are saved even though they are involved in a lifestyle that is displeasing to God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Still others deceive themselves into thinking they are in good standing with God even though they sow to the flesh instead of the Spirit (Galatians 6:7-8). Do not allow yourself to be self-deceived. Take inventory of your life regularly to make sure that you are going down the narrow road that leads to eternal life.

What is your condition before God? Remember, where you spend eternity doesn’t depend on what your mother, father, sister, or brother does, but on what you do and how you live. We will all give account of ourselves someday.

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