Primary Text – 2 Corinthians 13:5 (ESV):

> “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”

Understanding the Verse:

In this verse, the Apostle Paul urges the Corinthian believers to carry out a *self-assessment* of their spiritual condition—to determine whether they are truly “in the faith.” The phrase *“unless indeed you fail to meet the test”* (ESV) is a serious warning that some may profess faith outwardly, yet lack a genuine inward transformation a personal relationship with Christ.

This “test” is not simply about behavior but about the reality of Christ dwelling within (cf. *Romans 8:9*). If Jesus Christ is not in you, you are not truly saved regardless of outward religious

activity.

Theological Background:

Justification vs. Sanctification:

Justification is the act of God declaring a sinner righteous through faith in Christ (Romans 5:1). It happens once.

Sanctification, however, is the ongoing process of growing in holiness and being conformed to Christ (Philippians 2:12–13; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Paul’s command to “examine yourselves” pertains to sanctification evidence of the new life in Christ. This is not about working for salvation, but working from salvation. True saving faith will inevitably bear fruit (James 2:17).

Assurance of Salvation:
Paul’s statement assumes that assurance of salvation is possible, but not automatic. Christians are called to self-reflection, not self-condemnation (Romans 8:1). Assurance grows as we walk in

obedience and see the Spirit’s fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22–23).

Christ in You – The Hope of Glory:
Paul’s test hinges on whether “Jesus Christ is in you” (cf. *Colossians 1:27*). This indwelling presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit is the defining mark of a true believer (Romans 8:9–11).

What Does “Failing the Test” Mean?
The Greek word for *“fail the test”* or *“disqualified”* (ἀδόκιμος – *adokimos*) refers to something proven false, counterfeit, or rejected after testing (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:27). In this context, it’s about not standing up under scrutiny lacking genuine saving faith, which may be revealed through ongoing disobedience or hypocrisy.

Illustration: Like Learning to Ride a Bicycle

Think of a child learning to ride a bike. In the beginning, they may use training wheels to stay upright. While it looks like they can ride, they’re still relying on external support. The real test comes when those training wheels are removed. If they fall, it shows

they weren’t ready yet.

Similarly, in your Christian walk, you may initially depend on others your pastor, a prayer partner, reminders to read Scripture, etc. That’s part of growth. But over time, your faith must stand on its own. When no one’s watching, when no one reminds you *do you still pursue God?*

That’s what it means to examine yourself.

Practical Signs of a Genuine Faith:

You pursue God in prayer and Scripture, even when no one prompts you (Matthew 6:6).

Your life bears the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23).

You hate sin and seek to repent, even of secret sins (Psalm 139:23–24).

Your conduct is Christlike both inside and outside of church (Philippians 1:27).

You love other believers and grow in humility and holiness (1 John 3:14; Hebrews 12:14).

Ask yourself:
How do I behave when I’m alone?
What kind of content do I consume online?
Who influences my heart and mind?
Am I motivated by love for Christ or just trying to please others?

These are the kinds of questions that help you *“test yourself”* in light of Scripture.

Clarifying a Common Misunderstanding:

The phrase *“unless you fail the test”* does not mean that God has predestined certain people to be rejected no matter what they do. The Bible clearly teaches that God desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). No one who genuinely seeks God with a repentant heart will be turned away (John 6:37).

Failing the test means you have not yet surrendered your life fully

to Christ, or you’re living in self-deception thinking you’re right with God, when your life bears no evidence of true transformation. But even then, grace is still extended. The call is not to despair, but to repent and believe afresh.

Final Encouragement:

If your faith only functions when someone else is pushing you along, that’s a sign it’s time to grow. Christian maturity is about becoming spiritually self-disciplined not independent of God, but independent of constant human supervision.

So take Paul’s words seriously, not as condemnation, but as an invitation to deeper intimacy with Christ. Let your relationship with God be real, rooted, and resilient able to stand firm even when no one else is watching.

God bless you as you.

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