

Men's Bible Study – Book of James

Chapter 2

Little overview not only is the mature Christian patient in testing (James 1), but he also practices the truth. This is the theme of James 2. **Immature people talk about their beliefs, but the mature person lives his faith.** Hearing God's Word (James 1:22–25) and talking about God's Word can never substitute for doing God's Word.

James wanted to help us practice God's Word, so he gave us a simple test. He sent two visitors to a church service, a rich man and a poor man, and he watched to see how they were treated. The way we behave toward people indicates what we really believe about God! We cannot and dare not separate human relationships from divine fellowship. "If a man say, 'I love God,' and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

In this section, James examined **four** basic Christian **doctrines** in the light of the way we treat other people.

1. **The Deity of Christ (2:1–4)** "My brothers, don't hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, by showing favoritism" (literal translation). Jewish people in that day coveted recognition and honor and viewed with one another for praise.

Our Lord's parables in Luke 14:7–14 deal with the problem, and also His denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew 23.

We have this same problem with us today. Pyramid climbers are among us, not only in politics, industry, and society, but also in the church/fellowships. Many of the believers James wrote to were trying to seize spiritual offices, and James had to warn them (James 3:1).

Jesus did not respect persons. Even His enemies admitted, "You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are" (Matt. 22:16 niv). **Our Lord did not look at the outward appearance; He looked at**

the heart. He was not impressed with riches or social status. The poor widow who gave her mite was greater in His eyes than the rich Pharisee who boastfully gave his large donation. Furthermore, He saw the potential in the lives of sinners. In Simon, He saw a rock. In Matthew, the publican, He saw a faithful disciple who would one day write one of the four gospels.

The disciples were amazed to see Jesus talking with the sinful woman at the well of Sychar, but Jesus saw in her an instrument for reaping a great harvest. **We are prone to judge people by their past,** not their future. When Saul of Tarsus was converted, the church in Jerusalem was afraid to receive him! It took Barnabas, who believed in Saul's conversion, to break down the walls (Acts 9:26–28). **We are also prone to judge by outward appearance rather than by the inner attitude of the heart.** We do not enjoy sitting with certain people in fellowship because they "are not our kind of people." Jesus was the Friend of sinners, though He disapproved of their sins. It was not compromise, but compassion, that caused Him to welcome them, and when they trusted Him, forgive them. Jesus was despised and rejected. This fact was prophesied in Isaiah 53:1–3. He was "the poor man" who was rejected by the self-righteous nation. Unlike the foxes and the birds, He had no home. He grew up in the despised city of Nazareth in a home that knew the feeling of poverty. Had you and I met Him while He was ministering on earth, we would have seen nothing physically or materially that would attract us. Yet, He is the very glory of God.

In the Old Testament, God's glory dwelled first in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34–38) and then in the temple (1 Kings 8:10–11). When Jesus came to earth, God's glory resided in Him (John 1:14). Today, the glory of God dwells in the believer individually (1 Cor. 6:19–20)

No wonder Jesus warned the religious leaders, "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment" (John 7:24 niv). Sad to say, we often make the same mistakes. When visitors come into our churches/fellowships, we tend to judge them on what we see outwardly

rather than what they are inwardly. Dress, color of skin, fashion, and other superficial things carry more weight than the fruit of the Spirit that may be manifest in their lives.

We cater to the rich because we hope to get something out of them and we avoid the poor because they embarrass us. Jesus did not do this, and He cannot approve of it.

How do we practice the deity of Christ in our human relationships?

It is really quite simple: look at everyone through the eyes of Christ.

If the visitor is a Christian, we can accept him because Christ lives in him. If he is not a Christian, we can receive him because Christ died for him. It is Christ who is the link between us and others, and He is a link of love. The basis for relationship with others is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Any other basis is not going to work.

2. The Grace of God (2:5-7)

The emphasis here is on God's choosing, and this involves the grace of God. If salvation were on the basis of merit, it would not be by grace. Grace implies God's sovereign choice of those who cannot earn and do not deserve His salvation (Eph. 1:4-7; 2:8-10). God saves us completely on the basis of the work of Christ on the cross and not because of anything that we are or have.

God ignores national differences (Acts 10:34). The Jewish believers were shocked when Peter went to the Gentile household of Cornelius, preached to the Gentiles, and even ate with them. The topic of the first church council was, "Must a Gentile become a Jew to become a Christian?" (Acts 15). The answer the Holy Spirit gave them was, "No!" In the sight of God, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile when it comes to condemnation (Rom. 2:6-16) or salvation (Rom. 10:1-13)

James taught us that the grace of God makes the rich man poor, because he cannot depend on his wealth; and it makes the poor man rich, because he inherits the riches of grace in Christ. (Review James 1:9-11.) "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to

make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Sam. 2:7-8). From the human point of view, God chooses the poor instead of the rich. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:26-27).

The poor of this world become rich in faith; as sons of God, they inherit the wealth of the kingdom. It is possible to be poor in this world and rich in the next, or rich in this world and poor in the next (1 Tim. 6:17-18). Or, you could be poor both in this world and the next, or rich in this world and the next. **It all depends on what you do with Christ and the material wealth He has given you. God promises the kingdom to "those that love him" (James 2:5), not to those who love this world and its riches.**

James gave a stern rebuke in James 2:6-7: "When you despise the poor man, you are behaving like the unsaved rich people." In that day, it was easy for rich persons to exploit the poor, influence decisions at court, and make themselves richer. Unfortunately, we have the same sins being committed today; and these sins blaspheme the very name of Christ. Our Lord was poor, and He too was the victim of injustice perpetrated by the wealthy leaders of His day.

The doctrine of God's grace, if we really believe it, forces us to relate to people on the basis of God's plan and not on the basis of human merit or social status.

Jesus broke down the walls between rich and poor, young and old, educated and uneducated. It is wrong for us to build those walls again; we cannot rebuild them if we believe in the grace of God.

3. The Word of God (2:8-11)

In recent years, believers have waged battles over the inspiration and authority of the Word of God. Certainly, it is a good thing to defend the truth of God's Word, but **we must never forget that our lives and ministries are the best defense.**

D. L. Moody often said, "Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather!" James reached back into the Old Testament for one of God's laws, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18). In His parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus told us that our neighbor is anyone who needs our help (Luke 10:25–37). It is not a matter of geography, but opportunity. The important question is not, "Who is my neighbor?" but "To whom can I be a neighbor?" Why is "love thy neighbor" called "the royal law"? For one thing, it was given by the King.

God the Father gave it in the law, and **God the Son** reaffirmed it to His disciples (John 13:34). **God the Spirit** fills our hearts with God's love and expects us to share it with others (Rom. 5:5). True believers are "taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9). But "love thy neighbor" is the royal law for a second reason: it rules all the other laws. "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10).

There would be no need for the thousands of complex laws if each citizen truly loved his neighbors. But the main reason why this is the royal law is that obeying it makes you a king. Hatred makes a person a slave, but love sets us free from selfishness and enables us to reign like kings. Love enables us to obey the Word of God and treat people as God commands us to do. We obey His law, not out of fear, but out of love.

There is only one Lawgiver, and all of His laws are from His mind and heart. If I disobey one law, I am capable of disobeying all of them; and by rebelling, I have already done so. Christian love does not mean that I must like a person and agree with him on everything. I may not like his vocabulary or his habits, and I may not want him for an intimate friend. Christian love means treating others the way God has treated me. **It is an act of the will, not an emotion that I try to manufacture.** The motive is to glorify God. The means is the power of the Spirit within ("for the fruit of the Spirit is love"). As I act in love toward another, I may find myself drawn more and more to him, and I may see in him (through Christ) qualities that before were hidden to me. Also, Christian love does not leave the person where it finds him. Love should help the poor man do better; love should help the rich man make better use of his God-given resources. Love always builds up (1 Cor. 8:1); hatred always tears down. We only believe as much of the Bible as

we practice. If we fail to obey the most important word—"love thy neighbor as thyself"—then we will not do any good with the lesser matters of the Word.

4. The Judgment of God (2:12–13)

Every orthodox statement of faith ends with a statement about the return of Jesus Christ and the final judgment. Not all Christians agree as to the details of these future events, but the certainty of them none denies. Nor would any deny the importance of a final judgment. Both Jesus (John 5:24) and Paul (Rom. 8:1) assured us that Christian believers will never be judged for their sins, but our works will be judged and rewarded (Rom. 14:10–13; 2 Cor. 5:9–10).

Our words will be judged. Note the words spoken to the two visitors in James 2:3. What we say to people, and how we say it, will come up before God. Even our careless words will be judged (Matt. 12:36). Of course, the words we speak come from the heart; so when God judges the words, He is examining the heart (Matt. 12:34–37). Jesus emphasized caution when speaking in some of His warnings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:21–26, 33–37; 7:1–5, 21–23).

Our deeds will be judged. Read Colossians 3:22–25 for additional insight. It is true that God remembers our sins against us no more (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 10:17), but our sins affect our character and works. **We cannot sin lightly and serve faithfully.** God forgives our sins when we confess them to Him, but He cannot change their consequences.

Our attitudes will be judged (v. 13). James contrasted two attitudes: showing mercy to others and refusing to show mercy. If we have been merciful toward others, God can be merciful toward us. However, we must not twist this truth into a lie. It does not mean that we earn mercy by showing mercy, because it is impossible to earn mercy. If it is earned, it is not mercy! Nor does it mean that we should "be soft on sin" and never judge it in the lives of others. "I don't condemn anybody," a man once told me, "and God won't condemn me." How wrong he was! Mercy and justice both come from God, so they are not competitors. Where God

finds repentance and faith, He is able to show mercy; where He finds rebellion and unbelief, He must administer justice.

It is the heart of the sinner that determines the treatment he gets. Our Lord's parable in Matthew 18:21–35 illustrates the truth. The parable is not illustrating salvation, but forgiveness between fellow servants. If we forgive our brothers, then we have the kind of heart that is open toward the forgiveness of God. We shall be judged "by the law of liberty." **Why did James use this title for God's law?** For one thing, when we obey God's law, it frees us from sin and enables us to walk in liberty (Ps. 119:45). Also, law prepares us for liberty. A child must be under rules and regulations because he is not mature enough to handle the decisions and demands of life. **He is given outward discipline so that he might develop inward discipline, and one day be free of rules.**

Liberty does not mean license. License (doing whatever I want to do) is the worst kind of bondage. **Liberty means the freedom to be all that I can be in Jesus Christ.** License is confinement; liberty is fulfillment. Finally, the Word is called "the law of liberty" because God sees our hearts and knows what we would have done had we been free to do so.

Example of Christian student who obeys only because the school has rules is not really maturing. What will he do when he leaves the school? God's Word can change our hearts and give us the desire to do God's will, so that we obey from inward compulsion and not outward constraint. There is one obvious message to this section: **our beliefs should control our behavior.** If we really believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that God is gracious, His Word is true, and one day He will judge us, then our conduct will reveal our convictions.

Before we attack those who do not have orthodox doctrine, we must be sure that we practice the doctrines we defend. Jonah had wonderful theology, but he hated people and was angry with God (Jonah 4). One of the tests of the reality of our faith is how we treat other people. Can we pass the test?

Next week study notes

James 2:14–26

FALSE FAITH: Faith is a key doctrine in the Christian life. The sinner is saved by faith (Eph. 2:8–9), and the believer must walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), and whatever we do apart from faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

Pastor Adrian Rogers has said that faith is not “believing in spite of evidence but obeying in spite of consequence.” When you read Hebrews 11, you meet men and women who acted on God’s Word, no matter what price they had to pay.

Faith is not some kind of nebulous feeling that we work up; faith is confidence that God’s Word is true and conviction that acting on that Word will bring His blessing. In this paragraph, **James discussed the relationship between faith and works. This is an important discussion, for if we are wrong in this matter, we jeopardize our eternal salvation.**

What kind of faith really saves a person? Is it necessary to perform good works in order to be saved? How can a person tell whether or not he is exercising true saving faith?

James answered these questions by explaining to us that there are **three kinds of faith**, only one of which is true saving faith.

1. **Dead Faith** (2:14–17)

Even in the early church there were those who claimed they had saving faith, yet did not possess salvation. Wherever there is the true, you will find the counterfeit. Jesus warned, “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” (Matt. 7:21).

People with dead faith substitute words for deeds. They know the correct vocabulary for prayer and testimony and can even quote the right verses from the Bible, but their walk does not measure up to their talk. Discuss....They think that their words are as good as works, and they are wrong.

James gave a simple illustration. A poor believer came into a fellowship, without proper clothing and in need of food. **The person with dead faith noticed the visitor and saw his needs, but he did not do anything to meet the needs. All he did was say a few pious words! "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed" (James 2:16).** Let's pause and think how many times we see a need/prayer request in our fellowship and just say we are praying. But the visitor went away just as hungry and naked as he came in! Food and clothing are basic needs of every human being, whether he is saved or unsaved. "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8).

One of my favorite character in OT Jacob included these basic needs in his prayer to God: "If God will be with me ... and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on" (Gen. 28:20).

As believers, we have an obligation to help meet the needs of people, no matter who they may be(Discuss). "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). To help a person in need is an expression of love, and faith works by love (Gal. 5:6).

The question in James 2:14 should read, "Can that kind of faith save him?" What kind? The kind of faith that is never seen in practical works. The answer is no! Any declaration of faith that does not result in a changed life and good works is a false declaration. That kind of faith is dead faith. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17). The great theologian John Calvin wrote, "It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone." The word alone in James 2:17 simply means "by itself." True saving faith can never be by itself: it always brings life, and life produces good works. **The person with dead faith has only an intellectual experience. In his mind, he knows the doctrines of salvation, but he has never submitted himself to God and trusted Christ for salvation. He knows the right words, but he does not back up his words with his works.**

Faith in Christ brings life (John 3:16), and where there is life there must be growth and fruit. Three times in this paragraph, James warned us that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:17, 20, 26). Beware of a mere intellectual faith. No man can come to Christ by faith and remain the same any more than he can come into contact with a 220-volt wire and remain the same. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). **Dead faith is not saving faith. Dead faith is counterfeit faith and lulls the person into a false confidence of eternal life.**

2. **Demonic Faith** (2:18–19)

James wanted to shock his complacent readers, so he used demons as his illustration. In recent years the church has rediscovered the reality and activity of demons. Discuss on Satan church in New York.....

When our Lord was ministering on earth, He often cast out demons, and He gave that power to His disciples. Paul often confronted demonic forces in his ministry, and in Ephesians 6:10–20, he admonished the early Christians to claim God’s protection and defeat the spiritual forces of wickedness.

It comes as a shock to people that demons have faith! What do they believe? For one thing, they believe in the existence of God; they are neither atheists nor agnostics. They also believe in the deity of Christ. Whenever they met Christ when He was on earth, they bore witness to His sonship (Mark 3:11–12). They believe in the existence of a place of punishment (Luke 8:31), and they also recognize Jesus Christ as the Judge (Mark 5:1–13).

Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (James 2:19 niv). The man with dead faith was touched only in his intellect, but the demons are touched also in their emotions. They believe and tremble. But it is not a saving experience to believe and tremble. A person can be enlightened in his mind and even stirred in his heart and be lost forever.

True saving faith involves something more, something that can be seen and recognized: a changed life. “Show me thy faith without thy works,” challenged James, “and I will show thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18).

How could a person show his faith without works?

Can a dead sinner perform good works? Impossible! When you trust Christ, you are “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

Being a Christian involves trusting Christ and living for Christ; you receive the life, then you reveal the life. Faith that is barren is not saving faith. The Greek word translated “dead” in James 2:20 carries the meaning of “barren or idle,” like money drawing no interest.

James has introduced us to two kinds of faith that can never save the sinner: **dead faith (the intellect alone), and demonic faith (the intellect and the emotions)**. He closes this section by describing the only kind of faith that can save the sinner—dynamic faith.

3. Dynamic Faith (2:20–26)

Dynamic faith is faith that is real, faith that has power, faith that results in a changed life. James described this true saving faith. To begin with, dynamic saving faith is based on the Word of God. We receive our spiritual rebirth through God’s Word (James 1:18). We receive the Word and this saves us (James 1:21). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

James used Abraham and Rahab as illustrations of dynamic saving faith, since both of them heard and received the message of God through His Word. Faith is only as good as its object.

No matter how much faith a person may generate, if it is not directed at the right object, it will accomplish nothing. Discuss....

“I believe” may be the testimony of many sincere people, but the big question is, “In whom do you believe? What do you believe?” We are not saved by faith in faith; we are saved by faith in Christ as revealed in His Word.

Dynamic faith is based on God’s Word, and it involves the whole man. Dead faith touches only the intellect; demonic faith involves both the mind and the emotions; but dynamic faith involves the will. The whole person plays a part in true saving

faith. The mind understands the truth; the heart desires the truth; and the will acts upon the truth. The men and women of faith named in Hebrews 11 were people of action: God spoke and they obeyed. Again, **“Faith is not believing in spite of evidence; faith is obeying in spite of consequence.”** True saving faith leads to action. Dynamic faith is not intellectual contemplation or emotional consternation; it leads to obedience on the part of the will. And this obedience is not an isolated event: it continues throughout the whole life. It leads to works.

Many different kinds of works are named in the New Testament.

“The works of the law” (Gal. 2:16) relate to the sinner’s attempt to please God by obeying the law of Moses. Of course, it is impossible for a sinner to be saved through the works of the law.

“The works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19) are done by unsaved people who live for the things of the old nature.

There are also **“wicked works”** (Col. 1:21) and “dead works” (Heb. 9:14). Where there is dynamic faith—saving faith—you will always find good works.

James then illustrated his doctrine in the lives of two well-known Bible persons: Abraham and Rahab. You could not find two more different persons! **Abraham was a Jew; Rahab was a Gentile. Abraham was a godly man, but Rahab was a sinful woman, a harlot. Abraham was the friend of God, while Rahab belonged to the enemies of God.** What did they have in common? Both exercised saving faith in God.

You will want to read Genesis 15 and 22 to get the background facts for this illustration. God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees to lead him into Canaan and to make out of him the great nation of Israel. It was through Israel that God would bring the Savior into the world. Abraham’s salvation experience is recorded in Genesis 15. At night, God showed His servant the stars and gave him a promise, “So shall thy seed [descendants] be!” How did Abraham respond? “And he believed in the Lord, and he [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:5–6). The word counted is a legal or financial term; it means “to put to one’s account.” As a sinner, Abraham’s spiritual bankbook was empty. He was bankrupt! But he

trusted God, and God put righteous on Abraham's account. Abraham did not work for this righteousness; he received it as a gift from God. He was declared righteous by faith. He was justified by faith (read Rom. 4).

Justification is an important doctrine in the Bible. Justification is the act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross. It is not a process; it is an act. It is not something the sinner does; it is something God does for the sinner when he trusts Christ. It is a once-for-all event. It never changes. How can you tell if a person is justified by faith if this transaction takes place between the sinner and God privately?

Abraham's example answers that important question: the justified person has a changed life and obeys God's will. **His faith is demonstrated by his works.**

James used another event in Abraham's life, an event that took place many years after Abraham's conversion. This event is the offering up of Isaac on the altar (Gen. 22). Abraham was not saved by obeying God's difficult command. His obedience proved that he already was saved. "You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did" (James 2:22 niv). There is a perfect relationship between faith and works. As someone has expressed it, "Abraham was not saved by faith plus works, but by a faith that works." How was Abraham "justified by works" (James 2:21) when he had already been "justified by faith" (see Rom. 4)? By faith, he was justified before God and his righteousness declared; by works he was justified before men and his righteousness demonstrated.

It is true that no humans actually saw Abraham put his son on the altar, but the inspired record in Genesis 22 enables us to see the event and witness Abraham's faith demonstrated by his works. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, D. L. Moody often said, "Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather." He did not say that because he had been a successful shoe salesman; he said it because he was a dedicated Christian.

Dynamic faith obeys God and proves itself in daily life and works. Alas, we still have church members today who fit the description given in Titus, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him" (Titus 1:16). Paul also wrote, "This is

a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Titus 3:8).

His second illustration is Rahab, and the background for her is found in Joshua 2 and 6. Israel was about to invade their Promised Land and take the city of Jericho. Joshua sent spies into the city to get the lay of the land. There they met Rahab, a harlot, who protected them and affirmed that she believed in what God had said and what God was going to do. When the men departed, they promised to save her and her family when the city was taken, and this they did. It is an exciting story. But in it is one of the Bible's great examples of saving faith (see Heb. 11:31). Rahab heard the Word and knew that her city was condemned. This truth affected her and her fellow citizens so that their hearts melted within them (Josh. 2:11). Rahab responded with her mind and her emotions, but she also responded with her will: she did something about it. She risked her own life to protect the Jewish spies, and she further risked her life by sharing the good news of deliverance with the members of her family. The Hebrew word translated "harlot" in Joshua 2 can also have the wider meaning of "an innkeeper." Rahab ran a guest house, so it was normal for the spies to go there. The Greek word "harlot" in James 2:25 definitely means an immoral person. This is also the meaning in Hebrews 11:31. Matthew 1:5 indicates she married into Israel and became an ancestress of our Lord.

What grace! Rahab is one of the first soul-winners in the Bible, and you cannot help but compare her with the "bad Samaritan" in John 4. Rahab could have had dead faith, a mere intellectual experience. Or she could have had demonic faith, her mind enlightened and her emotions stirred. But she exercised dynamic faith: her mind knew the truth, her heart was stirred by the truth, and her will acted on the truth.

She proved her faith by her works. When you realize the small amount of information Rahab had, you can see how truly marvelous her faith really was. Today we have the full revelation of God through His Word and His Son. We live on the other side of Calvary, and we have the Holy Spirit to convict and to teach us the Word. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48). Her faith is an indictment against the unbelief of sinners today.

James 2 emphasized that the mature Christian practices the truth. He does not merely hold to ancient doctrines; he practices those doctrines in his everyday life. His faith is not the dead faith of the intellectuals or the demonic faith of the fallen spirits. It is the dynamic faith of men like Abraham and women like Rahab, faith that changes a life and goes to work for God. It is important that each professing Christian examine his own heart and life and make sure that he possesses true saving faith, dynamic faith. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5a). Satan is the great deceiver; one of his devices is imitation. If he can convince a person that counterfeit faith is true faith, he has that person in his power.

Here are my 10 commandments for follow up of this chapter/questions we can ask ourselves as we examine our hearts before we study 3 chapter:

1. Was there a time when I honestly realized I was a sinner and admitted this to myself and to God?
2. Was there a time when my heart stirred me to flee from the wrath to come? Have I ever seriously been alarmed over my sins?
3. Do I truly understand the gospel, that Christ died for my sins and arose again? Do I understand and confess that I cannot save myself?
4. Did I sincerely repent of my sins and turn from them? Or do I secretly love sin and want to enjoy it?
5. Have I trusted Christ and Christ alone for my salvation? Do I enjoy a living relationship with Him through the Word and in the Spirit?
6. Has there been a change in my life? Do I maintain good works, or are my works occasional and weak?
7. Do I seek to grow in the things of the Lord? Can others tell that I have been with Jesus?
8. Do I have a desire to share Christ with others? Or am I ashamed of Him?
9. Do I enjoy the fellowship of God's people? Is worship a delight to me?

10. Am I ready for the Lord's return? Or will I be ashamed when He comes for me?

To be sure, not every Christian has the same personal experience, and there are degrees of sanctification. But for the most part, the preceding spiritual inventory can assist a person in determining his true standing before God. "Search me, O Lord, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24)

Pastor John Spurgeon