Transformed – **2 Corinthians - wk 16 – The Final Exam**

**An ongoing multi-year conversation with a church the Apostle Paul planted – that is now struggling with division, sin, and shifty leaders.**

**Written by an Apostle with the heart of a spiritual father – Paul confronts their sin and the many attacks against his authority.**

**Last week – Paul started wrapping up his letter and now ends with a couple of introspective questions – vital questions for us today.**

**This was a confrontational letter, so it ends the same way - confrontational. Christianity is not a sucker religion. It’s not a weak religion. It is a faith where you sometimes find God in your face, telling you about yourself, so that you can grow.**

**2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. (The problem w/ Corinth - they loved to criticize Paul but never examined themself) Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! (unless you’re not!) 6 I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.**

**7 But we pray to God that you may not do wrong (listen - don’t and refuse correction) - not that we may appear to have met the test, (this is not about comparing yourselves to us and for us to look good) but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. (we pray you do what is right because you know it is right – even if you think we have failed you. No matter what you hear about us - will you be faithful? 8 For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. (only for Jesus)**

**Paul has apostolic authority – we are coming to discipline you, but he himself was not above the truth of the Gospel. He is not above Jesus. “We can do nothing against the truth”**

**9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for. (if this issue and all the attacks on me help you to grow stronger, it will be worth it) 10 For this reason, I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.**

**I am writing so you can deal with these issues before we come in the authority Jesus gave us as Apostles. We just want to see you built up – encouraged in Jesus.**

**One - Examine yourself (look inside)**

**\*What does my relationship with God look like? Am I really a Christian?**

**Am I a true follower of Christ - or only a Christian in name?**

**2 Corinthians 13:5 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! 6 I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.**

**What is self-examination?**

**lit. take to trial, go to court, cross-examination yourself.**

**We are often great at pointing out others' issues and faults - but look in the mirror. Make it personal.**

**\*\*\* The truth is some are not true Christians - The reality is some might fail the test and be disqualified from the kingdom of heaven.**

**Test yourselves?**

**Matthew 7:3-5 – you focus on the speck in others eyes when you can’t see the log in your eye. Take your log out first then work on your brother.**

**Look at yourself first.**

**1 Tim 4:16 Keep a close watch on yourself (life) and on the teaching (doctrine). Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.**

**Lamentations 3:40 Let us test and examine our ways and return to the Lord! 41 Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:**

**Hebrews 2:1 - Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.**

**(leaders are to lead in this too) Acts 20:28 - Keep watch over yourselves and the entire flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.**

**We do this not in the filter of ourselves and our opinions.**

**But to examine ourselves in the light of God’s character, the grace of Jesus, and the word of God. Convicting & changing.**

**2 Tim 3:16-17 – Scripture’s rebuke, correct, teach, train, and equip us.**

**How can we know if we are a Christian? What the test is not.**

* **Spiritual gifts, talents, experiences, and accomplishments are not the test of true faith in Christ.**

**Matt 7:22 On that day, many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’**

**I did this – felt this – experienced this – had this happen – once did this… “I never knew you”**

**How can we know? Six Questions – The 1 John Test**

**Briefly cover (unpacked in Living the Way)**

**\*\*Truth - you can know for sure (without a doubt) if you are a Christian.**

**1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.**

**1. Have you been born again?**

**1 John 5:4 …for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.**

**John 3:3 …no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'**

**Whether you are Methodist, Catholic, Orthodox, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopalian or Pentecostal… you must be born again.**

**2. Have you responded to the cross of Christ with repentance?**

**1 John 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. / 1 John 5:5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**

**This is an act of faith and confession in the work of Jesus – it is a turning from self to the authority and Lordship of Christ.**

**Romans 10:9 …if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (turning from self to the Lordship of Christ) and believe in your heart (faith) that God raised him from the dead, (The gospel) you will be saved.**

**3. Do you have a deep love for Jesus - more than anything else?**

**1 John 5:3 - For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome… / 1 John 2:3 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.**

**Mark 12:30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’**

**If you're a Christian, you Love Jesus... a lot! More than anything else, it is not an afterthought but a consuming mission. To love Jesus is to love his words and commands – and you love the truth of God.**

**Mark 8:34 - If anyone desires to come after me...**

**Matt 13:44-46 - Pearl of Great price and the buried treasure parables…**

**Willing to follow Jesus at all costs. Are you faithfully following Jesus our of love for him?**

**4. Do you have remorse for sin and a desire for holiness?**

**1 John 2:4 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.**

**1 Jo 3:9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.**

**Obedience is the fruit of faith.**

**If you love me, you will obey (John 14:15)**

**Obedience is the response to knowing Jesus and loving him.**

**5. Do you have a growing love for people?**

**1 John 2:9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness.**

**1 John 3:10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness (desires holiness) is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.**

**1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. (Love as defined by God’s word) 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.**

**4:16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**

**Compassion and love for others is a fruit of true faith.**

**“They will know you are my disciples by your love” John 13:35**

**Hatred for other people is a sign of a serious heart issue.**

**This includes forgiving others.**

**6. Do you have an inner witness of the Holy Spirit?**

**1 John 4:13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. (The work of the HS in a person)**

**A true believer is convicted when we sin - why? Because the Holy Spirit in us is convicting and calling us to grace. (Rom 6)**

**When you make a mistake and are worried that you are no longer saved – rest in this… that heaviness in your heart is the Holy Spirit saying God is still working in you.**

**This exam is not a test for perfection. It is not based on worldly standards (like the super-apostle’s skill, gifts, or perfection) but on the grace of God as we grow and learn.**

**1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (none of you are perfect) 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

**When you stumble - repent. Not to keep your salvation but for your sanctification. Learning to walk and yield to the HS.**

**Psalms 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!**

**Examine – identify – confess - repent = new direction.**

**Paul gives a final short challenge – 2 Cor 13:11 Finally, brothers, rejoice. (a type of goodbye) Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.**

**Exam Two - Examine your relationships (look around)**

**What do my relationships with others look like? Am I treating others in a Christ-like way? Am I reflecting that I am a true follower of Christ - or only a Christian in name?**

**1. Do you lovingly confront one another or just want to prove a point?**

**“Aim (strive) for restoration”**

**We strive for restoration and confrontation out of love – to mend or make complete and restore relationships. (Last week)**

**Or is there a sea of bodies behind you?**

**2. Do you seek to encourage one another or desire to tear others down? “comfort one another”**

**Do you speak words of hope and life into others, or do you tear apart and spoil relationships – and try to be superior?**

**Ephesians 4:29 - Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building up the one in need and bringing grace to those who listen.**

**This is the work to encourage and forgive others.**

**3. Do you pursue unity with one another or try to win arguments?**

**“agree with one another”**

**Mindful of the “wolves,” we seek to protect and be in unity with other believers in the church. (1 Cor 1:10, 1 Pet 3:8)**

**Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

**4. Do you work to live in peace with one another or like to fight?**

**“live in peace”**

**Do you try to get your way – by bullying others?**

**Phil 2:3 - Preferring others above ourselves. / Matt 5:9 - Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.**

**When we work on these things – this is the result -**

**2 Cor 13:11 …and the God of love and peace will be with you.**

**What a wonderful thing to desire in your home, family, relationships, and church. Love and peace.**

**Are there frequent divisions and bitterness? Does strife and drama follow you around? Are you holding a grudge? As a follower of Christ, are you missing God's peace & comfort? Check your "one another’s.”**

**These two exams are to be an ongoing activity.**

* **One - Examine yourself (look inside)**

**\* What does my relationship with God look like? Am I really a Christian? Am I a true follower of Christ - or only a Christian in name?**

* **Two - Examine your relationships (look around)**

**\* What do my relationships with others look like? Am I treating others in a Christ-like way? Am I reflecting that I am a true follower of Christ - or only a Christian in name?**

**Paul's final words – 2 Cor 13:12: Greet one another with a holy kiss. (common practice) 13 All the saints greet you. (here in Macedonia, Philippi) 14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

**Trinitarian doxology and blessing**

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ = the goodness/salvation of God**

**The love of God (the Father) = the love/purposes of God**

**The fellowship of the Holy Spirit = daily relationship/family with God**

**May the Grace, the Love, and the fellowship of God be with you. Walk in these.**

**Examine yourself today - You can know without a doubt that you are a follower of Jesus today, a Christian bound for the kingdom of God.**

**\*\* Have you responded to the cross of Christ with repentance?**

**\*\* Christian – the habit of humble repentance – today.**