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## 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5-10

### 2 Corinthians Series

[PRAYER] Wow Lord, I get so excited about worship and meeting people. So Lord, I ask now that you'd settle my heart. Call me so that I can communicate the things you've been working in my life this week. I just thank you for your word and the power that it has to change us. So we want to have our hearts receptive to you today. And we ask, Lord, as we come to another passage (it's the passage from last week, we're going on to the next verses today) that you would use that in our lives to teach us. I know that every verse in your word is powerful. Every verse in your word is important. So today we come to a new passage and we ask that you would speak to us and teach us what it means to live for you and to understand you more. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

In our study of 2 Corinthians, we've been looking at the power of God all through the passage. We've been understanding more about the power of God. And so it's time to take a test today. When I think of tests, I had a lot of tests in my education. I heard today they don't have any more finals in high school. Did you know that? At Ewing High, no more finals. They've abandoned finals. They don't even have any more midterms. That is really different than I experienced education.

I remember when I was in seminary, I really enjoyed my seminary time. There was one class I had a particular difficult time with. It was Dr. Ellison's class in church history. Not that I didn't like the subject matter, but just the way he taught it was kind of dry. But it was hard for me to remember all the facts. I was getting bad grades on the quizzes. So we had these quizzes and I was getting C's and D's and I knew I was in trouble.

So when it came time for the final exam, I was determined to study better, differently, or somehow to capture all the material so that I could do well and raise my grade in that class so it wouldn't lower my GPA. So I studied with Doc Kirk, my really good friend. I went through seminary with him, we had a great time together and we determined that we would study together for this final exam in Dr. Ellison's church history class. So what we did is we went to the house and we would go into a corner of the room. Maybe some of you studied this way if you had to study. We would go into the room where there was the plant and the bookcase and the picture on the wall in the corner, and we'd remember everything we needed to do about one section of that. We'd memorize all this stuff so that when we get into the actual test we can think back, "Oh that was the corner over there." Then we have the other corner over there. We went through the whole house. So we had all this information down about church history. I was pumped. I felt like I knew everything going into that class.

Unfortunately the questions that he asked on the test were not the same ones that I studied because he wasn't looking for facts, he was looking for stuff related. So I thought I did pretty well on the test, Doc thought he did pretty well on the test. But a couple days later we went to our little cubby holes where our papers were, we pulled out our papers and I had gotten a C and he had gotten a D. Ah how disappointing. I just couldn't believe it. I was sitting there going, "We worked so hard, hours of studying for that test." And Doc took his paper out and wrote on the top of it "grace." And I said, "Cut it out. That's not grace." That's what I said to him. He said, "Look, it is grace that I'm even here. It's grace I'm able to learn in this place. It's grace that I'm able to attend this school." Grace. Actually Doc taught me a lot about God's grace in seminary, just in the experiential part in our lives because he really rested on God's grace quite a bit.

So today we're going to take a test. In order to do that, first I want to look at God's word, I want to look at the passage of scripture that we're going to look at and notice it talks about a test. So that's where I'm getting the idea as I try to each week when I teach you is to take the verses right out of the scripture and illustrate them and present them to you in a way that you might take Jesus home.

So would you stand with me in honor of God's word? You can open your own Bibles and read along in 2 Corinthians 13 starting in verse 5.

*It says this: Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test. Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong—not so that people will see that we have stood the test but so that you will do what is right even though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored. This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.*

You may be seated.

If you recall in our study, we've seen how much the people from Corinth have attacked Paul. Some leaders had come into the church. I don't know whether they're believers or false prophets, I'm not quite sure. But they were attacking Paul and questioning his integrity as an apostle. Paul spends a good part of his time defending himself in the book, as we've seen up till now. And he's done a pretty good job. He's passed the test with flying colors really in his answers. So now he turns the tables and he says to them, "I want you guys to examine yourselves."

It's a lot easier for us to examine other people and identify the problems they have and the ways they're failing and the challenges they have. It's always easier to confess someone else's sins than it is to confess our own sins. And so Paul is turning the tables and he's saying would you take a moment and examine yourselves. So we're going to do that today. We're going to examine ourselves. So this is a self test.

In over my years of being a Christian, I've often thought it would be great to create a report card for Christians. I could create this big list of things that this is what it means to be a Christian. I could list "read your Bible" and "pray" and I keep listing things, fifty things, then I get to a hundred things. But I think if I gave that to you, I might appear legalistic. You'd go, "Whoa. His idea of spirituality is different than what God is doing in my life." And I don't want to appear legalistic. I'm not sure a report card like that is to our advantage because then what does it do? It robs the Holy Spirit of the opportunity to work in our hearts to grow us to be the people God wants us to be.

So today we're looking at a self test. This self test, I thought about calling it an open book test. That would be cool because you're talking about the Bible, you can open the Bible and kind of read along. But then I'm thinking as I went through this passage, really this isn't an open book test, this is an open heart test. If we have open hearts as we ask these four questions of ourselves today, then God can do something very special inside of our lives and our hearts. So this is the open heart self test from 2 Corinthians 13.

Let's go back into the passage to find out what the questions are we're going to ask. If we look at the first verse, remember I said examine yourselves. Remember this is a self test. I just want you to see it's a self test. You're going to evaluate yourself. No one else is looking. It's you looking at yourself. Don't be nudging your husband or wife here. This is about yourself. Look at yourself to see.

The first question is *whether you're in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that* (and here is the definition of what it means to be in the faith) *that Christ Jesus is in you*. I'm going to call this first question on our self-test the assurance question. Do I have the assurance that I'm truly saved? If we go back to the verse, notice it says *the faith. See whether you are in the faith*. It doesn't say to see whether you have faith. That's a different passage of scripture. We all need faith. This isn't talking about faith, it's talking about the faith. And what that means is, are you a Christian? Do you know what that means?

Every creed or every religion has their own faith. You can know whether you are in the faith of Buddhism if you believe the things that Buddhism describes or humanism or atheism. They're all forms of religion and there are beliefs that underline them. But this isn't a belief system; this is a decision to be in the faith.

So he's saying are you in the faith? What does that mean? What that means is that Christ Jesus is in you. That's what the text says. *Christ Jesus is in you*. So that's a pretty powerful statement. And this is what makes our understanding of God and the salvation process different. See, every form of religion, whether it's Christianity or Judaism or Hinduism or Buddhism or atheism or humanism, has built within it some form of enlightenment. That if you become a part of that religion you become enlightened. If you're talking about humanism then the enlightenment is self-actualization. If you in school studied psychology then you probably studied about Maslow and all the different hierarchies of needs. And the last one is self-actualization. That's a humanistic view of this thing that we're talking about.

But we have to understand that Christianity is different than any other religion. It's not the same as any other religion. It is different. It is unique. It's unique in this sense that God lives in us. That Christ died on a cross, rose from the dead. That's unique in itself. But then there's this sense of He's in us and He's present in us so when we become part of the faith then that's what happens.

If you're here today and you don't know whether you're in the faith or not, I just want you to understand what it looks like and what it means. Because in order to get saved... We sang the first song about being saved, *I am Saved*, a great song, beautiful song. But in order to get saved, you first have to get lost. So if you're not lost today, I'm going to show you how you are lost. Because the Bible talks about sin in our lives.

Now when you think about sin, maybe you think about the wrong things you did this week as sin. Yes, that is a problem. But we have a bigger problem than just the sins that we did this week is that there's something inside of our hearts called a sin nature that we all have. And that sin nature is a magnetic pull towards selfishness and towards sin. And that sin nature just robs us freedom. It robs us of peace. We become enslaved by it. It's a difficult challenge. And God wants us to be free.

So in John 8, Jesus is trying to win people to the Lord. That's what He's trying to do. He's witnessing to them. First He talks to the Pharisees, then the Bible says that He talks to the Jews who believed in Him. Now He's talking to the Jews who are really interested in Him and He says to them *the truth will set you free*. And they say to Him, "Look we are Jews. We've never been under anybody's captivity. We are free people. Why are you saying we need to be free? We're already free."

Now I would suggest that there are a lot of people in our world today who think they are already free. They're free because they might have a nice job or they're free because they've got a family or they're free because they can do whatever they want. And so Jesus has to enlighten them a little bit more. So He says to them this: *You are slaves to sin*. That's what He says to them. That's the first step to getting saved is that you've got to know that you're lost. You're a slave. He says *you are a slave to sin* and then He says *whoever believes in me will be free indeed*. That's the other song we sang, *You Will be Free Indeed*. So there's something that takes place in us when we understand this faith that we make a decision to be in the faith.

So it's not good enough to believe things about Jesus. It's not good enough to just come to church or just hang around Christians. It's not good enough to live in a Christian family. You must make a decision and that decision is to be in the faith. You make a decision. Every one of us makes a decision on their own in person.

Now you might say, "Well Pastor, you can't really know whether you're saved or not. Can you?" And I would say yes, you can. In fact the Bible says yes, you can. If we look at 1 John 5:13, it says these words: *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life*. I want you to know that you can be assured of your salvation today. It happens because you put your faith in Jesus Christ. You invite Him to come inside of you. Christ Jesus is in you. He's only in you if you invite Him to come in. Otherwise

you fail the test. That's what He's saying here. So if you haven't accepted Jesus Christ into your life, then you've got a challenge and you want to resolve that challenge. I would suggest you do it right away.

That's the first question, the assurance question. If you're looking at kinds of questions on the test, this is a true or false question. There is only a yes or a no to this one. You're either in or you're not. And you're in because you make a decision to say, "I want to serve Jesus Christ in my life. I know I have problem with sin." That should be scary. When I think about the sin nature and that magnetic pull towards sin and then you start looking at your life and going, "Yeah man, that's where I need help," that's why you need a Savior. And the Savior comes in to you and He empowers you then to live the free life that He wants you to have. So no longer are you weighed down by the gravity of sin because now you have another law, this law of spiritual freedom that allows you to fly and enjoy the Christian life. So that's question number one, the assurance question.

Let's continue on in our passage to find the second question. He says as he continues in the next verse – *Now we pray to God that you will not do anything wrong and that you will do what is right.* In other words it's what does your behavior look like? What's going on outside? This does not get you into heaven, how you act. What gets you into heaven is are you in Christ. But if you want to do a self-test about your own spirituality, you want your heart to be open, then you want to ask the question, am I doing the right thing?

So I call this the fruit test. Do I demonstrate evidence that Jesus Christ is in me? I use the word 'fruit' because there's a verse in the Bible talks about fruit where it says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. I'll show you the verse in just a minute, but the idea here is that if you look at those, they are not behaviors. They are heart qualities that a person has. I want to explain the difference between those. Would you pass the fruit test? There's the nine different words in Galatians 5:22-23 so you look at them.

Now this is not a true or false question. This is a scale. If you have a scale of one to ten, where are you on the joy scale? Where are you on the peace scale? Or the patience scale? Where are you? So you might be at a six on the joy scale and you might find yourself at a two, so there's room to maneuver and you're into working and God wants you moving more in your life. But this is a progress. So as you're doing a self-test, this is not a yes or no. You're evaluating where you are in your heart.

But notice that they're all heart qualities. That means that they're characteristics of things in your heart. We can define a heart quality this way: A pattern of thinking and acting in response to a challenge. A pattern of thinking and acting in response to a challenge. Two parts, thinking and acting.

Let me show you where I get that idea. If we go back to this verse in Psalm 19:14 it says – *Let the words of my mouth* (that's the acting, that's what's coming out of me -- and what else?) *the meditations of my heart* (that's the thinking inside). Those are the two things, the thinking and the acting, that he's talking about in the passage. *Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing or acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.* Two

things are going to be patterns inside of my heart. So when you experience a trial in your life then do you have a way of thinking and acting or is the pattern of thinking and acting taking you down a different course?

The question is what are we looking at when we're looking at this list of things and this fruit question. Do I demonstrate this? That I'm moving in this direction in my particular life. So take a moment and look at the list. Okay, if you're going to take a test, self test, a heart test, you don't have to write down a sliding scale for all of these. Just look at the words.

And here's what the Holy Spirit will do with you because you're working on this with God. He's going to say, "Oh there's one. Why don't you work on that a little bit," and He's going to identify for you something you want to work on because a gentle person thinks and acts differently than a person who's not gentle. The disciplined person thinks and acts differently than the person who's not disciplined. Which means we need to start thinking differently about life's challenges and we need to be acting differently, which means allowing God to work that salvation out into various aspects of our life. That's the fruit test, another very important one we need to consider in our own lives.

Let's go to the third question, which is in verse 8. Notice the word *truth* is emphasized here. *We cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.* The Bible gives us truth that is not just information, but it's hearts transformation. The third question that I think should be on the test, or that I don't think that God is saying here is the truth question. Do I have a good plan for integrating biblical truth into my life? If we know that God's word is important, how are we getting it into our hearts? I'm not just trying to be able to identify all of the names of the gospel writers.

George Barna did a study recently and 34% of Christians were not able to identify or name the names of the four gospel writers. And 64% of them think "God helps them who helps themselves" is in the Bible. It's not. I do have to say a lot of us as Christians are biblically illiterate. Not you guys, of course, because we're all growing in our understanding of God's word. But I would suggest we need a plan for integrating the Bible, but not just Bible facts.

Let me ask you a question. Does God's word change behavior? Yes. Oh that's because you're in church that you answer that question yes. Alright. The answer is yes. The answer is also no. Okay? The answer is maybe. It only changes our behavior if it goes through our hearts. That's what Psalm 119:11 says – *I have hidden your word in my heart* so that it will change my behavior. If you want to start growing in your character, you want to start changing your behavior, you want to live life differently, it's going to start with God's word and God's word is going to empower you and make that change. So that's why God's word is so important in our lives.

God's word is not just this book that's full of wisdom that we can learn how to live life. That's not all that the Bible is. It's certainly is that, but that's not all that it is. It gives us an understanding of God. Its primary purpose is to give us an understanding of God, to give us an understanding of ourselves and give us an understanding of the plan that God has to bring us together and to empower us forward. That is the purpose of God's word. It's not just little bits of

wisdom here and there. You can find those in all kinds of books today. We're looking at a book that is the word of God that communicates who He is, who we are, and how we can live for Him and what that looks like, the mission that He's given to us. We want to have that inside of our hearts.

So this third question that we're looking at is the truth question: Do I have a good plan for integrating biblical truth in my life? I would suggest this is also one of those sliding scale questions. Because I would suggest that just being here this morning you're getting God's word into your heart. But there's other ways you can do that. You may choose to add different things so that you're maximizing the power of God's word in your life.

Let's go to this last part of the passage. The fourth question we're going to look at in a minute, but it comes from this last part of the verses, which I find to be just... I just enjoyed this part as I was meditating this week. He says: *We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored. This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority—the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.*

So let's talk about the authority. That's the word *exousia* in the passage. The word *authority* here or power. Because all of us have authority or *exousia* or power. You have power over your Snapchat account. You have power over your Facebook account, your Twitter account. You have power over your mouth. You have power over your choices that you make. That gives you authority in those areas.

Now some people also have authority in position and there are people under them as well, under them in the sense that they are being empowered by that authority. And so there's a statement being made here about the use of authority in our lives. So if you're in a position of authority, this is the best leadership development course you'll experience right here. The leadership that you have or the authority that you have is given to you.

First of all, where does it come from? Do you see that? Where does it come from? Yeah. It says *by use of authority* and he pauses to say *the authority the Lord gave me*. So you have to recognize if you're a boss over some other people, the Lord has put you there. If you're a father or a mother in a home, the Lord has put you there. You're in a position of authority. God is the one who gives authority to us and we need to recognize that and we then need to use that authority according to His guidelines.

Notice what it says there. *The authority the Lord gave me for doing what? For building you up, not for tearing you down.* The purpose for this authority is to build up, not to tear down. Wow. That adds a whole dimension to leadership, I think, that we need to understand.

Jesus wanted to teach His disciples this very same thing. He wanted to know that this whole idea of building others up and not tearing them down is the goal. So He shares this verse with them in Mark 9:35. *And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."* That's Jesus' words. He's trying to teach us about

this authority. He's doing the same thing Paul is doing when Paul is explaining it to us so that we can understand the purpose of authority.

I had a fun time talking to my son, Ben, this week. He's in the Marines. He knows I'm going to share this story because I called him back the next day – "Hey, I've got to get that story straight because I'm going to share it on Sunday." So he's given me permission to share this story. Ben has moved into a new position in his Marine career. He's been a Marine for twelve years, so now he's moved into a new position. He moves into this new position and he just takes on leadership, he just loves what he does. They saw that, so when he moved into this new place they say, "Hey, we're going to give you this shop over here. These people over here are failing." So he has thirty-seven Marines under him and they're not coming to work on time, not cutting their hair, not doing the work they're supposed to be doing, not reporting in, and he's supposed to organize that shop.

Now here's the interesting thing about Marines (and I know some of you are Marines, so you understand this) that many Marines lead by yelling. That's their goal. They come in and they are yellors. And so they're yelling, yelling, yelling in order to get the job done. That's what a lot of Marines do.

But my son, Ben, says, "I pulled one of the Marines into the office. She's failing. She's not getting the work done. I start explaining to her the value of her job. At twenty-one years old she's got a job that pays her medical, that gives her full-time benefits. She's got all kinds of things and she's not doing her job? She's going to get kicked out of the Marines? Come on, you need to get up to speed." What he's doing is he's not yelling at her, he's trying to build her up. I'm saying, "Ben, you're applying this Bible verse." He doesn't even know that. But I said, "Ben, you're applying this Bible verse in work in what you're doing."

Some Marine sergeants are going to go in and they're going to pound people. They think that's the way to change people is you keep yelling at them. Not Ben. Ben comes in there with this sense of restoring them. He wants those Marines to be successful. He tells me, "These Marines have the ability to do excellent work. They're just failing in a lot of their character," so he's trying to help them strengthen that and build that. I like that. That's godliness happening in the Marines (if I can even say that). I think that godliness happens in our own lives. When we look at that passage and we say wow, that authority is given for us. Not to tear people down, but to build people up. Which means the way that we use our Facebook account or our Snapchat account or whatever it is is going to reflect that godliness.

So you ask the question... I think this question on the self test is a question that's an essay question, in my opinion, as I looked at it. If you're going to look at it, this would be the essay question where you're going to say, "Am I using my influence to encourage others? There's two kinds of power. One is the power of position and the other is the power of influence. Some people want the title. "Give me the title! I want the title!" And so they think that the title is what gives them the power. It's not the title that gives you the power; it's the influence that gives you the power. There are some people who don't have the title, but their influence is so pervasive in the shop or in the group or on the team that they're doing a lot of controlling, really. They're using their power in a way that builds the team. The open heart self test.

Maybe when you look at that, you come up to some things and you say, “Wow, I just feel like I’m inadequate. I fail. I just feel like you in Dr. Ellison’s class that I’m going to get the F or I’m going to get the C. I’m not going to get the grade that I want.” So we got to go back and I just want to show you this one slide. You just got to understand this one concept: Christ passed the test for us. When we get to the final exam, you don’t have to go to the final exam because Christ goes in your place! And He passes the test. There is no reason for you to feel inadequate. There’s no reason for you to feel hopeless or despairing. There’s no reason for you to be discouraged. Yes, circumstances change, but we are in Christ and God uses all of those things to strengthen us, to build us up, to be the kind of person that He wants us to be. This is what makes Christianity what it is.

There are some people who say, “Well you know, I think there are a lot of different religions.” I got to tell you, there are a lot of different religions, but there is only one way to have this salvation, self-actualization, this peace, this nirvana, this enlightenment.

There’s only one way to get that, and that one way is through Jesus Christ. That’s what Jesus said about it. Jesus didn’t say, “Well, there’s a lot of different things out there, but I think mine might be the best.” No. He’s saying, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” There’s only way to heaven and that’s through Jesus Christ, and then there’s this life that He produces in us that is the life that we just enjoy because we’re Christians.

I’ve made a commitment in my life to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. And that fuels everything about my life and what I’m doing, and I hope that does for you too. That as you take this test, if you’ve never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you say, “I want that. That’s what I need. I want that in my life.”

But I want to suggest something else. Because you know in humanism, let’s just compare Christianity to humanism for a moment. In humanism, you want to be self-actualized so that what? So that you can be built up, so that you can be strong. The goal is all about me. So that I can be better and I can be great and I can tell people how great I am and I can communicate that. It’s all about that. That’s what humanism is. If you go to the leadership classes, you’ll get pumped up about how great you are and then you want to know how to communicate your greatness to other people. That’s the whole purpose of humanism is to do that. But in Christianity, I want you to understand that as we become Christian it doesn’t stop with us experiencing salvation or self-actualization or whatever you want to call it. It doesn’t stop there. It starts there. So once you become a Christian, you’re starting this missional view of life. That now everything you do is about Jesus and you’re carrying it forward.

So in my life I’ve accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, but I’m also on a mission. The reason I come to Calvary Chapel Living Hope is not just because I’m the pastor here, but because I want to wed myself with a body of believers that share the same vision, the same passion to reach people for Jesus Christ and we do it together. We come to encourage each other. We talk about our lives and learn cool things that are going on. But we are all in this together. We’re moving forward.

I want to ask you to join with me in that. If you're just attending here, I want to encourage you to say, "This is where I'm going to live out my salvation. This is where I'm going to grow spiritually. This is where I'm going to wed myself with other believers who are going to share the gospel here in Robbinsville, in our neighborhoods, in our areas of influence." That's who we are. We have a mission. It doesn't stop with us becoming Christians. That's where it starts. And from there, we take on this missional view of life that God wants for us, and boy, that's when real life starts to happen in each of us.

Would you stand with me and let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Father, as we examine ourselves, we open our hearts to receive from you. We call your Holy Spirit to put His finger on areas of our lives that need to be changed and places in our hearts that need affirmation to say yes, you're doing the right thing. So Lord, we ask you to do that. We know that you have extreme power to help us to change in areas where we feel like we can't change. Where you provide hope in areas where we feel discouraged or despairing. We know, Lord, that you are so big that your grace is bigger than anything that we could ever experience. Give us the ability to walk in faith, to walk in the trust that you are the God of the universe and that you want to do a work in our hearts. Thank you that we can trust in you, the true God. In Jesus' name, amen.