

Am I A Genuine Christian?

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March 21, 2015

I've told this story before but this is in a different context. In early 2012, one morning I was at my desk working and my cell phone rang. And I picked it up, announced who I was because I could see I wasn't familiar with the number. And I didn't hear any greetings—"Hi. How are you? This is so and so." All I heard was "Are you for real?" It took me up short and I started laughing because I was thinking "What is this?" It was a young woman's voice and she says, "Are you for real?" It turned out after an hour long conversation (and a friendship later, of course), it was a young woman who lives east of Toronto with her husband and their three children. They had been listening to CDs or watching DVDs for about two years.

What she was really asking as it turned out was "Do you guys live what you preach?" That's what she wanted to know and that is a very good question. "I hear the words, but do you really live what you preach?" Or, she didn't say this but the implication was—or "Are you wolves in sheep's clothing? Are you something different than what you say?" That's what she was really asking—"Are you really who you say you are?" In modern parlance, we would say, "Are you the real deal?"

I grew up in west Texas and there is a saying in west Texas about someone who is not the real deal. The saying is, "He's all hat and no cattle." What they mean by that is he wears the hat, he wears the boots, but if you lift the curtain behind him, there are no cattle back there. He pretends to be a cattleman or a cowboy but he's really a poser or a wannabe or an imposter.

What this young woman was asking was, "Are we the real deal? Are we really like what we preach or what we say in our DVDs and CDs?"

As we approach the Passover, the critical issue for all of us is the question: "Am I the real deal in God's eyes? Am I a true Christian in God's eyes? Or am I all hat and no cattle in God's eyes?" To put the question another way we might say, "Am I 'dokimos'," the Greek word "dokimos."

We've been there before but let's go back to 1 Corinthians 11:19. We covered this before generally talking about divisions within the church. We want to talk about it today focusing on the word "dokimos" because it is pertinent to what we were just talking about—are we the real deal? Are we really who we say we are? Let's focus on the first six words Paul says.

1 Corinthians 11:19. *For there must be ... (KJV)*

He doesn't say, "There might be;" "there could be;" "in some areas there may be." He says:

1 Corinthians 11:19. *For there must be also heresies ... (KJV)*

The Greek word for “heresy,” in addition to being translated “heresy” can also mean *disunion*. It can mean *division*. Or there is another interesting translation of this word; it can mean *choices*.

So what Paul is saying, “There must be disunion and, subsequently, choices as a result of that disunion or division among you.” Then Paul tells us why. God always tells us why. He says:

19b) ... that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. (KJV)

He says, “There is going to be disunion. People are going to have to make choices, but there is a reason—so that those “who are approved made be made manifest among you.” Now let’s look for a minute—this is all by way of introduction—look for a minute at the words “approved” and “manifest.”

The word for “approved” is Strong’s #1384 and that’s “dokimos.” It means *acceptable after assayal*.

We don’t use the words “assay” or “assayal” very much today. But a hundred and fifty years ago during the Gold Rush, most towns in the mountains of California had an assay office. The guys would bring the gold nuggets down from the hills or down from the mountains and they would take it to the assay office to find out if it really was gold or whether it was fool’s gold or something else.

So the Greek word for “dokimos” means *acceptable after assayal; that is, approved*. It was most commonly used in Paul’s day of describing coins. If a coin was “dokimos,” then it was “assayed” to be of the correct weight of the right kind of precious metal to be of a certain value so you could use it for doing business—buying things and selling things.

What God is saying here in 1 Corinthians 11:19 is that there are those who are legitimate, genuine, and approved Christians and, then, there are those who are not. He is saying there will be divisions among you to separate those two so that you can see.

And that leads to the Greek word “manifest” which is Strong’s #5318. It’s the Greek word “p-h-a-n-e-r-o-s” (fan-er-os). It’s interesting the literal meaning of the word is *shining*. If you shine a light on something, generally it will reflect back and the object appears to shine. That’s the literal meaning of the word. It says, “*shining; that is, apparent, know openly or outwardly.*”

So, what we're being told here is there must be divisions so that those who are legitimate genuine Christians will shine, will be made apparent, will be openly discernable to those around.

Now, the apostle John had a similar instance and used the same word "phaneros." Let's go to 1 John 2:19. They had a division and people left. He explains why. There is nothing new under the sun.

1 John 2:19. *They went out from us, ... (KJV)*

A group left.

19b) ... but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest [phaneros] that they were not all of us. (KJV)

So, when they went out, the shining occurred. It was apparent to everybody that they were not like-minded with John. So, therefore, they left. And they ceased following the words of John and the example of John and went somewhere else, who knows where.

With that in mind, let's go to back to 1 Corinthians 11. We read verse 19 a second ago, but look at verse 1. Paul said, in essence, the same thing that John was saying and we've read this many times.

1 Corinthians 11:1. *Be [you] followers of me, ... (KJV)*

John, in essence, is saying the same thing.

1 Corinthians 11:1. *Be [you] followers of me [John], even as I also am of Christ. (KJV)*

Then in verse 19, Paul says that divisions occur so that those who are not legitimate Christians or legitimate ministers (whatever the case might be) would be made apparent to everybody around. So it's obvious that our job is to follow Christ, to follow the example of the apostles as perfectly as we can. And, if we do that, then we become legitimate genuine approved Christians.

So, as we approach the Passover less than two weeks away, this is the big question and this is the title of the sermon:

Am I a Genuine Christian?

Am I for real? Am I a legitimate genuine Christian in God's eyes? There is no greater question. We need to think about that as we approach the Passover. What we're going to do today in four main points in the sermon is we're going to ask the question, "How can I know if I am dokimos? How can I know if I am a legitimate Christian?"

1. Being dokimos, being genuine, requires works, deeds, and fruits.

These are absolute requirements—works, deeds, and fruits. Christ made that absolutely clear. Let's go to Matthew 19:17. Christ was asked by a young man; the man came to Him and said, "What do I have to do to inherit eternal life?" And Christ gave him a very direct answer, but He asks a question first.

Matthew 19:17. ... *Why [do you call] me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if [you want] to enter into [eternal] life, ... (KJV)*

It's very simple.

17b) ... keep the commandments. (KJV)

Then in His very first sermon, The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7 and in verse 16 and again in verse 20—when you repeat things twice it's important—Christ said, "You shall know them." The light will shine on them. "You shall know them by their fruits." They will be phaneros or manifest by their fruits, by their deeds, by their actions.

The fact is that it's easy to say. We all know that. It's easy to talk. The all hat and no cattle, it's easy to talk, but the reality is what do we do? What do we wind up doing? Some unknown author said a number of years ago, "Your example is shouting so loud I can't hear what you're saying." That's the way it works. God is saying, "I need to see; I demand to see fruits, deeds, works, to show, to demonstrate that you are a legitimate Christian.

Now the apostles said exactly the same thing. Let's go to Romans 2. The apostles picked up and followed in Christ's footsteps. We're going to see two examples, one from Paul and the other from James. In Romans 2, we'll read verses 11 through 13. The apostles repeated this.

Romans 2:11. *For there is no respect of persons with God. (KJV)*

Nobody gets a pass with God. God doesn't grade on the curve. We either do or we don't.

12) For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

In verse 13, we get to the point.

13) (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. (KJV)

That is, be put in a right standing with God—the doers of the law. Now James said it in a different way and amplified it. Let's go to James 1 and we're going to read verses 22 through 27. So, when Christ says it and then the apostles—two different apostles and there are other examples too that we don't have time to cover—pick it up, this has to be vitally important, extremely important because it's mentioned over and over and over in God's word. James says:

James 1:22. *But be [you] doers of the word, and not hearers only, ... (KJV)*

Then he says, "If you're hearers only:"

22b) ... [you deceive] your own selves. (KJV)

We won't turn there, but Paul talked about that in Hebrews 3:13—about the deceitfulness of sin. And James is saying, "If you are hearers only, you're playing games. You're deceiving yourselves. You're not dokimos. You're not legitimate."

23) For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [in a mirror]:

24) For he [beholds] himself [he sees the image but then he] [goes] his way, and straightway [forgets] what manner of man he was. (KJV)

He forgets what he saw. He doesn't want to look in the mirror. He doesn't want to examine. And there are some who will go to any length to avoid looking in that mirror.

This is one of my frustrations as an elder. You talk to people and they will do anything except look in the mirror and examine themselves. Some fixate on the sins of others, not looking at themselves, but they're so fixated on what other people are doing wrong or what other groups are doing wrong or what this guy or that guy is doing wrong it keeps them from looking at themselves.

There are others who fixate on prophecy. They are so focused on prophecy that it blinds them and blots everything else out. When you focus on prophecy to the exclusion of other things, guess what? You don't have to look in the mirror. You don't have to look at yourself to see whether or not you measure up to the image of Jesus Christ.

People will do anything to avoid confronting and changing who they are. We can't be part of that. If we want to be dokimos, if we want to be approved and genuine and legitimate, we have to look at ourselves, compare ourselves to Jesus Christ, see the difference and, then, start changing.

25) But whoso [looks] into the perfect law of liberty, and [continues] therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (KJV)

Or some translations say, “in his doing.”

26) If any man among you seem to be religious, ... (KJV)

On the outward side he seems to be a model Christian.

26b) ... [and he doesn't bridle] his tongue, [he deceives] his own heart, ... (KJV)

This is the “deceitfulness of sin” again, that Paul mentioned in Hebrews 3.

26 continued) ... this man's religion is vain. (KJV)

We don't want to go there. We don't want to be part of that. Verse 27, once again we have the answer.

27) Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, ... (KJV)

Boy our antennas should go up, our ears should go up.

27b) ... to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (KJV)

Both of these are deeds. To visit the fatherless and the widow and to keep oneself unspotted from the world, those are deeds that we must perform in order to be dokimos.

So you see these scriptures—and we could spend a whole sermon on this first point—but the scriptures we've already read require deeds of us that demonstrate to God and Christ that we are real Christians—deeds, works, fruits. We dare not; we don't want to be tares, clouds without water, because they're all hat and there are no cattle. They are all talk but there is no holy spirit. There are no deeds to back it up. All of us want to be genuine approved Christians as demonstrated by our fruits. So, the first thing in order to be dokimos is that we have to have fruits that demonstrate to God and Christ what we really are. Do we talk or do we do? We want to do both.

2. The second point about being dokimos, being a legitimate Christian, implies and requires that I love God with all my heart.

It is so simple. I have to love God with all my heart.

Let's go to Matthew 22 and we'll begin in verse 36 where Christ was asked the very pointed question: What is the greatest commandment in the law? Of course, the Jews of the day and the Pharisees, in particular, they would argue and fight and go back and forth about what was most important. They would get off on the twigs and the branches and eventually fall out of the tree. Christ was being asked a prime question.

Matthew 22:36. *Master, which is the great commandment in the law? (KJV)*

Christ didn't hesitate. He answered him directly.

37) Jesus said unto him, [You shall] love the Lord [your] God with all [your] heart, and with all [your life], ... (KJV)

The King James says "soul" and it means *our life*.

*37b) ... and with all [your] mind.
38) This is the first and great commandment. (KJV)*

We're going to come back here in just a moment. Christ was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5. So, let's go back to Deuteronomy 6:5 to see what Christ was quoting because there is a difference. And we want to investigate this difference. We have here in Deuteronomy exactly as Christ quoted up to a point.

Deuteronomy 6:5. *And [you shall] love the Lord [your] God with all [your] heart, and with all [your life], ... (KJV)*

This is just like Christ said in Matthew 22. But notice:

5b) ... and with all [your] might. (KJV)

Christ quoted this, but He changed it from "might" in the Old Testament to "mind" in the New Testament. Why the change? Why would Christ do that? What does He want us to learn? What is different?

The Hebrew word for "might" is Strong's #3966. And it means *by implication, wholly, meaning fully*; or it means *diligently* or it means *exceedingly well*.

Now contrast that with the Greek word for "mind," Strong's #1271 and it means *deep thought, exercise of the mind, or understanding*.

So why did Christ change from doing something wholly, fully to doing something with deep thought and understanding and exercising the mind? What was He trying to get across to us? He gives us the answer to this change in the Sermon on the Mount, His very first sermon. So, let's go to Matthew 5 and we'll just read two verses, 27 and 28. As we know, Christ's first sermon was mind-blowing to the audience because they had been so structured in the letter of the law and in physical obedience to the law that He blows their mind by saying things like this.

Matthew 5:27. *[You] have heard that it was said by them of old time, [You shall] not commit adultery: (KJV)*

True.

28) But I say unto you, That whosoever [looks] on a woman to lust after her [has] committed adultery with her already in his heart. (KJV)

What Christ brought is a spiritual application to the law that they had never considered before, a spiritual application to the law and a spiritual understanding of the law. And what He is telling all of us is that sin begins in the mind. If it's not controlled in the mind, it can lead to action. I can lead to deeds.

Paul understood this completely. Let's go to Romans 7, which talks about the war that Paul is having in his mind and the battles that go on that we're all too familiar with as human beings. We'll begin in verse 23. The apostles understood what Christ said and they amplified what Christ said.

Romans 7:23. *But I see another law in my members, warring against ... (KJV)*

What?

23b) ... the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members [in my body, in my human nature]. (KJV)

Verse 25:

25) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with [my] flesh the law of sin. (KJV)

Paul acknowledged his human nature. The only conclusion we can draw from this is that Paul had control of his mind. And when the wrong thoughts, the wrong urges, the wrong emotions came, he cast them out because he had control of what was going on between his two ears. And Paul gave a solution to how we can control our minds in Romans 12:2. He tells us how to do this. When we're called and when we're converted and when we're baptized and when we have God's holy spirit, a change is to occur from the old person to the new person.

Romans 12:2. *And be not conformed to this world: but be [you] transformed ... (KJV)*

"Transformed" means *to change from one thing to another thing.*

2b) ... be [you] transformed by the renewing of your mind, ... (KJV)

To be a Christian we have to have a new mind—a totally new mind. And that mind has to be the same mind that is in God and Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5). We have to have a new mind. Our old mind has to be flushed out and we are filled with a renewed mind, he says.

2 continued) ... that [you] may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (KJV)

If we have a new mind, we are now dokimos. We're approved. We're legitimate. We're genuine.

Now we can't do that on our own. We just can't do it on our own. We don't have the power. It is made possible by what we find in Acts 1:8. Christ has risen. He is appearing to the apostles and He is making them a promise. He made a promise to them that was fulfilled to them in a dramatic way and is fulfilled in us when we are baptized and have the indwelling of God's spirit. Christ is speaking to the apostles.

Acts 1:8. *But [you] shall receive ... (KJV)*

What did He say? Power.

Acts 1:8. *But [you] shall receive power, after that the [holy spirit] is come upon you: ... (KJV)*

We memorialize that when we keep Pentecost.

And we see here, looking at why Christ changed what He said to the people about loving God with "all your might" to "all your mind," Christ did that to show us that when we control our minds, we control sin. Sin begins in the mind. If we stop it in the mind, it goes away and there is no sin. Paul is saying, "Look, I've got this war going on." One of the things we need to learn to be dokimos is we still have human nature—wrong thoughts, wrong emotions, wrong pictures come into our minds—but if we have control of our minds, we just shut them out right away. We don't allow them to take root. We just cast them out because if we have control of our minds, then we have control of whether or not we sin.

So everything begins with loving God with all our minds and all our beings. That is the second way we can be dokimos.

3. The third way of being dokimos requires that I love my neighbor as myself.

Let's go back to Matthew 22 verse 39. The man asked "What is the great commandment?" Christ said, "There isn't one. There are two." We know everything starts with the first one, but He says, "The second is like the first." It is interesting He said that.

Matthew 22:39. *And the second is like unto it, ... (KJV)*

Now He wouldn't say that if there wasn't a connection between those two.

39b) *... [You shall] love [your] neighbor as [yourself]. (KJV)*

Christ was quoting Leviticus 19, verses 17 and 18. We'll come back to Matthew but now go to Leviticus 19:17-18. They have heard this before. They understood this, but they had a problem which we'll see in a minute.

Leviticus 19:17. *[You shall] not hate [your] brother in [your] heart: ... (KJV)*

This gives an implication of thinking about it—in your heart, inside you.

17b) ... [you shall] in any [way] rebuke [your brother], and not suffer sin upon him. (KJV)

Don't sin against your brother.

18) You shall not avenge [nor take vengeance], nor bear any grudge against the children of [your] people, but [you shall] love [your] neighbor as [yourself]: I am the [Eternal]. (KJV)

And the one who was saying this was Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament. So, Christ was quoting Himself.

We all know that they could not do that. We won't turn there but in Deuteronomy 5:29 Christ laments to Moses that "Oh, that there were such a heart in them that they would fear Me and keep My commandments always." They didn't have the power to do that, but the instructions were still there. One of the reasons for the Old Testament and for God calling Israel is to show that without God's holy spirit, you cannot please God. You cannot be dokimos. You can't be genuine and legitimate without God's holy spirit.

Let's go back to Matthew 22 where we just read verse 39 and let's go on to verse 40. Christ said:

Matthew 22:40. *On these two commandments hang ... (KJV)*

It doesn't say "part of the law" or "some of the law" or "most of the law." He says:

40b) ... all the law and the prophets. (KJV)

Mark 12:31 adds to this same account.

Mark 12:31b. *There is none other commandment greater than these. (KJV)*

These are the summit. These are the top—these two commandments.

And the point is the first commandment allows us to keep the second commandment. If we don't love God first with all of our heart, with all of our being, with all of our mind, we can't keep the second one. But if we do love God with all our heart, with all our mind,

with all our being, then we will keep the second one because we ultimately know that in God's plan, all people who have ever lived will be brothers and sisters with us in the kingdom.

I have heard twenty, thirty, forty years ago, a few sermons over the years where someone was trying to water down this scripture of loving your neighbor as yourself. They asked the question, "Well, really who is my neighbor?" Let's look at that. The word "neighbor" here is Strong's #4139. It's the Greek word "plosion" (play-see'-on). It means *a neighbor*. It also means *a fellow human being*. It means *a countryman*. It means *a fellow Christian* or it can mean *a friend*. By putting all those together, then the sum definition is *somebody who is nearby*. The word can literally mean *near*.

So we see that the definition—and this holds true no matter whose concordance you look at—the fact is, when Christ said "Love your neighbor as yourself," He is saying, "Love anyone who is nearby that you have contact with as much as you love yourself." The person who is standing six feet away across the counter in a grocery store or the bank teller, your next door neighbor, in a farmer's case it might be the farmer a mile down the road, anybody who is nearby or is near to you. Of course, with the internet and the phones that can mean they don't have to be physically nearby but they can be nearby in the fact that we can communicate with them.

Now, the apostles, did they drop this? Did the apostles ignore this and move onto other subjects? No, they didn't. Let's go to Romans 13 and verse 10. We could quote dozens of scriptures but we're going to look at a few about loving our neighbor as ourselves. Paul puts it in a different way. Paul says, "Love," the love we have for God with all our being:

Romans 13:10. *Love [works] no ill to his neighbor [No ill.]: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (KJV)*

And if we work no ill will to our neighbor, that means we want to cooperate with our neighbor. We want to get along with our neighbor. We want to esteem our neighbor better than ourselves.

With that jump to Galatians 5 and we'll read just one verse, verse 14. There is a simplicity in the gospel. There is a simplicity in God and Jesus Christ. People overcomplicate things. I think that's human nature really—to overcomplicate things.

Galatians 5:14. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; [You shall] love [your] neighbor as [yourself]. (KJV)*

Following what Christ said, emphasizing it over and over and over again because it's not easy sometimes. Then let's go to Philippians 2:3 and I'll read this out of the New King James. I think you know what this is. Two verses later in verse 5, it talks about having the mind of Christ. If we have the mind of Christ, then we can fulfill verse 3.

Philippians 2:3. *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition ... (NKJV)*

Meaning: To elevate the self at the expense of somebody else.

3b) ... or conceit, ... (NKJV)

Thinking one is better than another person.

3 continued) ... but in lowliness of mind [humility] let each esteem others better than himself. (NKJV)

And, if we would only do that, we would avoid a lot of conflict, a lot of trouble, a lot of upset. Now the New Living Translation, the NLT, says this and it's interesting.

Philippians 2:3. *Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. (NLT)*

If we would just do that in all occasions, but we too often fail.

The columnist Abigail Van Buren said this:

The best index of a person's character is: (a) how he treats people who can't do him any good, and (b) how he treats people who can't fight back.

Boy, is that ever true! But if we esteem others better than ourselves, we won't show respect of persons by currying favor with somebody who can give us something we want or we won't ignore people who can't fight back or we won't take advantage of people who can't fight back. Yet, you see that in the world all the time—people taking advantage of other people.

The next verse we're going to turn to is a verse that I don't know how many hundreds of times I read it. And I'm sure we've all read verses dozens if not hundreds of times and then, all of a sudden one day you read that same verse and it jumps out of the page like you've never read it before in your life. And it hits you right between the eyes. And this is one of those verses, 1 John 3:14. I read this about fifteen, sixteen or seventeen years ago and a light bulb went on that hadn't gone on before. And shame on me for going that long and reading this verse and not having the light bulb go on.

1 John 3:14. *We know ... (KJV)*

It doesn't say, "We suspect," or "We might," or "maybe it could be."

1 John 3:14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, ... (KJV)*

And I read that, "We know that we have passed from death unto life," like I had never read that before. I said to myself. "That's exactly what I want to know—if I've passed

from death unto life! I want to know if I'm dokimos. I want to know if I'm legitimate." And then the answer comes.

14b) ... because we love the brethren. He that [loves] not his brother [abides] in death. (KJV)

This happened at a time when various church groups were shooting ICBMs at each other and throwing rocks at each other and saying hateful things at each other. Even in local churches, there was warfare going on. Then you read that and you say, "Whoa, wait a minute! What have I allowed myself to get into here? What have I allowed to come into my mind—these thoughts that don't show love to the brethren?"

And I realized right then that, yes, I loved some brethren—like-minded brethren or brethren that I happened to get along with or friends in a close circle. But I had to ask myself, "Do I love all the brethren? Do I really love all the brethren? Am I willing to die for those people? Am I willing to sacrifice for those people?" I was an elder, obviously, at the time and I had to admit to myself that I hadn't been doing that. I hadn't been doing that. And when you see a blind spot, you have to start to change. As we're going to see in a minute, it only comes through the holy spirit.

So this third point of being dokimos is that we should express our love to God, we demonstrate our love to God by showing love to those around us, thereby, proving to God that we are genuine legitimate Christians.

4. We have to go through a process of examining ourselves to see if we are indeed legitimate.

As we approach the Passover, we have to ask ourselves (and I ask this to myself), "I need to find out what is keeping me from being dokimos. I need to examine myself, look in my heart to see what is preventing me from being legitimate and genuine in Christ's eyes and in the Father's eyes."

We often talk this time of year about this scripture, which we're going to turn to, as we approach the Passover and we emphasize it—and rightly so—but we should do it all year long. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 13:5. It's a very, very familiar scripture at this time of year, but when the spring holy days are over, we can't forget this scripture and just drag it up once a year. We have to do this often—every day, frankly.

2 Corinthians 13:5. *Examine yourselves, ... (KJV)*

That means we do the examining and the focus of the examining is us.

The Greek word for "examine" is Strong's #3985. It is the Greek word "p-e-i-r-a-z-o" (pi-rad'-zo). And it means *to objectively test*. It can mean *to scrutinize* or, here comes that word again, it can mean *to assay* like an assay office looks at gold and finds out if it's real or not. Or it can mean *to try in the sense that you put it to the test*.

So Paul is saying here,

2 Corinthians 13:5. [Scrutinize, assay, try yourself] *whether [or not you are] in the faith; ... (KJV)*

Whether or not you are a legitimate Christian, but notice going on in the rest of verse 5, he adds something else.

5b) ... prove your own selves.... (KJV)

Now that word is a different word. It is Strong's #1381. "Dokimos is #1384. The Strong's definition for #1381, the Greek word is "dokimazo" (dok-im-ad'-zo) rather than dokimos. And it says it's from dokimos #1384. It has two definitions. It means *to test, to examine to see whether a thing is genuine or not as in metals*. That's the first definition of dokimazo. Now dokimos referred to metals too. So, it is *to test, to examine to see whether a thing is genuine or not as in metals*. The second definition is *to recognize as genuine after examination*.

We see here that when Paul adds to "Examine yourselves," then he, says "Prove yourselves," to test ourselves to see if we are genuine; to assay ourselves to see if we are genuine or approved. Now, what should be the standard of our examination? The latter part of verse 5 tells us.

5b) ... prove your own selves. Know [you] not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except [you] be reprobates? (KJV)

That is the standard. That is the test—to look inside ourselves to see whether we have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5); to see if our deeds are similar to Christ's deeds, if our thoughts are similar to Christ's thoughts, if our words are similar to Christ's words. Do I have that mind? Am I following in those footsteps?

So in our examination process at this time of year, we need to identify areas where we don't think like Jesus Christ and we don't act like Jesus Christ. I have to look at my life and I see times when I don't think like Christ. I don't act like Christ, and I am ashamed and embarrassed.

The fact is though that Satan attacks us and provokes us not where we're strong, but where we are weak. He is the ultimate military general in that sense. If you study tactics and warfare, you don't attack the enemy head on where they are strongest. You attack them from the flank, or you attack them from behind. Or you attack the wall of a fort or of a city where it's weakest, not where it's strongest. That's exactly what Satan does. He provokes us and he attacks us where we are weak.

So we need to examine ourselves and sometimes we can't see ourselves like the man looking in the mirror and walking away. It's best then to ask somebody close,

somebody nearby, somebody who knows you well. Ask them, “If you could change one thing in me, what would it be?” Seek counsel if necessary because sometimes we can’t see it. We all need to ask God to reveal our blind spots because we all have blind spots. I have had so many. I just knew I was right, and then five years later, I looked back and I was so wrong. And I was ashamed I was so wrong. I was embarrassed I was so wrong.

Let’s go to 1 Timothy 5; we’re going to read verse 24 out of the Revised Standard Version because it makes it clearer. Paul is instructing Timothy because he’s this new pastor, this young minister. He’s telling Timothy, “Look, you have to watch out here. You have to be careful.”

1 Timothy 5:24. *The sins of some men are conspicuous, ... (RSV)*

We see it all the time. Some people just wear their sins on their shoulder. It’s just out there for everybody to see. Paul is acknowledging that to Timothy. Then he says:

1 Timothy 5:24. *The sins of some men are conspicuous, pointing to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. (RSV)*

We’ve known people that on the surface the first time you meet them, they’re friendly. They may even be charismatic and at first glance they just seem like model Christians. But after you get to know them and observe their deeds and hear their words, all of sudden a dark side emerges that wasn’t apparent in the beginning. Paul is saying to Timothy, “Just be careful. You can’t know a book by its cover. You have to give it time. Examine and see the fruits.” I’m sure Timothy needed that very badly.

Notice Psalm 19:12, which is a psalm of David. As we know with the situation with Bathsheba, David had several blind spots that he didn’t see in himself until later when Nathan confronted him. Notice what he said. David asked this question:

Psalm 19:12. *Who can understand his errors [or his sins]? ... (KJV)*

I’m sure when he walked out on the top of that building and looked down on Bathsheba, he had not a clue. He had no plan. He didn’t plan this thing was going to cascade down and creating all of this havoc. He’s saying to himself, “Who can understand what’s going on in his own mind?” Then he said to God:

12b) *... cleanse [You] me from secret faults. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for “secret” is Strong’s #5641. It’s the word “c-a-t-h-a-r” (saw-thar’) and it means *concealed or hidden*.

David is acknowledging, “I had some sins deep down that I was not aware of and look at the trouble it caused me.” He wanted God to show him his blind spots—the ones that are hidden even from ourselves, because if we’re blind to it, we don’t acknowledge it

because it's there but we don't see it. The shining hasn't occurred. The spotlight hasn't gone on it. So let's talk for a minute, just briefly about three blind spots that we can have that, frankly, are all too common with all of us.

The first blind spot, referring back to our second point, is a lack of godly love—love for God—and to the third point—love for our fellow man. Let's go to Matthew 24. We know Matthew 24 discusses the end time, discusses our time. If this doesn't apply to our time, I don't know what does. We have seen it fulfilled in front of our very eyes. We're going to read verses 10 through 12.

Matthew 24:10. *And then shall many be offended, ... (KJV)*

Has that happened? Big time.

10b) ... and shall betray one another, ... (KJV)

Talk badly about one another; gossip about one another.

10 continued) ... and shall hate one another. (KJV)

We have seen that. Why do they hate one another? Why do they betray one another and cause offense?

11) And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many. (KJV)

That's happening today. It is just amazing that the leaders say things that are absolutely false, absolutely un-Christian. Why is that happening? Why? Verse 12 gives us the answer.

12) And because [lawlessness] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (KJV)

If we love God with all our heart, if we love our neighbor as ourselves, we will do no ill will to our brothers and sisters in the church, our family members, or to those around us, but sometimes we can lack godly love and we are blind to it. We're thinking we're doing God a service. There were those who thought they did God a service by killing Christians. How blind can you get? And the human mind is deceitful and sin is deceitful. So that is something we should look at as we go through Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

A second blind spot—I'm going to talk about four things, but they really all are one—pride, self-righteousness, respect of persons, and selfishness. They're altogether. You can lump it under pride because it starts with pride—pride, self-righteousness, respect of persons, and selfishness. Let's go again to a prophecy that Paul made to Timothy, this time in 2 Timothy 3:1. You know where I'm going. We'll read verse 1 and the

beginning of verse 2. Pride leads to self-righteousness. Pride leads to respect of persons. Pride leads to selfishness.

2 Timothy 3:1. *This know also [young Timothy, my brother, my friend, my fellow elder], that in the last days perilous times shall come. (KJV)*

What does he list first?

2) For men shall be lovers of their own selves, ... (KJV)

“Looking at the self, loving the self, putting the self first;” then he says:

2b) covetous, ... (KJV)

Covetous means taking to the self, wanting to get for the self.

2 continued) ... boasters, ... (KJV)

Trying to brag about the self in order to elevate the self, and then it all comes under the one word:

2 continued) ... proud, ... KJV

So, this is something that we need to look at because it relates to the third point. Too many times we put ourselves first instead of esteeming others better than ourselves and loving our neighbor as ourselves. And, as I said, it all starts with loving God with everything we have. So we need to look and say, “Am I esteeming others out of humility better than myself. It’s a tough question. Sometimes when we ask that question, we have to hang our heads and put our tails between our legs and say, “Yep. I’ve been there. I’ve done that.”

The third blind spot is something I see just too often in counseling, and that is, hypocrisy—hypocrisy from the standpoint of living two lives. Living the church life, the church face, coming to services as if everything is fine; going home and then under the roof at home there is a completely different life, completely different language, completely different words, completely different attitudes, completely different motives, completely different deeds. And you look at that and say, “How can this be?” How can it be?

I talked to a man a number of years ago. He’s an elder and he said, “I’ve got two standards. I’ve got my standard for my dealings in the church. And then I’ve got another set of standards for dealing in my business.” I was so shocked my jaw was down on the floor. I was absolutely speechless. What do you say to somebody like that? Where do you start?’ This is somebody who has been in the church for thirty years, read all the scriptures and he says, “Hey, I can work this out. I can make it

happen. I do it all the time.” I just turned on my heels and walked away. I just didn’t know what else to do. Two standards. Two sets of rules.

Then we have the hypocrisy of people condemning others for doing something and they themselves are doing something worse but are blind to it. They don’t see it. Boy, they lash out at somebody or put the spotlight on somebody and say, “Do you realize what they’re doing? They’re doing this, that, and the other.” And then in their private life, they’re doing something far worse, but they’re blind. They don’t see it.

So when we look at these blind spots, we need to get down on our knees and sincerely ask God by saying, “God I want to be a better” and fill in the blank. “I want to be a better husband.” “I want to be a better wife.” “I want to be a better parent.” “I want to be a better friend.” Or above all, “I want to be a better Christian. I want to be more like you and like Jesus Christ. Please show me where I am lacking, where I am coming up short. Open my mind. Take the scales off my eyes so I can see.”

The other thing to be dokimos, to be legitimate is we have to realize where our battle lies. Our battle does not lie with our mates or with our fellow church members or with our next door neighbor. Our battle lies in what we find in Ephesians 6. Let’s go there. We’re going to read verses 11 and 12. I will read it out of the NIV. It puts it very nicely. It doesn’t change the meaning of the verse at all. This is talking about the whole armor of God, but notice who the enemy really is.

Ephesians 6:11. Put on the whole armor of God, ... (KJV)

Why do we need to that? He gives us the answer.

11b) ... that [you] may be able to stand against the wiles ... (KJV)

It’s not the next door neighbor. It’s not the mate. It’s the devil. The devil is the source of all evil. The devil is the source of all lies, of all iniquity, of all ungodliness.

12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world ... (NIV)

Because they’ve been influenced by the devil.

12b) ... and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (NIV)

They put thoughts in our heads, put pictures in our minds, put emotions.... And we just yield to those provocations and off we go.

But at the end of the day, we are responsible for our own fruit. We can’t blame anybody else. The old saying is, “The devil made me do it.” No, the devil didn’t make you do it. The devil may have encouraged us to do it or provoked us to do it, but he didn’t make us do it. We did it on our own.

Look at Galatians 6. We're going to read verses 3 and 4. We are responsible for our own actions, our own thoughts, our own deeds. Galatians 6, we'll begin in verse 3 where Paul hits pride right there.

Galatians 6:3. *For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he [deceives] himself. (KJV)*

And all of us know when we just take off the façade, get down to the core of who we are, we know that we are nothing compared to God. We are absolutely nothing. We are just naked and alone and like a newborn baby laying out in an alley somewhere, we have no hope, no defense, no protection apart from God. So, we come to realize that. That's what verse 3 is talking about. Pride should be gone.

4) But let every man prove ... (KJV)

Guess what that word is. Number 1381, dokimazo, *put to the test, assay, try.*

4) But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not [others]. (KJV)

Rejoicing in the sense that the only thing we have to do is yield to God and Christ. We can't take any credit for anything, but if we yield to God and Christ, then we can rejoice, but only from the standpoint that we are allowing the holy spirit to work inside of us and to motivate us to have the mind of the Father and the Son.

So what Paul is saying here, is let every man prove his own work to see if one's works are legitimate and genuine, if they are true, if they are approved by God Almighty. That ends the fourth point.

Now, let's just conclude. We've seen four ways we can be genuine Christians, legitimate Christians, dokimos according to the Greek word. The first is we have to bring forth fruit that demonstrates to God and Christ that we are indeed legitimate. We have to have works. The second one is we have to love God with all our being and with all our minds. Then following that the third point is we have to love our neighbor to the extent that we love ourselves. And we demonstrate God's love for us and we demonstrate our love for God by how we treat those that are nearby. Then the fourth is that we have to go through a process (emphasized at this time, yes, but all year long) of examining ourselves to see if we are indeed legitimate. We need to do that.

It comes back to the question: Am I all hat and no cattle? Is that what I am? Am I just pretending to be a follower of Christ? Or pretending when I'm near other people? Or am I deceiving myself thinking I can live two lives? All hat and no cattle? Am I a wannabe Christian? Now is the time to examine ourselves to determine the answer. How does my conduct compare with Jesus Christ's? Not only out in the open at church when people see me, but when the doors are closed, the drapes are closed, nobody

else can see, how does my conduct compare to that of Jesus Christ? Do I exhibit the fruits of the holy spirit every day of my life? Do I exhibit those fruits? Am I able to control my mind, my mouth and my deeds and to conform them to Jesus Christ, as Paul said?

We have a little less than two weeks to answer those questions. And we have a little less than two weeks to do something about the answer to those questions. So, as we approach the Passover, let's all strive with all our being to be dokimos.