

Examining Yourself 2021

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, January 24, 2021

INTRODUCTION

As we segue from worship to the ministry of the Word, I am saddened to report the sudden passing of our brother and friend, Michael Watson. Michael was a man who loved the Lord and a member of this assembly who will be deeply missed. I do not have service information, etc., at this juncture. Allow me to note...

NOTE 1 – His passing serves to remind us of this timeless truth...

James 4:14b

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

NOTE 2 – We mourn this loss, but “not as those who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13).

Q. Would you take a moment with me to pray for the family that remains?

NOTE 3 – At this time I will dismiss the children for Children’s Church...

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

FYI – Following service we will host our Church Business Meeting. This is our annual opportunity to assess the health and trajectory of the assembly using a series of key metrics (e.g., church financials, ministry updates, future goals, etc.). It is important to periodically examine the condition of the corporate body...

KEY 1 – It is also important to periodically examine the condition of our personal walks with Christ...

2 Corinthians 13:5a (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

5 **Examine** yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; **test** yourselves.

KEY 2 – Rather than cross-examining others, believers are to prioritize the examining of their own lives...

Galatians 6:4

4 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else.

Matthew 7:3–5

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

KEY 3 – A tough but spiritually beneficial question to ask ourselves regularly is, “What is my spiritual condition?”

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

KEY – Of course, if we are to evaluate our spiritual condition, biblically-sound metrics are required...

Q. Upon what basis are we to evaluate our relationship with Christ? Standard(s) of measure?

FYI 1 – This morning I would like to offer a series of assessment tools founded upon scriptural precepts. As we come to understand how God has ordered healthful Christian life and living, we can consider the degree to which we are in sync with His purposes and plan.

FYI 2 – I will be drawing from information I touch upon every few years, so if some of this sounds familiar may the Lord give you ears to hear what He is saying in this hour! If not, please take note of the following information!

“IN” CHRIST PT. 1

Christians are those who live IN Christ.

Q. What is the significance of this phrase and/or term?

A. “In” Christ speaks to union with Him (i.e., signifying vital relationship).

NOTE – As one scholar notes, “The simple and often intended meaning of ‘in Christ’ is to denote a relationship with Him.” This is a phrase that appears continually in the pages of the New Testament (i.e., primarily within the writings of the apostle Paul)...

1) It Often Appears in the Openings of His Epistles...

Ephesians 1:1 (Emphasis Mine)

1Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful **in Christ** Jesus . . .

Philippians 1:1 (Emphasis Mine)

1Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints **in Christ** Jesus at Philippi . . .

Colossians 1:1–2 (Emphasis Mine)

1Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, 2 To the holy and faithful brothers **in Christ** at Colossae . . .

1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1 (Emphasis Mine)

Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians **in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** . . .

2) It Often Appears in the Body of His Work(s)...

1 Corinthians 1:30 (Emphasis Mine)

30 It is because of him that you are **in Christ** Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

FYI – The union of believers with Christ is of the Father (i.e., something that He has purposed before the foundations of the world). God the Father has always planned to have a people for Himself, fundamentally linked to and united with His Son—the source of our righteousness, holiness and redemption!

Romans 8:1 (Emphasis Mine)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ** Jesus.

FYI – Those who are united with Christ by faith are spared from any condemnation. Death, hell and the grave hold no terrors for us, for Jesus has become our “propitiation” according to 1 John 2:2 (i.e., the atoning sacrifice that averts wrath).

2 Corinthians 5:17 (Emphasis Mine)

17 Therefore, if anyone is **in Christ**, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

FYI – Those who are joined with Christ through faith have experienced a new birth (i.e., beginning of a new life).

“IN” CHRIST PT. 2

FYI 1 – The greatest illustration of this spiritual union was put forth by the Lord Himself...

John 15:1–2, 4–5

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful . . . 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

FYI 2 – Without delving too deeply, Jesus likened Himself to a life-giving vine. He also likened us to branches that are meant to bear fruit that pleases the Father (i.e., gardener). We can only bear fruit as we are “in” Him (i.e., in vital connection and intimate union with Him).

“IN” CHRIST PT. 3

KEY – These principles provide a metric by which we can examine our Christian life and living (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5a)...

Q. To what degree do you live your life in vital union with Him?

Q. To what degree do you perceive your unique position before the Lord?

Q. To what degree do you allow the reality of this position to affect how you live?

Q. Do you realize that...

...No matter the situation
 ...No matter the circumstance
 ...No matter the pressure you face
 ...No matter the pain/distress you feel
 ...No matter the time or your geo. location

...You are IN living union with Jesus Christ? [and that changes everything]

Q. Do you recognize that...

...When you are surrounded by adversaries
 ...When you are bombarded with varying crises
 ...When you are walking through the darkest valley
 ...When you feel alone, abandoned and truly forsaken

...You are IN living union with Jesus Christ? [and that changes everything]

“WITH” CHRIST PT. 1

Christians are to live (i.e., walk) WITH Christ.

Q. What is the significance of this phrase and/or term?

A. “With” Christ speaks to the companionship or fellowship we experience with Him.

NOTE 1 – As the old song goes, “He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own.”

NOTE 2 – It would take months to explore all of the texts that speak to this wondrous reality. Please consider...

Isaiah 43:2 (Emphasis Mine)

2 When you pass through the waters,
 I will be **with** you;
 and when you pass through the rivers,
 they will not sweep over you.
 When you walk through the fire,
 you will not be burned;
 the flames will not set you ablaze.

Matthew 28:18–20 (Emphasis Mine)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am **with** you always, to the very end of the age.”

Psalms 23 (Emphasis Mine)

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
- 3 he restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are **with** me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
- 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

KEY – Every action of the Good Shepherd is inherently founded upon His ongoing, perpetual & abiding presence.

“WITH” CHRIST PT. 2

FYI – There may be a great many in the sound of my voice who may feel lonely (particularly in this season of social distancing and isolation)—but you are never alone. We are a people who relish in the promise of God (Heb. 13:5b): “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”

Q. To what degree do you live your life in light of this reality?

Q. To what degree do you seek and sense His intimate, abiding presence?

Q. To what degree do you allow the reality of His nearness to shape life and living?

KEY – This principle provides yet another metric by which we can examine our spiritual condition(s) as Christians.

Let us be a people who hunger for His presence. Let us be a people who, like Moses, treasure the presence of God more than the blessings He may give. Remember, Moses preferred to stay in the wilderness with the Lord than enter the Promised Land without Him (cf. Exod. 33). Why? There is no substitute for being with Him!

“THROUGH” CHRIST PT. 1

Christians are to live THROUGH Christ.

Q. What is the significance of this phrase and/or term?

A. “Through” Christ speaks to divine empowerment or enablement

KEY – There is nothing that I am called to be or do that I cannot achieve through the working of His divine power.

NOTE 1 – Of course, I recognize my own limitation...

John 15:5b (Emphasis Mine)

5 . . . apart from me you can do **nothing**.

NOTE 2 – Yet in and with Him, all things become possible...

Phil 4:13 (KJV, Emphasis Mine)

13 I can do **all** things **through** Christ who strengthens me.

Phil 4:13 (NIV 1984, Emphasis Mine)

13 I can do **everything** **through** him who gives me strength.

“THROUGH” CHRIST PT. 2

1) It is Through Christ that My Life is Transformed

John 15:5 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much **fruit**; apart from me you can do nothing.

Galatians 5:16–17, 19–23 (Emphasis Mine)

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the **fruit** of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

2) It is Through Christ that I Am Enabled to Serve

Acts 1:8 (Emphasis Mine)

8 . . . you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

3) It is Through Christ that I Can Endure

2 Corinthians 12:7b–10

7 . . . in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

“THROUGH” CHRIST PT. 3

Q. To what degree do you live your life in light of this reality?

Q. To what degree do you trust in the power of God to bring about personal renewal?

Q. To what degree do you believe for and anticipate the empowerment of God in your witness and work?

Q. To what degree do you rely upon the strengthening power of the Lord in your seasons of weakness?

KEY – This principle provides yet another metric by which we can examine our spiritual condition(s) as Christians.

Let us be a people who rely upon the power which He so generously supplies. In the end, it is not by might or by power that we grow, endure or achieve in the Lord—it is by the power of His Spirit in our lives (cf. Zech. 4:6). Let this bring necessary transformation to your heart, mind and Christian life!

“FOR” CHRIST PT. 1

Christians are to live FOR Christ.

Q. What is the significance of this phrase and/or term?

A. “For” Christ speaks to the purpose and aim of life and living.

KEY 1 – My life and every aspect of it is to be submitted unto Him. There is no part that is beyond the scope of His authority (e.g., my time, talents, dreams, hopes, resources, physical body, etc.). There is to be nothing in my life outside of His expressed or revealed will. He is Lord...

Romans 10:9–10 (Emphasis Mine)

9 If you declare with your mouth, “**Jesus is Lord**,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

KEY 2 – This principle is affirmed again and again in the pages of God’s Word...

1 Corinthians 6:20a (cf. 7:23)

20 You are not your own, you were bought at a price . . .

Matthew 16:24

24 “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

Ephesians 2:10

10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Philippians 1:21a

21 . . . For me, to live is Christ . . .

Colossians 1:15–16 (Emphasis Mine)

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and **for** him.

"FOR" CHRIST PT. 2

NOTE – Of course, many resist this reality and reject the invitation to receive Him as Lord. Many prefer to live life on their own terms (i.e., for something or someone else beyond the scope of His desire or authority). This is a perilous road indeed...

Matthew 7:13–14 (Emphasis Mine)

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to **destruction**, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

KEY – Serving Christ comes with great benefit...

1) The Promise of Eternal Life**John 3:16**

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

2) The Promise of Eternal Reward**Revelation 22:12**

12 "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.

Matthew 6:19–20

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."

3) A Life of Purpose and Meaning (i.e., Every Act is Charged w/ Eternal Significance)**Matthew 10:42**

42 . . . if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

“FOR” CHRIST PT. 3

Q. To what degree do you live your life in light of this reality?

Q. To what degree do you know Him as Lord that you might have Him as Savior?

Q. To what degree do you see purpose, significance and the hope of reward in daily life and living?

KEY – This principle provides yet another metric by which we can examine our spiritual condition(s) as Christians.

Let us be a people who give ourselves unto His lordship. Let us recognize that everything has been made both by and for Him. Our lives will only have purpose and meaning if we find THAT purpose and meaning in Him! Everything else is futility and shall prove to be utterly unstable foundations (cf. Matt. 7:24–29).

“BEFORE” CHRIST PT. 1

Lastly, Christians are to live BEFORE Christ.

Q. What is the significance of this phrase or term?

A. “Before” Christ speaks to spiritual accountability.

NOTE – The Lord is able to reward every action we undertake in His Name because He is always watching. He is ever mindful of our actions, our words, and even the very intents of our hearts! Nothing escapes His penetrating gaze...

Psalm 139:1–4

1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

4 Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

QUOTE – “My greatest thought is my accountability to God” –Daniel Webster

Hebrews 4:13

13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 9:27

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Romans 14:10

10 For we will all stand before God's judgment seat...

2 Corinthians 5:10

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

“BEFORE” CHRIST PT. 2

Q. To what degree do you live your life in light of these realities?

Q. To what degree do you live in the light of His penetrating gaze?

Q. To what degree do you consider your “spiritual” accountability?

KEY – This principle provides yet another metric by which we can examine our spiritual condition(s) as Christians.

Let us live in the light of eternity, knowing that we shall be called upon to give account. May we all aspire to hear the words from our great God and Savior (Matt. 25:21): “Well done, good and faithful servant . . . Come and share your master’s happiness!”

CONCLUSION PT. 1

In mere moments we will meet for our annual business meeting. We will put many aspects of the assembly under the magnifying glass (i.e., hoping that our stewardship and spiritual labor is pleasing both to the membership of this body and the Lord). Yet, it is essential to examine ourselves from time to time, making sure that we are progressing in His ways, plans and good purposes (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5a)

Let us live in, with, through, for and before the Christ. Let each of us examine ourselves in light of these truths!

CONCLUSION PT. 2

Thank you for taking the time to join us today. Should those of you who have joined us online wish to give, please do so through the giving portal of our church website (www.NewLifeBarre.org). For those who are present, please place your donation in one of our offering boxes.

NOTE 1 – The 2020 Annual Business Meeting will take place in just a few moments. We will take a brief ten-or-so minute break to use the restroom, grab a quick (i.e., church-provided) pre-packaged snack, collect your Annual Report, etc. We will reconvene shortly.

NOTE 2 – Parents with children may watch the meeting from the Community Room or the Nursery (though there will be no Nursery workers). Those who are at home can feel free to join via ZOOM or come back in a few minutes to our next livestream. All of the necessary information is and shall be posted on this FB page...

May the Lord bless you all!