

So after 5 years there I went to the Bible Institute of Los Angeles for a year to get warmed up again and to re-examine some of the thoughts that were in the bottom of my mind that had been inserted there during these years, and that were perplexing me a bit. During that year we had some wonderful evangelistic speakers and time after time students whom I had seen out on the street preaching the word of Christ, seeming to be such effective servants of His, would come forward at the end of a meeting and say, "I never thought I was a Christian before; I've never received Christ as Saviour and I want to do it now." I saw that happen in so many instances that I began to wonder, Am I really a Christian? Have I really believed in Christ? Have I really received Him into my heart?

I had no such experience, no such great experience. I could not remember any time at which I had specifically received Him into my heart. One night it bothered me. As I lay on my bed I thought about it and I turned to the Lord and I said, "Lord, I believe I've been your child for many years. I believe that I've truly belonged to Christ for a long time." I said, "If I have not, I will right now receive Him into my heart." From that moment I've never been bothered by that any more. I've always known that I belong to Him. But I'm glad I had that experience and I've had a certainty that goes beyond what I had before.

Are you certain that you've simply not gone along with the people that you like, people whose character seems good to you and followed along with them and wanting to be like them without truly having the experience of turning to Christ, of turning away from sin, receiving Him into your heart. He calls on everyone to receive Him. That, of course, is the heart of the Gospel. Sometimes I have felt that a sermon is not truly a Christian sermon no matter how good it is, no matter how much fine truth is in it, if it does not somewhere in the course of the sermon present the way of salvation clearly. I believe you never know when in a congregation to which you are speaking there is someone who has not truly received Christ into his life.

I've heard wonderful ethical sermons, fine sermons about Christian service which a man might listen to and when he got through would have no idea what the real meaning of Christianity is. "As many as received Him." Make sure you have received Him. Make your calling and election sure.

But secondly, Paul calls on us to examine ourselves as to our sanctification. Everyone who receives Christ has gone from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God. Yet there are people who have never received Christ whose ethical character is way above that of some people who have received Christ as Saviour. The question is not where you are. But what direction are you moving? If one truly knows Christ he must be moving forward in his sanctification. He must know Him better today than he knew Him a year ago. He must be living more in the presence of Christ. He must be more real in his prayer life. He must have the love of Christ show through him more truly.