

Title: Approved in Christ
Text: 1 Corinthians 11: 19
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1 Corinthians 11: 18: For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be DIVISIONS among you; and I partly believe it. 19: For there must be ALSO HERESIES among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

The word "heresies" means parties or sects. The Sadducees, Pharisees and Nicolaitans are an example. But within the church at Corinth dissensions arose from varying opinions. So it is in our day. But God has a purpose even in all these choices among men.

1 Corinthians 11: 19: For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are APPROVED may be made manifest among you.

There must needs be all these different parties and denominations and varying opinions that those God has approved may be manifest among you.

God is the Assayer. One who approves gold is called an assayer. If one claims gold is 18 carat gold the "assayer" assesses the gold to determine if the actual fineness of the gold agrees with the claim. If so he gives the gold a stamp of "approval."

Heresies is one of God's trials of faith. Through them our Lord assesses each child to whom he has given faith in Christ. By the test, he manifests those he has approved. Those he has given true faith, those he has accepted and is pleased with in Christ shall continue in faith in Christ.

The last time I preached on this I used an illustration that I found helpful. There are three methods of assaying gold.

Division: 1) The Touchstone Method; 2) The X-ray Method 3) The Fire Method.

THE TOUCHSTONE METHOD

In this method, gold is rubbed against a touch stone leaving some of the gold on the stone. Then different strengths of acid are dropped on the gold. It is where we get the term acid-test. The purer the gold the stronger the acid it takes to dissolve it. If it dissolves quickly it is lower karat gold. If it takes stronger acid it is higher karat gold. If it is not gold it will not even abide being rubbed on the touchstone.

Christ Jesus is the Touchstone. The acid test is what think ye of Christ?

Matthew 22: 41: While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The Son* of David. 43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, 44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? 45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? 46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions*.

Christ is the Stone against whom all that hear the gospel are rubbed.

1 Peter 2:4: To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5. Ye also as lively stones are built up...

It is by Christ Jesus that God assays—tries—all who hear the gospel. Christ Jesus has two effects on people. One, for those God has given true faith, Christ is precious to us.

1 Peter 2: 7: Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious:

Isaiah 13: 12: I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

To those given true faith, Christ is more precious than fine gold! God made Christ Wisdom unto us. Solomon wrote of Christ our Wisdom as “more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto [Wisdom.]” (Pr 3:15)

Christ is precious to us because in Christ we see God's wisdom in being a Just God and a Savior. Also, Christ is Wisdom in our hearts; we have discernment because Christ is our Wisdom. So by faith, we behold how Christ is our Righteousness. He justified God's elect. We behold how God is just to show us mercy. Christ bore justice for us and made us the righteousness of God in him. This is why God's saints are just to show one another mercy. Judgment has been settled by Christ on the cross.

When Abraham sent his servant to find a bride for Isaac, it is a picture of God sending the gospel to find his bride for Christ, to call his elect to faith in Christ. The servant spoke of his master, Abraham and of his son, Isaac. We speak of God our Father and Christ his Son. When Rebekah was given a heart to be Isaac's bride, she was given precious jewels, among which was gold.

Genesis 24: 53: And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave *them* to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

When God sends his preacher with the gospel and reveals Christ to one of his elect, Christ is the Jewel! The unsearchable riches of Christ is Christ and all the blessings of God we have in him and by him! His raiment of righteousness robes us by God's grace. Christ becomes precious to us.

As they travelled that long distance to meet Isaac, I picture Rebekah asking the servant over and over, "Tell me again about Isaac!" As we travel to meet our Isaac, God's saints want to hear Christ's person and works declared every time we hear the gospel preached. He is the Gospel to us. He is precious to you who believe.

But the second effect Christ the Touchstone has on people is vastly different. If a man's faith is not the gift of God, Christ makes his faith dissolve quickly. To this man, the Stone is a,

1 Peter 2: 8: And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence,...

When men still have choices or when sinners put confidence in "self" in some way, Christ is a stumblingstone.

Romans 9: 32: Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingSTONE;

1 Corinthians 1: 18: For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

THE X-RAY METHOD

By this method, x-ray light is used to measure the inner purity of gold. If gold is only plated the light will reveal the inside is not gold.

Christ Jesus is the Light. He is the Word who is “the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb 4: 12)

The Pharisees were whited sepulchers on the outside. But when Christ declared they had not kept the law, Christ revealed their hearts. Christ declared sinners must have a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. That righteousness is Christ himself. By that word, Christ the Light, revealed the inner most heart of those who were looking to self for righteousness by their works.

It is the gospel that strips man of all his goodness and all his glory. The gospel gives all the glory to Christ. It is this Light that reveals the thoughts and intents of the heart. Christ coming and laying down his life in

place of his people declares all who he saves were sinners dead in our sins. Those Christ saves are ungodly, God haters by nature. This Light reveals what a man really thinks of himself.

Christ declared to Nicodemus that a man must be born from above. A sinner must be born of the water of the word and of the Holy Spirit or he cannot see Christ and enter the kingdom. The light of this word, the gospel of Christ, reveals the heart of every man who puts confidence in his will that he had a part in making himself be born-again and in coming to Christ. It is Christ the Word delivered through the gospel of God's written word that "is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

But by the same gospel, God assays the heart and the faith that God has given. By Christ the Light, by Christ the Word, the believer hears he is the sinner and agrees with God against himself. He confesses to God he must have Christ or he perishes forever. By Christ, through faith, the same gospel

Ephesians 3: 16:...strengthens us with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

This is why Paul declared, "There must needs be heresies that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

THE FIRE METHOD

The fire method is the most destructive method used to assay gold. By this method, the gold is put into a furnace and the fire consumes the dross so that all that is left is pure gold.

Christ is the Refiner. He is like a refiner's fire.

Malachi 3: 1: Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. 2: But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 3 And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

Christ is the Refiner and he is the Fire. It is not the trial itself that purges our dross. It is not God removing trouble and making our circumstances like we want them to be that purges us. It is Christ himself. The fire of trial does not hurt those with true faith but makes us rest in Christ alone more. Those he has given faith, are sustained in faith by Christ himself.

1 Peter 1: 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6: Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Our great Refiner sends the trial. But Christ also sends the gospel. By his Spirit, he keeps us in the furnace of affliction, sustaining our faith, till he consumes our dross. He keeps us in the fire of trouble until we cease looking to self. Christ makes the fire rage until we are turned to him and made to trust him alone and to wait on him alone to save. But like he was in the fire with the three Hebrew children so Christ is the fire with his child, sustaining us in faith the whole way. Then he reminds us the reason he sent the trial.

Isaiah 48: 10: Behold, I have refined thee, but not with [as] silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. 12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.

Malachi 3: 3...he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

The only offering in righteousness that God will receive is Christ. So Christ purges everything that is not simple faith in him. That is how Christ makes us come to the Father with the one offering God will receive, Christ our Righteousness.

But where a man's faith is not the gift of God, there is only dross. So the self-made religionist cannot bear the fire! Christ said,

Matthew 13:21: Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

This is why the Spirit of God declares "there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

Those approved are one with Christ our Touchstone. The acid test is what think ye of Christ? To you who believe this Living Stone is precious. We say, "to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life and we believe and are sure thou art that Christ the Son of the living God."

Since Christ is the Light who called us into his marvelous Light, his Word penetrates our hearts and makes us glad. We have no Light but Christ. He alone expels our darkness.

Christ is our Refiner. He is the refining Fire who consumes our dross so that we are left trusting Christ. We give him all the glory in every aspect of our salvation.

The marks of one approved of God is that he remains steadfast in faith in Christ. We walk by faith which works by love. We glory only in the cross of Christ, by whom the world is crucified to us and us to the world. It is only those who believe on his Son by God-given faith that approves!

2 Corinthians 10: 18: For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

1 Peter 4: 14: If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

We want to be found in Christ like our brother Appelles. Paul said, "Salute Apelles approved in Christ." (Rom 16: 10).

Amen!