

than He did a year ago. Salvation is an instantaneous thing, but sanctification is a progressive thing which must go on all through our lives. It is ~~the~~ very important that we examine ourselves.

I remember when I was in seminary one of the professors said once: It is possible to maintain a good devotional life even in a theological seminary! It sounds terrible to say such a thing. But it is true. It is very easy to feel that we are going to serve Christ in days to come; we are just preparing for it. You must be serving Christ right now. You must be growing in your knowledge, growing in your understanding of His Word. Every course that we take in seminary can be simply something that we learn, some facts, or it can be a means of grace. It can be something that draws us closer to the Lord, something that enables us more effectively to serve Him, something that makes us grow in grace and in the character He wants us to have. It is good to examine ourselves.

Even Paul said that he hoped he would pass the examination. I don't think he had any doubt of his salvation. But I am sure he thought repeatedly in his life of whether he was growing more than he had a year ago, or less than he had a year ago, and how God wants him constantly to move forward. Sometimes I've thought that if the standard of some of us is say here and that of some of us here and of some of us here (motioning upward with the hands), it seems that there is a tremendous difference between them in their character. But we think of the standard that God wants and it's more like the ceiling. More like something four or five times as high as the ceiling. We have a long way to go. But how easy it is because you are here and someone else is there to feel so superior to the other person. Don't judge yourself by others. Judge yourself by the standard God has in His Word. Ask Him each day to show you whether you are growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, or whether you have backslidden a little bit that day. The life that counts for Christ must be a life of constant improvement.

Perhaps even more directly applicable to the problems of seminary personnel is the third: Examine yourselves as to your service. Somebody has said a trip across the ocean does not make a missionary. If you are not serving Christ in Hatfield, you are not apt to serve Christ in the Congo. The place where you are is not what matters. Some people think God has called them to a certain distant part of the earth and they are going to serve God when they get there. God has called us to serve Him wherever we are. It's not one thousandth as important where we are as what we are doing where we are!

If you are not effectively serving Christ as a seminary student you are not apt to do it as a seminary graduate. Examine yourself as to your service, as to your preparation for service. Here in seminary it is easy to think of each problem, each situation in one of two ways: How will I get by in this course? How will I get these credits? Or, How will I fit myself to serve Christ more effectively? Every course in the seminary is important in enabling you to learn to serve Christ effectively. That mark at the end, that degree at the end, that is just a way-mark along the way.