

Questions for Adult Believers

by John Fletcher

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," II Cor. 13:5

Whatever we see in the example of Jesus, and whatever he promises to bestow on his followers, are unquestionable privileges of Gospel salvation....Nor can we ever have so much of the likeness of God as to be incapable of more; but rather the more we obtain of his image and favour, the more we are fitted to receive for ever and ever.

HEADS OF EXAMINATION.

I. Do I feel any pride; or am I partaker of the meek and lowly mind that was in Jesus?

Am I dead to all desire of praise? If any despise me, do I like them the worse for it? Or if they love and approve me, do I love them more on that account? Am I willing to be accounted useless, and of no consequence, glad to be made of no reputation? Do humiliations give me real pleasure, and is it the language of my heart,

"Make me little and unknown,
Loved and prized by God alone?"

II. Does God bear witness in my heart that it is purified? That in all things I please him?

III. Is the life I live, "by the faith of the Son of God;" so that Christ dwelleth in Me?

Is Christ the life of all my affections and designs, as my soul is the life of my body? Is my eye single, and my soul full of light, all eye within and without; always watchful?

IV. Have I always the presence of God?

Does no cloud come between God and the eye of my faith? Can I "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks?"

V. Am I saved from the fear of man?

Do I speak plainly to all, neither fearing their frowns, nor seeking their favours? Have I no shame of religion; and am I always ready to confess Christ, to suffer with his people, and to die for his sake?

VI. Do I deny myself at all times, and take up my cross as the Spirit of God

leads me?

Do I embrace the cross of every sort, being willing to give up my ease and convenience to oblige others; or do I expect them to conform to my hours, ways, and customs? Does the cross sit light upon me, and am I willing to suffer all the will of God? Can I trample on pleasure and pain? Have I

"A soul inured to pain,
To hardship, grief, and loss;
Bold to take up, firm to sustain,
The consecrated cross?"

VII. Are my bodily senses, and outward things, all sanctified to me?

Do I not seek my own things, to please myself? Do I seek grace more for God's honor than my own profit, preferring the glory of God to all in earth or heaven, the giver to the gift?

VIII. Am I "poor in spirit?"

Do I "take pleasure in infirmities, necessities, distresses, reproaches;" so that out of weakness, want, and danger, I may cast myself on the Lord? Have I no false shame in approaching God? Do I seek to be saved, as a poor sinner, by grace alone?

IX. Do I not "lean to my own understanding?"

Am I ready to give up the point, when contradicted, unless conscience forbid? Am I easy to be persuaded? Do I esteem every one better than myself? Am I as willing to be a cypher as to be useful, and does my zeal burn bright, notwithstanding this willingness to be nothing?

X. Have I no false wisdom, goodness, strength; as if the grace I feel were my own?

Do I never take that glory to myself which belongs to Christ? So I feel my want of Christ, as much as ever, to be my all? And do I draw near to God, as poor and needy, only presenting before him his well beloved Son? Can I say,

"Every moment Lord, I need
The merit of thy death?
I shall hang upon my God,
Till I thy perfect glory see,
Till the sprinkling of thy blood
Shall speak me up to thee?"

Do I find joy in being thus nothing, empty, undeserving, giving all the glory to Christ? Or do I wish that grace made me something, instead of God being all?

XI. Have I meekness?

Does it bear rule over all my tempers, affections, and desires; so that my hopes, fears, joy, zeal, love, and hatred, are duly balanced? Do I feel no disturbance from others, and do I desire to give none? If any offend me, do I still love them,

and make it an occasion to pray for them? If condemned by the world, do I entreat; if condemned by the godly, am I one in whose mouth there is no reproof; replying only as conscience, and not as impatient nature dictates? If in the wrong, do I confess it? If in the right, do I submit, being content to do well, and suffer for it? It is the sin of superiors to be overbearing, of inferiors to be stubborn; if, then, I am a servant, do I yield not only to the gentle, but to the froward, committing my cause in silence to God; or if a master, do I "show all long suffering?" The Lord of all was "as he that serveth." If a teacher, am I lowly, meek, and patient, not conceited, self willed, nor dogmatic? Am I ready to give up the claims of respect due to age, station, parent, master, &c; or do I rigidly exact those demands?

XII. Do I possess resignation?

Am I content with whatever is, or may be; seeing that God, the Author of all events, does, and will do, all for my good? Do I desire nothing but God, willing to part with all, if the Lord manifest his will for my so doing? Do I "know how to abound," and yet not gratify unnecessary wants; but being content with things needful, do I faithfully and freely dispose of all the rest for the help of others? Do I know how to suffer need? Is my confidence unshaken while, humanly speaking, strangling were better than life? And, in these circumstances, do I pity those who, having plenty, waste it in excess, instead of helping me?

XIII. Am I just; doing in all things as I would others should do unto me?

Do I render due homage to those above me, not presuming on their lenity and condescension? As a superior, do I exercise no undue authority, taking no advantage of the timidity, respect, or necessity of any man? Do I consider the great obligation superiority lays me under, of being lowly and kind, and of setting a good example?

XIV. Am I temperate, using the world, and not abusing it?

Do I receive outward things in the order of God, making earth a scale to heaven? Is the satisfaction I take in the creation consistent with my being dead to all below, and a mean of leading me more to God? Is the turn of my mind and temper in due subjection, not leading me to any extreme, either of too much silence, or to too much talkativeness, of reserve, or freedom?

XV. Am I courteous, not severe?

Suiting myself to all with sweetness? Striving to give no one pain, but to gain and win all for their good?

XVI. Am I vigilant; redeeming time, taking every opportunity of doing good; or do I spare myself, being careless about the souls and bodies to which I might do good?

Can I do no more than I do? Do I perform the most servile offices, such as require labour and humiliation, with cheerfulness? Is my conversation always seasoned with salt, at every time administering some kind of favour to those I am with?

XVII. Do I "love God with all my heart?"

Do I constantly present myself, my time, substance, talents, and all that I have, a living sacrifice? Is every thought brought into subjection to Christ? Do I like, or dislike, only such things as are pleasing or displeasing to God?

XVIII. Do I love God with all my strength, and are my spiritual faculties always vigorous?

Do I give way to no sinful languor? Am I always on my watch? Do not business, worldly care, and conversation, damp my fervor and zeal for God?

XIX. Do I love my neighbor as myself; every man for Christ's sake, and honor all men, as the image of God?

Do I think no evil, listen to no groundless surmises, nor judge from appearances? Can I bridle my tongue, never speaking of the faults of another, but with a view to do good; and when I am obliged to do it, have I the testimony that I sin not? Have I that love which hopeth, believeth, and endureth all things?

Many consider that "perfect love which casteth out fear" as instantaneous: all grace is so; but what is given in a moment, is enlarged and established by diligence and fidelity. That which is instantaneous in its descent, is perfective in its increase.

This is certain, too much grace cannot be desired or looked for; and to believe and obey with all the power we have, is the highway to receive all we have not. There is a day of Pentecost for believers; a time when the Holy Ghost descends abundantly. Happy they who receive most of this perfect love, and of that establishing grace, which may preserve them from such falls and decays as they were before liable to.

Jesus, Lord of all, grant thy purest gifts to every waiting disciple. Enlighten us with the knowledge of thy will, and show us "the mark of the prize of our high calling." Let us die to all thou art not; and seek thee with our whole heart, till we enjoy the fulness of the purchased possession. Amen !

John Fletcher - Methodist Preacher and Apologist Born 1729, died 1785. From the Works of John Fletcher; Vol 4, pages 267-270. Chapter titled "Heads of Examination for Adult Christians"

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