



## **Before You Throw the Flag** by [John T Polk II](#)

*All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.*

According to the rules of football, some players may be disqualified (rejected, thrown out of the game) if they show an unwillingness to follow all of the rules. Some things show a serious violation of football rules, such as: helmet-to-helmet tackling; "spearing," or tackling by leading with the helmet; stomping on a downed player; or fighting after the whistle has blown. Who has the right to tell any player he cannot play, except those who are designated to enforce the rules? There is no fear of being disqualified as long as one plays by the rules.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, he taught them (and us!) how not to be thrown out of the Christian life ("disqualified"): "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified" ([2 Corinthians 13:5-6](#)).

To "examine yourselves" meant for Christians to look into their own heart, individually, and determine whether they were "in the faith" or not. "In the faith" refers to the rulebook God has given, the Bible (Old and New Testaments). Our own judgment of ourselves, however, is not enough, for Paul had written, "For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord" ([1 Corinthians 4:4](#)). God is the One who applies the rules, but each person must be honest with himself and determine whether or not he has followed those rules.

To "test yourselves" meant a detailed examination, like one would with some metal (gold, silver, etc.). This surely takes this self-examination beyond merely our opinion of ourselves, but going through the details of who we really are. This should take place every first day of the week in the Lord's Supper, for Paul had written:

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body ([1 Corinthians 11:27-29](#)).

No one should think he is "worthy" of Jesus Christ, not John the Baptist ([Acts 13:25](#)) nor the Apostle Paul ([1 Corinthians 15:9](#)). However, Christians can



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(and should!) "walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" ([1 Thessalonians 2:12](#)).

Paul wrote to Philippi, "let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God" ([Philippians 1:27-28](#)). The Lord's Supper should always be taken by those who feel unworthy of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, and grateful that He has prepared the Way by which we are enabled to "walk worthy."

No one is qualified to follow Christ who has not played by the rules. Paul wrote, "And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules" ([2 Timothy 2:5](#)). No one is a Christian who has declared their sins already forgiven before being baptized, for it is in baptism that one is saved.

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin ([Romans 6:4-6](#)).

No one is a Christian who, though once baptized into Christ, has gone back into the ways of the world. It was to Christians that Paul wrote:

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God



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comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them (**Ephesians 5:3-7**).

If a child of God becomes disobedient once again, there is NO promise of salvation, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (**1 Corinthians 10:12**).

No one is a Christian who worships God according to their wishes, rather than as God directs.

Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,' which all concern things which perish with the using-- according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh (**Colossians 2:18-23**).

Christians can be cheated out of their reward who:

- Don't offer the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (**Acts 20:7**);
- Disregard the unity of the body of Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:17-27**);
- Accompany their singing with instruments other than their hearts (**Ephesians 5:19**);
- Give grudgingly to the Lord (**2 Corinthians 9:7**);
- Pray for publicity with symbols and prayer mats (**Matthew 6:5**);
- Make a great outward religious showing with their clothing, ceremonies, and titles (**Matthew 23:1-10**);
- Convert people to the wrong way of serving God (**Matthew 23:15**).

Before you throw the flag on other Christians and the churches of Christ, take the Holy Spirit's word and "examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves." The only rule a Christian should follow is the word of Christ; the only



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pattern to imitate is the example of Christ; the only comfort is in the love of Christ; and the only reward is in the judgment of Christ. "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart" (**Psalm 26:2**).

**--- John T Polk II**