

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 16- The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error

151. Testing the Spirits- Part 2

WAOY Wednesday 02/13/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to *continue* to examine what John taught about "Testing the Spirits". So let's open our Bibles and read **1John 4: 1-6-** again together:

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

5 They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them.

6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Now I want us to look very carefully at verse 1 of Chapter 4 on today's broadcast and so let's read that verse again together:

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

So here John gives us an Apostolic command to "**test the spirits**" to see if they are of God. Now why did John tell us to do this? Well he answers that in the last part of this verse:

... because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Now many today tend to think that the issue of false prophets is an ancient problem that science and technology and education and social advancements caused to vanish hundreds of years ago. But that is not true. If anything- there are actually *more* false prophets alive and operating today in the earth than there were when John actually penned down these inspired words. And there is a reason for that.

There is a great reluctance on the part of many in the modern Church to do what Scripture clearly teaches and that is to hold what people say and what people teach and what people believe accountable to Scripture. Spiritual Discernment has gone out of style in our day and any attempt at maintaining Doctrinal purity is looked at as being mean spirited; cruel, judgmental, or in some cases even unchristian. We value human relationships- being liked and of liking everybody way above being faithful to what Christ taught and we have been conditioned to believe that anything that divides people is bad and wrong.

Let me give you and very clear example of what I am talking about. We have many people in this country- some of whom are unfortunately in positions of power and leadership- who honestly believe that the reason that we are fighting against demon possessed barbarians who blow up buildings and ten year old little girls is because there is some big misunderstanding between us. That if only we would sit down and talk to these savages- that we could all holds hands and get along and end the war on terror.

Perhaps if we would give them money- we could buy some peace from them- sort of like paying ransom to a blackmailer.

But dear friends- the reason that we are fighting against terrorism is not because we *don't* understand what these people are trying to do- it is precisely because we understand *exactly* what they are trying to do that we fight. It is because we understand very well that those who truthfully follow this demonic religion do not value any life- not even their own- not even their own children- who they gladly strap bombs to so they can blow them up. These people will stop at nothing until the United States of America lives under sharia law and that every Christian and Jew on earth is forcibly converted to Islam by the edge of the sword. That has been their written and openly stated goal since the seventh century. Back then all they could do was rattle their swords

and cry out against the sand- and we were protected from their madness by thousands of miles of open seas- but today these same people- emboldened by fear and hate- now have hundreds of billions of dollars of oil revenue and they are desperately trying to get a hold of a nuclear weapon.

So our options are very limited here- we either fight them there or we fight them here- but fight them we will. The reason that our options are very limited is because we were attacked- we lost more people on 9/11 than we did in Pearl Harbor. Even the Japanese would not bomb civilian targets during that raid over 60 years ago- but these terrorists do not hesitate.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to return to those peaceful days before evil men following an evil religion came out of nowhere to kill men, women, and children- even other Muslims in their effort to destroy our nation? But we can never go back to those days- that is a pipe dream and a fantasy. We are confronted with one of the most serious challenges to our survival that we have every faced and we will either win this battle or we will lose.

During the late 1930's a British Prime Minister by the name of Neville Chamberlain didn't believe that Adolf Hitler was willing to plunge the entire world into a war- that if only he could talk to the German Dictator- all would be well.

Chamberlain believed that all men were basically good and that reason and money could persuade anyone. Chamberlain said that if he could just talk to Hitler- Hitler would see the sincerity of his heart and Germany would not attack Poland. So on September 30, 1938, Neville Chamberlin went to Germany and talked to Hitler for hours and he even got Hitler to sign and piece of paper promising that Germany would never attack Poland. When Chamberlin returned back to England – he lifted the paper above his head in triumph and said, “We have peace in our time!”

On September 1, 1939 the Nazi Panzer tanks crossed the border of Poland and World War 2 began that would eventually take the life of over 100 million human beings.

The point here is that when evil confronts you; when evil rears its ugly head; when evil comes to your door- you have two choices- surrender or fight. And that is what the Apostle John saw in the Church late in the first century. John said that evil men were trying to

come into the Church to destroy it. Jude taught in verse 4 of his Epistle that these “certain men” “ungodly men” would creep into the Church. Now these ungodly men weren’t going to destroy the Church with weapons or tanks- no, these “spiritual terrorists” were going to sneak into the Church disguised as genuine believers and they were going to function as “sleeper cells” *inside* the Church for the purpose of detonating their “dirty bombs” of false teaching and wicked doctrine.

Now I realize that anytime that anyone begins to talk about this issue- many, many people simply turn them off. They view talk like this as inflammatory and unnecessary. I am well aware that I could make many more friends and expand my influence if I would just teach a nice sermonette about how we all can become richer and happier with ourselves- but I am endeavoring to teach verse by verse through the Epistle of **1John** on these broadcast and I didn’t write this book- God the Holy Ghost inspired John to write it- and this is the subject that the Apostle John talked about here in **1John4:1**- which is why I am dealing with it now.

Now even though many of us today are not bothered by the issue of false doctrine and false teachers- John clearly was. And so this last living Apostle gives us a command in this verse to test the Spirits to prove whether or not they are of God; to try to the Spirits; to put what we hear and what we are taught and who we are listening to a test that will prove whether or not who they are and what they teach is Divinely inspired or is the invention of Man or comes from the devil.

So this is the great issue of what is called spiritual discernment; or being able to rightly divide the Word of Truth; or to be able to make a clear distinction between that which is holy and that which is profane.

Now many today believe that this is the job of the pastor or the elders or the other leaders of the Church and I agree that those who stand in positions of authority in the House of God are saddled with this responsibility. Let’s read **2Timothy 2:15**:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

Now **1 & 2 Timothy** as well as **Titus** are three Epistles or letters from an Apostle known as the “Pastoral Epistles”. These three Epistles teach pastors how to be pastors and they establish the qualifications for those

in leadership in the House of God. No one should hold any position of leadership in God's House who does not meet up to the qualifications that these Epistles set forth.

So in **2Timothy 2:15**- the Apostle Paul is instructing young Timothy how to prepare himself to lead the flock of God in the Church at Ephesus. And in this verse that we just read- Paul gives Timothy a command- not a suggestion- but a command- that Timothy should study.

Now when you break this verse down back to the original Greek- here is what you will find. The word, "**diligent**" means: *to set aside dedicated, consecrated, and consistent times of uninterrupted examination and research.* The phrase, "**approved to God**" means: *that what you do must meet up to God's expectations- not necessarily man's.*

The word, "**workman**" means: *a skilled craftsman.* The word, "**ashamed**" doesn't mean embarrassed- it means: *condemned.* And the phrase, "**accurately handling the word of truth**" means: *to properly and accurately dissect, divide, and interpret the Scriptures.*

So when you put it all back together- **2Timothy 2:15** actually says that every single pastor and leader and elder and in the House of God should:

Set aside dedicated, consecrated and consistent times of uninterrupted study, research, and exegesis so that they can meet up to God's standard for leadership- not necessarily man's and so that they can become like a skilled craftsman who will not be condemned by God for leading people astray and so that they will be able to properly and accurately divide and interpret the Scriptures.

So yes, God holds leadership accountable for what they teach the people. But why does God do this? Does God want our pastors to simply be academics? God forbid. The reason that God wants leaders to be trained is so that they can teach the Word of God properly and fully so that the people will know the Truth so they will not be deceived by false teaching- because John says that many false prophets are gone out into the world. You see, the only thing that causes the darkness to vanish, dear friends, is the Light. Truth- when it is taught rightly and clearly- always causes lies to lose their power and their influence. False teaching abounds only where Truth is kept hidden or when it is warped out of shape.

And something that is interesting about this- is that you can have all the good intentions in the world- you can be as sincere as you can be- and still be as wrong as you can be about very serious issues about Who God is and what God has said.

But even though Paul clearly taught that all leaders should be properly trained and qualified to hold their positions; in spite of the fact that God will hold all leaders responsible to teach the Truth rightly, fully, and fearlessly; and in spite of the fact that John said that many false prophets are gone out into the world- we live in a time when training facilities all over our land are abdicating their responsibility to train up young men in the Scriptures and as a result of this great falling away of many of our most prestigious seminaries- many, many pastors and teachers and elders today reject *any* formal education and even see Biblical Doctrine as a hindrance to operating in the Spirit. .

The result is that many times we have the blind leading the blind and both are falling into the ditch. But we need to repent brothers and sisters and we need to begin to learn the Scriptures again and we need to return to Biblical Christianity so that Truth can expose and defeat error and Christ may be Lord of all.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.