

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

160. Testing the Spirits- Part 11

WAOY Friday-Monday 02/29-03/03/08

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 on the last broadcast, we were going over just who John was referring to here in verse 1 by looking at the three major heresies that attacked the Church during the age of the Apostles.

And on the last broadcast- we were talking about the second major attack against Grace called Antinomianism.

Now as you will recall- the Antinomians took the glorious truth about Grace and twisted it into something that actually promoted and condoned sin. They did this by twisting one verse of Scripture- **Romans 5:20**. So let's read that verse together:

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Now just what was Paul teaching here when he said:

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase

The Law of God is the single standard by which all men are going to be judged by God. Righteousness is defined by keeping this Law perfectly in thought, word, and deed. So breaking one Law even one time- in either thought, word, or deed causes you to be unrighteous in God's Eyes.

Now as far as Heaven is concerned- the only people who can go to Heaven are those who have attained to this perfect righteousness as defined by the Law. So that puts me in a very bad position.

You see, dear friends, God is infinitely righteous and holy and I am not. So how in the world am I going to be able to stand before this holy God and pass through His Judgment of my life? That is the great question that every single human being needs to ask and answer.

And that is the single question that every religion and man- made philosophy on earth seeks to answer- but which fails to do so. Every religion and Man-made philosophy on earth teaches in one form or fashion that *we* have to do something or we have to cease from doing something in order to become righteous enough to earn a place in Heaven. In other words- all false religions on earth all teach a variation of the same lie- that we are made righteous by what we do.

But Christianity alone teaches that human beings can never attain to perfect righteousness because of the weakness of our flesh and so we are made righteous in a glorious miracle of Grace and Love when the Blood of Jesus Christ washes us from all sin and God imputes the very Righteousness of Jesus Christ that He earned when He live here on earth to us. And the Bible goes on to teach that the way in which God imputes that Righteousness to us- is not based upon anything that we do- but is through the agency of Faith alone.

Now so far- so good. But the Bible goes even further to teach that while it is true that we are saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone without any human work or merit and effort at all- AFTER we are saved by this Grace- we are then

commanded to do good works.

You see, dear friends, good works, or good deeds, or righteous effort is not something that has the power to save anybody. And the reason that this is true is because any work that we do is always tainted with sin. No work of man is perfect. No work of man is perfectly righteous. All human effort is stained with sin and therefore is not good enough to be called perfect righteousness.

But while it is true that good works cannot *save* us- good works are a vital part of Christianity. How so? Here's how it all works. We are saved by Grace but we *after* we are saved by this Amazing Grace- we are then *commanded* to do good works. Good works are not optional, beloved- they are absolutely commanded by God to every single believer. Now while those works will never be good enough to earn Heaven- they do bring glory to God and they do testify that we are truly born from above.

So good works are not the *cause* of Salvation- they are the *result* of already being saved. Good works are not the *root* of Salvation- but they are the *fruit* of being genuinely saved. Good works never are good enough to develop our righteousness to make it perfect- but good works are the loving response to us being saved by this marvelous Grace.

Part of our good works is endeavoring to obey God through the power of the Spirit. Now we have to remember that obedience does not make me righteous- Jesus made me righteous- but obedience *does* bring God glory and the genuinely saved soul lives only to bring God glory.

So it is true to say that we are saved by Grace but the *proof* that we have been saved is our obedience to God. Now in our effort to obey- we periodically fall short. And how we respond to our failure to obey God is what makes us or breaks us. This is what is at the heart of the heresy of Antinomianism

Many today simply shrug their shoulders at failure and say, "*Well nobody's perfect.*" I believe that such a nonchalant response to sinning is a mockery of what Jesus taught. Failure to obey God should bother us, dear friends. It should bother us real bad. There is nothing in Scripture that teaches us to say, "*Well, nobody's perfect*" and just shrug our shoulders. The Bible says that sinning against God after you are saved should bring genuine sorrow to your heart and it should grieve your soul. In fact- it is the godly sorrow that we experience that is the

instrument that God uses to lead us to turning from our sin. Read with me **2Corinthians 7:10**:

For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Now over the last 150 years or so- we have looked at the last part of this verse so much that we have forgotten the first part. To be sure- the sorrow of the world is evil, and it always leads to death. That is true. But while that is true- that doesn't mean that all sorrow is bad or that God doesn't want sinning saints to be free to sin without any remorse and without any conviction and without any guilt and without any sorrow.

When a believer sins- he is grieved to his heart. And the result of that grief is a type of sorrow called "godly sorrow". Godly sorrow is not anything like the sorrow of the world- but it is sorrow. And also godly sorrow is not an end to itself. Hear me on this beloved. God absolutely wants His people to grieve over their sin. And please don't ever let anyone tell you that He doesn't. God wants his people to grieve over their sin and to experience something called godly sorrow until something else occurs. What is that something else? Repentance. A genuine turning away from that sin and a turning towards God. And I will say this. If you do not go through this godly sorrow- you will not truly repent.

Godly sorrow never leaves the believer in guilt and shame and condemnation. That is what the sorrow of the world does. But godly sorrow does indeed lead you *through* guilt and shame and condemnation- it just doesn't leave you there- godly sorrow always takes you all the way past those things into genuine repentance. This is the difference between a genuine Christian and an Antinomian.

If you can sin without guilt- you are not a mature believer- you have seared your conscience with hot iron. If you can sin with abandon without any remorse- you are not proving how wonderful Grace is- you are proving that you are not saved. If you can sin without any sorrow at all- then you are not an example of God's Love- you are an example of an Antinomian heretic.

Look at the question that Paul asked about this in **Romans 6:1**:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?

Here Paul is asking the very question that the Antinomians were teaching. These ungodly men taught that Grace was so powerful and so all-encompassing that the sin of a believer was no longer an issue with God. So the Antinomians were not giving glory to God for Grace through their teaching - they were *abusing* Grace and *twisting* it to be a license to sin with impunity. Jude says in **Jude 4** that these heretics were turning the Grace of our God into lasciviousness.

Now what was Paul's answer to the question? When the Antinomians were teaching that since Grace was so great that we can now sin to our hearts content- what was Paul's response? Read **Romans 6:2**:

May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Now the phrase, "May it never be" was one of the strongest denunciations in all of the Middle East during the first century. Another way of saying this is "Absolutely not!" or "Certainly not!" or "God forbid"

So there is no way that Paul, in the Greek language, could have rejected this Antinomian notion of sinning with impunity any stronger than he does here in verse 2. Now look very carefully at the *reason* that Paul gave as to why the Antinomian heresy was off base concerning Grace:

... How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Here is the key to correctly rejecting Antinomianism. You see, Salvation is not simply walking down an aisle. It is much more than praying a prayer or shaking hands with the preacher or crying and making promises to God. Salvation- genuine heaven sent, blood bought Salvation is a supernatural miracle from God in that it goes down inside the body of the lost soul and transforms that corrupt and sinful nature into a new Divine nature.

Without that transformation- there is no Salvation. Mormonism can modify human behavior. Buddhism can modify human behavior. Even some atheists have some degree of morality about them. So

Christian Salvation is not simply about modifying your behavior- it is about becoming an new creature. Read **2Corinthians 5:17**:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Changing your behavior through human will power is not the same thing as being saved. To be sure- if you are saved- your behavior will change but that is because you have become new creature and sin no longer dominates your life.

So Paul did what John taught and he tested the spirit of the Antinomians and he found them to be not of God and he wrote this verse to denounce their heresy and to teach that Salvation by Grace always leads to obedience.

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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