

BOOK OF 1 THESSALONIANS
EXHORTATION TO “PROVE ALL THINGS”
1 THESSALONIANS 5:21a

Introduction

How do we know when something is from God?

Last week we saw how that we are not to despise prophesyings—Which to us is made of the Holy Scriptures (Old and New Testaments books that have been handed down to us that make up the completed Canon of Scripture!)

The question I want to pose to you this week is this:
“How Can We Know What Is Of God And What Is Not Of God?”

Quite simply, our first resort is that we should seek out the answer from the Scriptures! If it is inconsistent with the Scriptures or the principles of Scripture, you can be assured that it is not of God!

Remember Jesus telling a group of Jews in John 5:39 regarding His claims to Who He was to *“Search the Scriptures...”*

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Remember Paul speaking about the believers in Berea in *Acts 17:11* *“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”*

There are some preachers today that would want you to just receive their Word as the Word of God! But both Jesus and Paul encouraged their hearers to compare what they were saying to the Word of God!

It can be dangerous to receive the words of a mere man as being the Word of God just because he comes to you in the name of God preaching out of a Bible! For your own safety you need to judge what is being said by the Words and principles of the Word of God!

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I want us to see tonight that a proper response to teaching, preaching, and the like that purports to be from God. There are three steps for Christians to carry out:

- 1. Ascertain – Prove All Things**
- 2. Adhere – Hold Fast That Which Is Good**
- 3. Avoid – Abstain From All Appearance Of Evil**

So, first of all tonight let’s take a look at the first thing we should do: **ASCERTAIN**—or as Paul put it **“PROVE ALL THINGS.”**

The word **“Prove”** here is translated from a word that means **“test”**. In other words we are to use **godly discernment** (in judging or ascertaining)!

Jonathon Edwards, the 18th century preacher in New England, in speaking about the revival during his time called the “Great Awakening”, presented **5 marks of the Work of the Spirit of God!**

(i.e. How can you tell if something is a work of the Spirit of God?)

And, by the way, remember that the Spirit of God is the Author of the Word of God! The Spirit of God is not going to work in a way that is contrary to His Word!

If It Is The Work Of The Spirit Of God:

- 1. It exalts Jesus as both the Saviour and the Son of God!**
John 16:13-14 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.
- 2. It opposes Satan and sin!**
Psalm 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

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Romans 12:9—“...Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.”

Psalm 97:10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

Psalm 101:3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

Psalm 119:104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

If It Is The Work Of The Spirit Of God:

It exalts Jesus as both the Saviour and the Son of God!

It opposes Satan and sin!

3. It teaches people to revere and trust Bible!

Question: Does the Word of God teach us to revere and trust the Bible? (Psalm 119) Who is the Author of the Bible?

4. It makes people aware of eternity and their lostness without Christ!

Question: Does the Word of God make people aware of eternity and their lostness without Christ?

And Who is the Author of the Bible again?

5. It stirs up in them new love of Christ and others!

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Question: Does this Book seek to stir up our love for Christ and others? It most certainly does!

Now how do you suppose that Jonathon Edwards came up with such a list? **It came from the principles found in the Word of God! So, would you think a good way of proving all things might be to use the Word of God?**

Listen up, counsel is often given to a Church or to an individual based on what appears to be sound reasoning:

- (1) It may be based on apparent sound financial reasons.
- (2) It may be based on apparent logical arguments.
- (3) It may be based on the conventional wisdom of the day.
- (4) It may be based under belief this is “of God’s leading”.

So we still need discernment, given by the Holy Spirit, to ensure that these align with God’s will and the Holy Spirit uses the principles of His Book!

Prove all things — preaching, teaching, doctrines, opinions, requirements, customs, professions, character, modes of working.

1. Prove all ancient things!

Things are not better just because they’re old! Sin is old! A lot of false religions are old!

2. Prove all new things!

A thing is not necessarily wise or adapted to the times just because it is new! It may be a new folly!

3. Common things!

Things are not right just because they are generally acceptable!

4. Attractive things!

Too often rather attractive things have misled our fallen nature! Our fallen nature, our flesh can’t be trusted because sin is attractive!

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5. Repulsive things!

e.g. Christ may put a cross in our path! But listen if Christ has that for us, it is better for us to bear that cross than to wear a crown!

Let me give you a four-fold test to be applied to when you are needing to prove or to ascertain or to discern something!—Even every teaching, every doctrine...Every minister or pastor who declares, “*Thus saith the Lord*”

I. THE SAVIOR TEST:

Ask this question: Is what is being taught and is what is being said honoring, glorifying and uplifting the name of our Lord Jesus Christ?

God the Father’s purpose for God the Son, Jesus, the Christ, the Lord, is told in *Philippians 2:9-11*:

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This, you will note is consistent with Scripture readings in **1 John 4:1–3, 13–15!**

Any “*preaching*”, any “*teaching*”, any purported “*doctrine*” as well as any “*calling*”, “*leading*”, or “*moving*” that does not honor, glorify, and uplift the name of our Lord Jesus Christ must be rejected!

II. THE SCRIPTURE TEST:

Ask this question: Is this that I am hearing consistent with not only part, but consistent with the totality of the written revelation of God?

What is God the Father's purpose in the Word?

The central theme of Scripture, start to end is the good news, the message of salvation through the LORD Jesus Christ!

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1. God created man in His image and for Himself!
2. Man has separated himself from God by Sin: both by nature and by choice!
3. God sought to reconcile man—to save man and bring him back to Himself!
 - a. In His every dealing with man in the Old Testament!
 - b. In Christ Jesus, God the Son by His death on the cross in our place!
 - c. In the world today through the preaching of the Gospel!
4. Those who reject this gracious gift are subject eternally to God's wrath in the Lake of Fire!

So any so-called Christian teaching that denies the message of salvation through Christ alone or that substitutes some other religious goal cannot be accepted as being from God!

Any teaching, any preaching, any purported doctrine must be consistent with not only part, but consistent with the whole of Scripture!

THE SAVIOR TEST...THE SCRIPTURE TEST...

III. THE SPIRIT TEST:

Is this teaching in concert with the express desires and ministry of the Holy Spirit, whose intended purpose was to in all things glorify the Lord Jesus?

A. What was God the Father's purpose for giving us His Holy Spirit?

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John 14–16 reveals this as:

1. To be a Helper, Comforter, Strengthener!
(John 14:16)
2. To abide in the Christian believer! *(John 14:16-17)*
3. To teach and bring to remembrance the things spoken by Jesus Christ! *(John 14:26)*
4. To bear witness of Jesus Christ! *(John 15:26)*
5. To convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment! *(John 16:8-11)*
6. To guide believers into all truth! *(John 16:13)*
7. To glorify the Lord Jesus Christ! *(John 16:14)*

B. So, if any purported spiritual preaching, or teaching, or interpretation:

1. Is not in agreement with these purposes...or
2. Distorts any of these truths...
3. Then it must be rejected!

THE SAVIOR TEST...THE SCRIPTURE TEST...THE SPIRIT TEST...

IV. THE SAINT TEST:

What have other great men and women of God said about this?

If you are the only person to interpret a passage in a certain way, you might be right, but you're probably not!

What was God the Son's purpose for the Church?

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God's truth is not by private revelation but by a public declaration of His Word: *2 Peter 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*

No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own private interpretation!

So, we may safely conclude that it is unlikely that the Holy Spirit is going to give to one Christian a set of gold-tableted truths that directly oppose what Christians have believed since days of Peter, Paul and John!

Especially when those so-called “truths” are contrary to or in direct opposition to what thus saith the Scriptures!

Conclusion

Don't be deceived by your own reasoning or the reasoning of others who are contrary to these principles!

These are times of deception! Be safe by being Scriptural! Be Scriptural by searching and studying the Scriptures!

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Timothy 3:13-17 13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. 14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.