

1 John 4:1-6 - Test the Spirits

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Open your Bibles if you would to 1 John chapter 4, and we're going to look at the first 6 verses. I just made up my mind that I'm not going to go too quickly through these verses because they need explanation, they need thought, and we're going to try to do that here tonight.

So let's start by just asking the Lord to guide us in prayer, shall we? Father, as we dig into the Word this evening, first of all, we're very thankful that we can gather together as the body of Christ, come together in this place, and just open our hearts to who You are and to what You have given to us and revealed to us in Your Word. And Father, I'm just so thankful for Your Word. We cling to it as the source of truth and we pray tonight that you would use the things that we're going to be looking at tonight, in these verses, to really strengthen and encourage our hearts. And we thank you, Father, for preserving Your Word, so that we can do just what we're doing tonight. Equip our hearts, fill us with Your Spirit, enlighten our minds. We ask it in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen.

1 John chapter four, it begins this way:

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, (and then John goes on to explain what he's talking about in the rest of the verse). For many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (ESV)

I want you to stop there for just a moment. We're going to take these probably 1 or 2 verses at a time, and we're going to get down through verse 6 tonight. But, John begins this section by reminding us that there are no shortage of false prophets in the world, there weren't in John's day, and there aren't any shortage, or should I say, isn't any shortage today.

And by the way, a prophet is defined as someone who speaks...no. A prophet is defined as someone who claims to speak in the name of God and the words of God. In other words, a prophet usually starts off by saying, “Thus says the Lord” or “The Lord would say to you”, and then they want to give you a word from the Lord. And this is going on a lot, even today. There are some churches that are just big into prophecy and prophecy becomes really the focus of their attention, not even the Word of God as a whole, just prophecy. And there are fellowships that really emphasize and kind of major on this. But because false

prophets exist among those who have a true and genuine prophetic gifting, it is necessary for believers, you and me, to put those spirits to the test, so that we might discern by which spirit they are speaking. And that's what John means when he says: "*test the spirits*".

He's saying; "Test the spirit by which they speak", because what they're doing is they're claiming to speak by the Spirit of Christ, right? They may not refer to the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of Christ, they may say the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit, those are interchangeable names. But they are claiming to speak by the Spirit of God and so, therefore, we are to test the spirit by which they speak, right?

And you might be a little uncomfortable, I don't know. Doesn't the Bible tell us not to test God? Well, this is different, this is testing the legitimacy of a word that comes through a human vessel. And, whenever or when anything comes through a human vessel, there really is a need to test what you're hearing, what you're seeing, we're even told to judge a person's fruit. You know, we're told that by their fruit you will recognize them (Matthew 7:16 & Matthew 7:20), right? Remember when Paul, we were talking about false prophets, by their fruit you will recognize them, right? Well, how do you know? How do you know if their fruit is good or bad? If you don't, judge? Or test it, right?

So people who say:

Well, doesn't the Bible say you're not to judge?

Yeah. But that is incredibly misunderstood and misquoted.

We are not to judge others hypocritically. In other words, when Jesus says, "Do not judge lest you be judged" (Matthew 7:1), the context of that statement is: why are you looking to get the speck out of your brother's eye when you have a board sticking out of your own? He's saying, take care first of the issues in your own life, in other words, don't judge hypocritically. But we are to judge many things. In fact, we are to, we're told in the Bible to judge rightly, Jesus himself said: "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment" (John 7:24). So he told us we need to...you can't go through life without judging. You have to judge every day, you have to judge all the time, and we do. And there's nothing wrong with it because judging is making an assessment. "Is this true?" When someone stands up and says: "I'm going to give you a word from the Lord." The Lord would say to you: "You need to ask yourself the question: is this true?"

And that's what John is saying when he says: “we must test the spirits”. In fact, we're told to test everything, you know? Let me show you on the screen.

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1 Thessalonians 5:21 (ESV)

... test everything; hold fast what is good.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 21, “*test everything* (Paul writes to the Thessalonians and he says) *hold fast to what is good.*” What do you suppose he wants you to do with what is not good? How about pitch it? Yeah, exactly. We're supposed to pitch. What do we define as good? Is it my decision or my definition of good? No. It's what lines up with the Word of God. That's what's good. What doesn't line up with the Word of God, that's not good and that's something we're not to hang on to. So Paul says, “*test everything.*”

So, John goes on in verse 2, look with me in your Bible, and he says:

“²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming (and in fact is) and now is in the world already.”

We talked about this previously when John talked about antichrist, he talked about the spirit of antichrist. There is “the antichrist” who is coming one day in the form of the beast, we know this from the book of Revelation. But there is the spirit of antichrist that has been in the world all along, and it is basically the opposition to truth from God's Word. That is the spirit of antichrist. And so, what John is saying here is that those who claim to be speaking according to the Spirit of God, yet who deny that God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ, those people who says (say) are not speaking by the Spirit of God, okay? And this is very important, it's very important that you see this because, whether we're talking about prophecy or whether it's teaching or preaching, doesn't really matter. If it's true, it will always present a true and accurate biblical view of who Jesus is, okay? Who Jesus is, because it's all about Jesus. The spirit of prophecy is even all about Jesus, okay?

Now, what John was dealing with in his day, was people questioning the humanity of Jesus. We don't deal with that much today. We don't deal with people questioning the humanity, we deal with people questioning the deity of Jesus like, all the time. And whether we're talking to a Mormon, or whether we're talking to a Jehovah's Witness, or some other type of group that denies the

deity of Christ as we know it in the Bible, that's the kind of thing that you and I are most likely to deal with. Well, in John's day they questioned whether Jesus was actually human. And the reason they did that is because they believed that the human body was evil. They believed that the flesh of man was evil, innately evil. And, therefore, they said:

“If God were to come as a man, He would be taking on evil with our flesh. So, obviously, the body wasn't a real body, it was probably just a phantom, or it appeared like a body or, you know, it was something but it wasn't like our physical bodies.”

Because, again, they believed the physical body was evil in and of itself, literally the flesh. So, they denied that Jesus came in the flesh. They said: “He couldn't have. Jesus couldn't have come in the flesh, otherwise, He would be evil. Right?”

Well, we don't deal with that. Like I said, yeah, we don't really deal with this sort of an issue. But, once again, an accurate picture of Jesus includes not just, again, a belief in His deity, but also His humanity. You know, they denied the humanity of Jesus. You might say, “Well, that's not that big of a deal. The big deal is denying the deity of Jesus. Now, that's a big deal.”

No, actually, both of them are a really big deal. You must believe both in the humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ, because He could not have done what the Bible says He did, if He were not both, all man and all God. Right? He had to be human to represent us, He had to be God to conquer sin, well, and even to be a sinless representative. You know, somebody wrote me a note here recently, and just said:

“Well, you know, why if Eve's the one who ate the apple, why couldn't she just die? Just have her die for all of us and then we're all good to go after that.”

Well, let me explain it. If Eve's going to pay for any sins, it's going to be her own. If any of us are going to pay for any sins at all, we're going to pay for our own. The only way I could possibly die for you, is if I didn't have a debt of my own. Right? Because if I have a debt, then I have to pay my own debt, I can't pay yours. I got my own debt I got to deal with, you know? So, somebody had to come along who didn't have a debt, somebody had to come along who didn't owe God anything, in the way of sin, because the wages of sin is death. Someone had to come who didn't deserve to die.

Well, you see, He had to be one of us to represent us. Jesus had to be a human. God can't die for man, the angels can't die for man. A man has to die for man. Why? Because it was a man that got us in this trouble in the first place. Adam and Eve were our corporate representatives in the garden. We call the first Adam, the first Adam. We call Jesus the second Adam, the second man, the second corporate representative of all mankind. But He had to be a man. Had to be. You can't deny His humanity, you also can't deny His deity because, without being God, He of course couldn't be sinless and He couldn't conquer sin in the grave, and raised Himself from the dead, which Jesus did, by the way. He raised Himself from the dead, and only God can do that.

So, you see, these are things that have to be and when you look at Jesus, when you convey the idea of who Jesus is, I don't care if you're a prophet, a teacher, a preacher, I don't care what you're...how you're conveying to do that accurately, biblically, it has to be the full picture. You get it? It has to be the full picture or it's not the right picture.

That's why the Mormons are absolutely fundamentally wrong about their idea of who Jesus is, because Jesus is a created being in Mormon theology who, you know, and that's just...He is not one with the Father. Even the Father was at first in their theology of created being who attained godhood.

Well, that has nothing to do with the Bible, either of those pictures are absolutely, completely wrong, completely wrong, you see? So, John is making a very important statement here about somebody claiming to speak for God. Now, there's one other thing that I want to say before we move on here. John is not giving this statement here in verse 3 as the only, or 2 and 3, as the only test of false doctrine. He's not saying...listen, if a prophet speaks, or if somebody speaks and they say, "Da,da,da,da," in just the right order, that this is the test of all false doctrines. It is not.

John is addressing a very specific issue of people denying the humanity of Jesus Christ. That's...he was dealing with what was going on in his day. Okay? He's not giving you a one test fits all because there are people who will speak of the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ and then go on to speak of false doctrine in other areas. So, this is not a one test fits all.

But I want to just remind you before we move on, that a genuine picture, again, whether it comes through prophecy or teaching, or preaching, or even in discussion between you and that person you're witnessing to, or talking to at work or whatever, is always going to have a consistent connection to the

revelation of Scripture. It must to be accurate. Okay? It must to be accurate. Okay?

Verse 4:

“⁴Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (ESV)

I dare say, you've probably heard this verse before. We give all kinds of warnings about the presence of the spirit of antichrist but, as believers, we're not to fear the presence of antichrist, we're not to fear the things that are in the world, we're not to fear the enemy. We may respect what he can do still, but we're not to fear him. Why? Because we are from God and we have overcome in Him because Christ overcame and we are overcomers in His Name through Him, right? And that's what he's saying here.

But, he's talking about the spirit of error here specifically in this passage. And you have to always remember that, through Jesus, we have already overcome the spirit of error because we are in Christ, okay? But I want you to notice that John points to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit as that power behind this overcoming ability in our lives.

Notice he said *“He who is in you?”* Who is in you? Well, Jesus is living in you through the Holy Spirit. Now, I know this is tough for kids. We teach our kids when they're little that you can have Jesus in your heart and they're kind of like, kids are very literal. He's like, “he's in here? Jesus is in here? (confused expression)”

And they think He's in their tummy and they say all kinds of cute, childish things about that. But, it is truly Jesus living in your heart through the Holy Spirit because it is the Spirit of Jesus living in you, all right? So, *“He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”* Right?

And that “he” who is in the world is really any “he” that could be any “he” or any thing, He who is in you is greater than anything or anyone who is in the world. And, it is through the power of the Holy Spirit, that we triumph and we overcome that which is in the world; the spirit of error, the spirit of darkness, the spirit of deception. All those things we overcome through the Holy Spirit who lives within us. Why? Because He's greater, He who is in you is greater right? He who is in you is greater. Man, I wish Christians would get this through their heart. He who is within you is greater. Don't be afraid, don't be

afraid. Take the authority that you have in Jesus Christ and don't be afraid. You are an overcomer in Christ Jesus. Don't fear the enemy.

Oh dear, I remember when I was a new believer, Satan had me on the ropes because I was so stupid, I mean ignorant. I was...I'll say ignorant. I was ignorant as a new believer and I didn't understand spiritual dynamics and I didn't understand our overcoming, the overcoming. I didn't understand that He who was in me is greater than he was in the world. And I was new as a believer and I'm talking about when I started, really started walking with the Lord, in my twenties. And Satan took me for all he was worth and I went through a period of time where I just was bamboozled by the enemy. That's the best thing I can explain.

And the enemy just had me running. And I see it happening in some Christians, even today, where they've become convinced that the enemy is actually stronger than he is and can do more than he can and they're always on their guard. You can tell because they're always talking about the enemy, always. They talk way more about the enemy than they do about the Lord.

“Boy, I just had, our family's just really been attacked by Satan lately. I tell you, Satan has really been out for us lately, just that devil. I mean, we pray against the devil all the time...”

And they're always talking about the devil and you can tell that he is really uppermost in their mind. And really, it's largely because of fear. And the enemy wants you to be fearful of him, he wants you to be fearful because he can keep you in a state of paralysis if you (he) can do that in your life. And that's where I was. I was in a state of paralysis and it was horrible. I mean...I went through, we were living in Montana. We didn't, I don't know, I don't think we had any kids yet, but it was right before we had our first child and I was a mess. I couldn't sleep at night; voices, thoughts. My thought life just wouldn't let go, just wouldn't let go. Fear, just worried, I mean, looking over at my shoulder, waiting for the devil to come after me at any moment.

I was just constantly fearful, and it got to the point where I couldn't go to work and that's getting pretty bad. Had to call in sick one, and I knew that was pretty bad when I called in sick that day. I wasn't working in the church yet; I was still working in radio. But brand-new believer, so I called my pastor, who wasn't a whole lot older than I was at the time, but I rang him and he came over to my house and sat down and he says,

“What's going on, Paul?”

“And I just, I don't know. I can't explain it. I just, I am just a bundle of nerves all the time, I just can't relax. I, and I just, I feel like the enemy is just out to get me.”

The first thing he did was he laughed at me, which it was a little unsettling. But then he paused and he closed his eyes and I always knew that when he closed his eyes, he was doing his best to listen to the Holy Spirit. And so, he just sat in my living room and I was literally sitting on the edge of my chair. I couldn't sit back, you know how body language tells you; I was sitting on the edge of my chair just in absolute...just ready to bolt out the door. There was a couple times I even did.

And he's sitting there with his eyes closed. I'm kind of wondering what this is all about, what's this going to come to? And he's just, he's got his eyes closed. He nods a couple of times. He says and I finally broke the silence myself and I said,

“Mark, I need you to pray for me.”

He said, “I'll pray for you. I'll pray for you, but the Holy Spirit just told me something. He said, “I want him, I want him.” Well, I didn't know what that meant. What I was focused on was that Satan wanted me all that time, and that's what happened, freaked me out. So, he prayed for me and he kind of prayed this prayer and, I don't even remember what he said, and then he left.

But, before he left, he gave me the best advice I've ever gotten in my entire life, and I'll share it with you. He said, “You know, there are times when you're caught in a situation that you just can't control and you don't know what to do about it.” And he said, “Really, the only thing you can do is trust the Lord.”

So, he said, “What I do in situations like that, when I'm caught and I know there's nothing I can do but trust God or die,” he said, “I literally, I lay down on the floor or on the bed, or the couch or wherever I can find a place to stretch out,” and he said, “this is going to sound a little macabre, but I imagine that I'm lying in a coffin. And I say to the Lord, ‘You either lift me up from this or you nailed the top on, because I'm done. I can't fight this, I can't win, only You can raise me up.’”

And then he walked out my door and I was kind of like, “Okay.” I thought,

“Whoa, what do I have to lose? I didn't even get to the lay down position, I just bowed my head right there, on the edge of the couch without even still sitting back, and I just said,

“Jesus,” I just called out His Name and immediately, and I mean, immediately, I had the...and this has never happened to me again, but I had the strangest sensation that started in my feet and it was like somebody hooked my feet up to an electrical current and it worked its way up my legs and up my torso, and out my head. And I felt this, just this electrical thing just go through me and, suddenly, all the fear, all the oppression, all the concern was gone and the Lord flooded me with a peace that I can't begin to explain to you. It's what the Bible would call peace that passes understanding. (Philippians 4:7)

And all I could do was sit and bawl like a baby. And that's what I did for the next several minutes, I just sat and cried because the Lord took it away, the Lord removed it. It was something the enemy put on me but, you see, I bit at the bait. I took it, I swallowed it because I was ignorant, I was just a baby in the Lord.

But the enemy wants to do that in your life too. He wants to make himself bigger than he is and get you afraid and get you to become paralyzed so you can't move. And I'm telling you, the answer to that is trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, but in all your ways, acknowledge Him. (Proverbs 3:6) And He will lift you up out of that coffin.

I added that little paraphrase, but you know what I'm saying? God will lift you up, God will raise you up from whatever situation that you absolutely can't deal with in your own strength, if you give it to Him. They who trust in the Lord will not be put to shame. (Romans 10:11)

So, remember that when the enemy starts kind of blowing smoke your way. When I think about the work of the enemy in our lives, I love my favorite hymn of all time. And I'm not a big hymn lover because I was raised with the hymns as a kid, I don't know if you knew that but I was raised in church all my life and that's all we sang, was hymns.

And, I don't mind the hymns at all, but I'm not a super big fan but I'll tell you something. There's one hymn that I absolutely adore and it is a Mighty Fortress by Martin Luther. And there's one stanza in that, let me put it on the screen. I love this.

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*And though this world with devils filled
should threaten to undo us
We will not fear for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him
His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure
One little word shall fell Him.*

You guys want to know what that little word is? Jesus. Jesus, that's the word. That's the word that'll bring him down every time. So, don't ever forget that.

In verse 5, as we keep going here, John articulates something that all of us have observed but maybe never put into words, when he says:

“⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.” (ESV)

Those of you who work a job outside your home and so forth, or maybe even those of you who live in a home filled with unbelievers, you know what this verse is saying. Those who are from the world speak as from the world, they speak the perspective that is from the world. And that's what, and that's what we expect, right? I hope, when you go to work in a secular environment, you are not expecting people from the world to talk like they're not from the world. Because they can't. You're going to be really disappointed and discouraged if you go to work with expectations that unbelievers are going to talk like believers or talk from the perspective of believers. They are not. Do you remember what Jesus said? Let me show you a passage from John chapter 8:

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John 8:23, 43 (ESV)

(Jesus) He said to them, “You are from below; (He is talking to the Jews) I am from above. You are of this world; (Jesus said,) I am not of this world. Why do you not understand what I say? (Well) It is because you can't bear to hear my word.”

Now this is a fascinating passage. Jesus said that the people of the world can't bear to hear the truth that comes from above. They can't bear it. They don't want to hear it, and there is...and we all know this, there's an intolerance in the world today. They like to call Christians intolerant, but there's an intolerance among

those in the world of the Word of truth. And the reason is just like Jesus said, they can't bear it. They will listen to those who speak their own message, who speak their own language, who speak worldly truth, but they don't want to listen to you, right? Because the truth is unbearable, it's literally unbearable. But, here's the flip side; verse 6, look in your Bible, four words:

“We are from God.” (ESV)

Now, when John says “We are of God” he's not talking about all Christians, he's talking about the apostles. He's literally speaking as a representative of the apostles. And he's saying, *“We are from God.”* In other words, we are in Christ, we are coming from that perspective to you, and we are speaking from that perspective. Now, when John says we are speaking, he's talking to those who had literally heard the apostles speak. You and I have not literally heard the apostles speak, we have read what the apostles wrote and what the apostles wrote became the New Testament. And so we have the Bible. Today we're not...John wouldn't say these things necessarily, or we don't say these things about this today because we don't have the apostles here, but we have what they wrote down, here.

But, back in John's day, he was still there. So, he says, “We, we apostles who received the revelation and who walked with Jesus, we are from God, right?” Today we would say, instead of “we are from God”, we would say “the Bible is from God.” The Bible is God's Word. John then says:

“...whoever knows God listens to us;” (ESV)

Now, again, this is going to be slightly different in our time frame. We would say, “whoever knows God, listens to the Word of God.” Because, again, the apostles aren't here, but their writings are in the Bible. So, whoever knows God, listens to His Word or listens to the Word from the Bible. Because as believers, the Word of God is our common source of truth, right?

It's our standard. It's our standard of truth. If I had a ruler here or a yard stick, or a meter, if somebody's using that system of measurement, those are standards. Standards by which you can measure if something is this long or that long or whatever. The Word of God is our standard, it's a standard by which we measure, okay?

So, somebody says something to you, they go, “Wa,wa,wa,wa. (talking signs with hands) I believe...” Whatever they say, how do you...what do you do with

that? Well, you measure it, you measure it. If somebody just walked up to you with a piece of wood and said,

“Well, this is two and a half feet long.”

And you looked at it and you're like, “Well.”

But, if you're a builder, you gotta make sure, so you pull out your measuring tape. You put it on there, you'll check and see. Is it really two and a half feet long? You're going to measure it. You and I need to do the same thing with the word of God, we need to measure everything. And it is our source of truth, and that is what John is saying here when he says, “*Whoever knows God listens to us...*” In other words, listens to the Word of God and it is the Spirit of God in us that confirms that word to our hearts and, isn't that wonderful?

You know, I don't know if you ever tried to read the Bible before you were a Christian, but it can be a very frustrating experience. Once somebody becomes a believer and the Holy Spirit begins to enlighten that person as to the truth of God's Word it's wonderful because there's that confirming element of what the Holy Spirit is doing in their lives to say, “This is Jesus talking.” This isn't just words on a page.

Unbelievers will tell you, “Well, I don't believe in the Bible. It's just the writings of men.”

Right? Have you ever had somebody say that to you? Sure.

“This is the writings...it's like any other book that's ever been written in the world, in antiquity or modern. It's all the same, just words on a page.”

And then you get saved and it becomes the words of life. Remember what Jesus said about His voice? Check this out on the screen from John chapter 10, verse 27. Jesus said:

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John 10:27 (ESV)

“My sheep hear my voice...”

Right? How do you hear the voice of Jesus today? Well, through His Word and through His Spirit, right? He speaks His Word, His Spirit confirms that Word to your heart, and you hear His voice. And, when He says something in the Word,

you say, “Yes, Lord. That's right, that's true.” And, when He speaks to you about something going on in your life, you say, “Yes, Lord. That is true.”

Now, concerning those who are of the world, John goes on to say in that verse, “⁶...*whoever is not from God* (this is the converse) *does not listen to us*...” And remember, “us” is the apostles, or for you and I, it's you and me, that's the way to say that, it's the Bible. So, whoever is not from God is not going to listen to the Bible. They're not going to listen to the Word of God.

And that's because the truths that come from above are never going to fit man's mine-centered, materialistic view of the world or view of life. They're just not going to fit. It doesn't fit. You can't...when you speak to an unbeliever about truths from the Word of God, they just go, “Yeah, that doesn't make any sense.”

Funny, I had a note just this week from a brother who was troubled because he was witnessing to his neighbor and every time he would talk about something from the Bible, his neighbor would deflect and kind of throw up a little smoke screen, but he would do it by questioning the authority and reliability of the Bible. And he would talk to him about all the different...and he would mention basically cult groups. You know how the world does that? They bring Christianity in with all, every other “religious” group in the world, and they just say, “Well, look at this.” As if we have to defend these other sort of belief systems that have nothing to do with the Word of God.

But, that's the way the world thinks. So, you start witnessing to somebody and they'll say, “Well, what about this? Or, what about that? And I heard about...” And they'll bring up all kinds of things and, this guy wrote to me and he was just really frustrated and he asked me for some help. And so, I wrote him back.

But, before I share with you what I told him, what would you say to him? And, I'm not asking you to speak out loud, but what would you say to him based on what we just read here in 1 John? He said, “⁶...*whoever is not from God does not listen*...” So, what he did is he wrote me, he said “How can I get him to listen?”

Let me put it on the screen, here's what I wrote him. I actually copied this just on here, I said:

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It's a heart issue.

Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 11:15) We witness to people according to the truth of God's Word and we follow up with those who are willing to hear. We pray for those who aren't and ask the Holy Spirit to do a work in their hearts to make them ready to hear the truth. Beyond that, there are no arguments that we can give that will make their hearts receptive. If someone wants to know the truth in their heart and their heart (rather) is ready to receive, God will meet them. We just need to be faithful.

And I really, I stand by that answer. We get our...we get all lathered up about the fact that somebody's not receiving or hearing what we want...what we're telling them, and we want to change it. Christians, you can't change it. It's a heart issue.

Jesus, Jesus told us this in the parable of the sower, the soil must be ready for the seed. (Matthew 13) Otherwise, it's either going to be full of weeds or it's going to be so hard that the seed never even makes its way into the soil. So, there needs to be that preparation, the heart preparation.

So, you're talking to somebody, you're sharing Christ with somebody, and they respond by just absolute rejection. Guys, do you know that happened to Jesus too? People rejected Him, they rejected what He had to say. Do you think they're going to believe you if they rejected Him? It's a heart issue, it comes down to the heart. And so, if you've witnessed to somebody and it was just nothing but hard concrete, then you...they need prayer.

And they need somebody to pray for them and ask God to do that work, to prepare their heart to hear the truth. Because, otherwise, you're sowing seeds on concrete and that crop is not going to come up.

John ends verse 6 by saying that someone's ability to hear or their inability to hear is critical to understanding where someone is "from." Notice he says at the end of verse 6:

"By this we know, (Very important, by this we know. We know what?) the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

We understand by that ability, of someone to hear or their inability to hear. I want you to notice also that John calls truth the Spirit of truth and he calls error

the spirit of error. In other words, he puts a spiritual element to those, those things, those concepts, truth and error. He puts a spiritual element to it (them). Well, what is the spiritual element of truth? That's easy? God. God, the Spirit. God, the Holy Spirit. He is the spiritual element to truth.

Well, what is the spiritual element to error? Let me show you, John 8:44. I'm going to quote this out of the NIV '84 revision, it says:

(slide)

John 8:44 (NIV84)

(This is Jesus talking, He says,) *You belong to your father, the devil, (talking to the Jews) and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and (And then I want you to notice what else Jesus says about Satan, He says he is) the father of lies.*

I've told you guys many times throughout the years that when someone is referred to as the father of something, it means he is the originator of it. In the Bible, the father of something is the source of that thing.

So, He's not just telling you that Satan is a liar, He's telling you he's the source of lies. He is the source of deception. He is the source of darkness, okay? So, what is the spiritual element of error? Well, Jesus told you right there; it's the enemy. It's the devil, Satan. That is the spiritual element that is behind all error, and Satan has done a very effective job of propagating and perpetuating error. Why? Because he wants the world and particularly spiritual things to be as confusing as possible.

You know, I get this question all the time, "Pastor Paul, why do you think there are so many "religious beliefs" with different messages than what is contained in the Bible?" That's easy, the spirit of error is in the world and the enemy wants to confuse people.

You think he's going to leave just one message out there on how to be saved? You think he's just going to leave one?

"Yes sir. Jesus said it. He's the only way to heaven. I'm not going to, I'm not going to try to change anybody's mind on that score."

Are you kidding me? He's going to do his absolute best to throw out as many things out there as possible to deflect and discourage you from focusing on Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life who He said He was.

And that's why there are so many religious “systems” out there today, because the spirit of error is just as prevalent in the world as it was in John's day. But, he gives us here some guidelines in this passage about how to recognize it for what it is. And we're going to stop there for tonight and we will pick it up, Lord willing, in verse 7 next time.

So, let's pray. Father, we thank you for Your incredible goodness. We thank You for Your love for us. We thank You for blessing us with truth because, Lord, we have to tell you right here, right now, in our flesh, we are not people of truth. But You have revealed Your truth to us in the person of Jesus Christ, Your Son, who is the truth. And I pray, my Father God, that that truth would radiate from our lives in such a way that those who have ears to hear would hear.

And those Lord who don't, who can't, and can't even bear the truth, we pray for them too. We pray, Father, that You'd bring them to a place to be able to hear, open their ears, unstop their ears and enable them, Father God, to hear. Use the circumstances of life, the difficulties of living to cause them, Lord God, to recognize that the system of this world is bankrupt and without hope. And that, Lord, seeing that they would turn to You as the only source of truth. Protect Your people, Father, from all of the lies of the enemy and keep us in truth everyday. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our King and all God's people said together, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your evening.