

## Sunday Morning Message

May 16, 2021

*1 John – Real Faith*

*Knowing the Truth in a World Full of Error*

Series – 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> John

Text – 1 John 4:1 - 6

Congregational Reading – 1 John 4: 1 - 3

### Introduction

We have been examining the first letter of John in a series of messages on Sunday mornings, and have discovered that this epistle is all about living a genuine faith – real faith. Contained within this letter are many proofs, which reveal to the reader whether or not his faith is real. In chapter three, we saw that a person who has real faith; a person who has truly been born-again through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will have a strong desire to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord and is yielded to the will of God. We also discovered in chapter three that a real faith will manifest itself in a love for people, particularly our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Beginning in v. 7 of chapter four, John will also continue to drive home this point about loving one another, but before he gets back to that discussion, he gives us some very practical instruction regarding distinguishing the Truth from the many voices of error that are in our world today. How can we know what the Truth is? Pilate asked a legitimate question when he rhetorically asked: what is truth (John 18:38)? Jesus said to his disciples: "... *ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32). The fact is that, as believers in Christ, we can know the Truth that will make us free, and we can be able to spot error, false doctrine, heresy, principles and philosophies that are commonly reported to be true, but are really rooted in a spirit of error. In this passage, God will show us how we can be discerning Christians who can separate the Truth from error.

Note - The particular error that John was dealing with in the first century was Gnosticism:

#### **From our notes from the first message in this series:**

Though not mentioned specifically in the letter, John appears to be defending a false doctrine that was taking root during this time-period known as Gnosticism, which taught that the body was evil, and the spirit was good; and therefore denied that Christ could have a physical body (Note – **Docetism** is the false idea that Jesus

physical body only appeared physical). The very first verse of the letter boldly refutes any such nonsense. John states that he not only had seen the Lord with his eyes, but he also “handled” him. He also states in 1 John 4:3 that “every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ **is come in the flesh** is not of God”. The Gnostics also held that knowledge was superior to virtue, and they accepted only a non-literal interpretation of the Scriptures, which they claimed could only be understood by a select, enlightened few. They also denied the possibility of a bodily resurrection. John corrects these heresies by boldly presenting the truth.

### Read the passage – 1 John 4:1 – 6

#### I. A Foundational Principle that Supports All Other Truth (vs. 1 – 3)

**Verse one** – notice that this is not an intellectual problem; it’s a spiritual one. As believers we are commanded to “believe not every spirit” (notice the small “s”), and to “try (prove, test) *the spirits* [to see] *whether they are of God.*” The use of the word, “**spirits,**” is not symbolic or allegorical. John is telling us that at the root of any and all doctrinal heresies are spirits, fallen angels who are actually the ministers of Satan:

*“(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) Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; (3) Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”* (1 Timothy 4:1-3)

There is a hierarchy in the spiritual world:

*“(12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* (Ephesians 6:12)

All of the so-called “gods” mentioned in the Old Testament – Baal, Ashtoreth, Molech, Dagon, and many more – were all just fallen angels or devils; what we commonly call demons.

The Bible speaks a lot about the spiritual forces that are behind the scenes influencing all of the doctrinal heresy and immoral practices in the world.

*“(3) But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: (4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”* (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

These “spirits” or fallen angels are the influencers behind the false prophets. Behind every false prophet who is spuing out damning doctrinal heresy is a fallen angel who is working for Satan.

*"(13) For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. (14) And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. (15) Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."* (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

The Bible says that we are to “try the spirits,” meaning that we are to carefully examine what is being taught as truth in our world in order to see if it actually is the truth. How do we do that? Through the Word of God and the indwelling Spirit of God Who is the Author of the Bible.

Jesus said: *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."* (John 17:17)

*"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."* (John 16:13)

Luke commended the Bereans because they checked out what Paul was teaching them from the Old Testament Scriptures:

*"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."*  
(Acts 17:11)

**Verses 2 and 3** – here John gives the *sine qua non* truth (the essential condition, the underlying truth that is absolutely necessary – the non-negotiable). You must believe that *"Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."*

This is not just believing that a person named Jesus was physically born into the world. This is believing that Jesus Christ who always was and always will be God, came to earth and became the God-Man.

*"(1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life; and the life was the light of men. (5) And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ...*

*(14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:1-5, 14)*

Jesus is the God-Man – 100% God and 100% man.

### **From my Doctrinal Synopsis Paper:**

The Bible very plainly teaches the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ in both the Old and the New Testaments. Jesus Christ of Nazareth is eternally the Son of God (John 3:16; Hebrews 13:8). He is the second person of the Triune Godhead (John 17:5; Hebrews 1:8). As God, the Son, He exists eternally (John 1:1; Colossians 1:17; Revelation 1:17), being co-equal (John 10:30; Hebrews 1:3), and co-eternal with His Father. Christ is completely without sin and absolutely incapable of sin (impeccable - Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 13:8; 1 John 3:5; Hebrews 7:26). Because He was born of a virgin, He was born without a sin nature. Because He was and is God, He was incapable of sin. He was tempted by Satan to show Himself as a truly sympathetic High Priest and to serve as an example to His followers. He is omniscient (Matt 9:4, Luke 11:17), omnipresent (John 1:48; John 3:13), and omnipotent (John 6:19; Mark 4:39; Matthew 4:24 – power over the winds, sea, and other natural things). He has all of the attributes of God (John 8:58, Matthew 18:20; 28:20). He does the works of God (Mark 2:1-12; John 5:21-27; 11:43; Mark 2:7). He was called, "God" (John 1:1; 10:36; 20:28; Matt 26:63-64; Hebrews 1:8, Rev 19:16). He claimed to be God and His Father referred to Him as God:

*"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." (Hebrews 1:8)*

What John is saying here in 1 John 4:2 and 3 is that the foundational truth that underlies all of truth is that Jesus is God who became flesh so that he could suffer punishment and die for the sins of the world. This truth is exclusive of all other so-called truths. Believing this foundational truth is not "a way," it is "the only way" to be saved and to know all other truths.

*"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)*

*"(11) And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (12) He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (13)*

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:11-13)*

You will note that none of the cults out there believe this truth. The Muslims believe that Jesus was a prophet, but they do not believe he is God. Hindus just add Jesus to their list of millions of other gods. Some Buddhists believe that Jesus was actually "a Buddha," meaning that he was "fully awakened," but they do not believe that He was the only true God. The Jehovah's witnesses and the Mormons also deny the deity of Christ. Many so-called Christian religions believe that Jesus is God, but they add works to the concept of faith alone in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

In order for you to have the key to understand all truth, you must first believe that Jesus Christ, the God-Man came to earth to die on the Cross for your sins, and that salvation is only possible through faith in Him.

Have you placed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone for your salvation?

If you have received Christ, you have God's Holy Spirit – the Author of Truth within you, and He will reveal all other Truth to you.

## **II. An Indwelling Person that Separates Truth from Error (vs. 4 – 6)**

**"he that is in you"** – a reference to the Spirit of God.

Jesus prophesied regarding the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when He was still with the disciples.

*"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:17)*

Believers in Christ have been sealed with the Holy Spirit:

*"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:13)*

*"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)*

Paul referred to our bodies as being the temple of the Holy Ghost:

*"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19)*

John already mentioned the Holy Spirit back in chapter three:

*"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John 3:24)*

Because we have the Holy Spirit – the Author of Truth – within us we have the exclusive ability to know the Truth. The world cannot know Truth because it does not know God.

*"(9) But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (10) But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:9-16)*

We can also learn Truth indirectly from others who know the Truth:

*"(1) Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly [Note – we can walk in the counsel of the Godly], nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (2) But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. (3) And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psalm 1:1-3)*

Because lost people do not know God, and do not have the Holy Spirit living within them, they cannot possibly know the Truth, and the Truth, to them, is foolish:

*"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)*

## Conclusion

### Practical Thoughts – How can you be sure of Truth

#### 1. Trust Christ As Your Saviour.

*"(31) Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; (32) And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32)*

#### 2. Read and Study the Bible

*"(15) Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)*

Daily Devotions, Meditation, Memorization

Church Services, Sunday School

Discipleship, Specialized Study – Bible Institute

#### 3. Pray

Ask God to reveal the Truth to you.

#### 4. Learn from Others Who Know the Truth

*"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)*

*"(15) Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. (16) Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. (17) Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (18) (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: (19) Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)"*  
(Philippians 3:15-19)

## Translation from 1 John 4:1 - 6

### 1 John 4:1

"**Ἀγαπητοί,**

Beloved,

**μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε,**

no / every (Dative – used with anarthrous [no article] noun / Spirit (Dat. Sing.) / ye (you all) believe

πιστεύετε – Pres. Act. **Imp.** 2<sup>nd</sup> Per. Plu. (Note – this is the same form as indicative, however “you believe” and the imperative “believe” mean the same thing.)

**ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα,**

but / ye (you all) test, examine, prove, scrutinize / the Spirits (Nom. or Acc. Plu.)

δοκιμάζετε – Pres. Act. **Imp.** 2<sup>nd</sup> Per. Plu.

**εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστιν:**

if / out of, from, by (with Gen.) / God (Gen.) / are (3<sup>rd</sup> Per. Sin. – typically translated “is”)

ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφήται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον."

that, for, because / many / false (ψευδο – liars, false) prophets (Plu. Nom.) / come out of / in, for, into / the world

ἐξεληλύθασιν – 3<sup>rd</sup> Per. Plu. Perfect Act. Ind. (Compound verb – out of + go or come)

**Translation – Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits [to see] if they are from God: for many false prophets are gone out into the world.**

Exegetical Comments – the word, “πιστεύετε” used with “μὴ” could indicate that believing every spirit has already been happening and needs to stop (Rogers and Rogers). ἐξεληλύθασιν indicates that these false prophets are continuously going out into the world.

### 1 John 4:2

**"ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ:**

In this (3:10, 16), in Him (3:19, 24) / ye know / the Spirit (Acc.) / of God (Gen.)

γινώσκετε - 2<sup>nd</sup> Per. Plu. Pres. Act. Ind. or Imp

**πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔστι:"**

each, every, all, whole / Spirit (Nom. Sing.) / professes or confesses / Jesus Christ / in / bodily form / to come / out of, from, by / God / is

ὁμολογεῖ - Pres. Act. Ind. 3<sup>rd</sup> Per. Sing.; ἐληλυθότα – 2<sup>nd</sup>. **Perf.** Act. Part. Acc. Sing. (completed action with continuing results)

**Translation – In this you all know the Spirit of God: every spirit that professes that Jesus Christ has come in bodily form is from God.**

### 1 John 4:3

**"καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα,**

And / each, every, all, whole / spirit / what, which, that, you / not / confesses or professes / Jesus Christ / in / bodily form / to come



ἐηλυθότα – 2<sup>nd</sup>. Perf. Act. Part. Acc. Sing. (completed action with continuing results)

**ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν:**

out of, from, by (with Gen.) / God / not / is

**καὶ τοῦτο ἐστὶν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου,**

and / this / is / that / antichrist

**ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται,**

what, which, that, you / that / he comes, is coming

ἔρχεται = 3<sup>rd</sup> Per. Sin. Pres. Mid. Ind. Dep.

**καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη."**

And / now / in / the world / is / now, already, even now

**Translation – And every spirit which professes not that Jesus Christ is come in bodily form, is not from God: And this is that antichrist which is coming and now is already in the world.**

**Exegetical Comments – “τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου” – the double definite article “τὸ τοῦ” is interesting. The τὸ seems to be used as the pronoun “that,” and emphasizes the specificity of antichrist.**

1 John 4:4

**"Ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστε,**

You all / out of, from, by (with Gen.) / the God / You all are

**τεκνία,**

children

**καὶ νενικήκατε αὐτούς:**

and / have overcome, to be victorious, to conquer / them

νενικήκατε – Perfect Act. Ind. 2<sup>nd</sup> Per. Plu.

**ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν ἢ ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ."**

that, for, because / greater / is / that, who or whom / in / you / that, who or whom / in /the world

**Translation – You are all from God, children, and have conquered them: because greater is who is in you that who is in the world.**

1 John 4:5

**"αὐτοὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου εἰσὶ:**

They (Nom. Sing.) / out of, from, by (with Gen.) / the world / they are

**διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου λαλοῦσι,**

on account of, because of / this (Neut. Masc.) / out of, from, by (with Gen.) / the world / they speak, they say

λαλοῦσι – 3<sup>rd</sup> Per. Plu. Pres. Act. Ind.

**καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν ἀκούει."**

And / the world (Nom) / of them, theirs (Gen) / hears

ἀκούει – 3<sup>rd</sup> Per. Sing. Pres. Act. Ind.

**Translation – They are from the world: because the speak of this world, and the world listens to them (hears from them).**

**Exegetical Comments** – Those who are part of this world system listen to each other. The philosophies of this world speak to them, and the world listen to them as they speak. “Birds of a feather.”

**1 John 4:6**

**"ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν:**

We (Nom.) / out of, from, by (with Gen.) / God (Gen) / we are:

**ὁ γινώσκων τὸν θεόν,**

that or whom / to know / God (Acc.)

γινώσκων – Pres. Act. Part. Nom. Sing. Masc.

**ἀκούει ἡμῶν:**

he hears / of us, our

ἀκούει – Pres. Act. Ind. 3<sup>rd</sup> Per. Sing.

**ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ,**

whoso / not / is / out of, from, by (with Gen.) / God

**οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν.**

Not / he hears / of us, our

ἀκούει – Pres. Act. Ind. 3<sup>rd</sup> Per. Sing

**ἐκ τούτου γινώσκομεν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης."**

out of, from, by (with Gen.) / this / we know / the Spirit / truth (Gen) / and / the spirit / error (Gen)

γινώσκομεν – 1<sup>st</sup> Per. Plu. Pres. Act. Ind.

**Translation - We are from God: he who knows God, hears us: whoever is not from God, does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and error.**

**Exegetical Comments** – *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* – (1 Corinthians 2:14)

*"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* – (1 Corinthians 1:18). This principle is very evident today as well. The lost world is absolutely blind to what we as Christians believe, and their world is becoming increasingly foreign to us as well.