

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 19TH, 2019 // BOOK OF 1 JOHN

*We must learn to discern the spirit of truth and falsehood, to love one another as God has loved us, and to love our brothers.*

## "DO NOT BELIEVE EVERY SPIRIT..." (4:1-6)

False gnostic teachers ("prophets") had crept into the church in Ephesus.

- "Spirit" in this passage can be interpreted as either (1) the spirit behind the prophet who is speaking (either the Holy Spirit or a demonic spirit) (2) The teacher/prophet himself, "spirit" being a figure of speech and a metaphor.
- Just because something feels or sounds spiritual doesn't mean it's from God!

So John gives us a test to know if someone is speaking a message inspired by the Spirit of God (vs. 2-3)- they must confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and is from God.

- In other words, the full deity and full humanity of Jesus must be affirmed by any teacher for that teacher to be legitimate.
- If that teacher teaches a different Jesus- they teach a false message, a gospel, and hope.

Anyone who doesn't acknowledge the true nature of Jesus has "the spirit of the antichrist", which is coming, but is in the world already (vs. 3).

- The final antichrist will be a ultimate personification of this worldly spirit that distorts the true nature of Jesus and His work.
- The 1st readers of this warning might have been alarmed that they had become seduced by the antichrist because of false teaching.

But John reminds the Ephesian believers that they are from God and have "overcome them", because they've contended for the truth and resisted the lure of false prophets.

- "He who is in you" (the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8:9) is greater than the one who is in the world (Satan, "the prince of this world", Jn. 12:31).
- False prophets are from the world and its seductive systems of thought (vs. 5).

The false prophets are from the world, but "we are from God" (vs. 6).

- The apostles had been with Jesus and given authority by Jesus to establish the church & write scripture- so whenever they spoke, those who were born of God listened to them.
- The sign of a spiritually mature believer is someone who humbly listens to God's Word and is willing to be under the authority of a local church and its' leaders.

There is MASSIVE need for the American Church to practice discernment and to identify false teaching and stay away from it.

- We have to know God's Word and know what the Gospel actually teaches.
- We have to be filled with and walk by the Holy Spirit that enables us to discern the spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. We have to be bold and speak

## THE SPIRIT OF ERROR: AMERICAN HERESIES

- Latter Day Saints (Mormonism)
- Jehovah's Witnesses
- New Age Movement
- Scientology

## UNIVERSALISM

"There are many paths to God, Jesus is simply one path out of many."

## DENIAL OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

"The Bible is a good book but it wasn't divinely inspired. It's full of errors, contradictions, and out dated mythology. The Bible isn't the word of God."

## "WORD OF FAITH" MOVEMENT

"It's always God's will for believers to have perfect health and abundant wealth- we just have to speak out our blessings and claim them in faith!"

## HYPER-GRACE ("CHEAP GRACE") MOVEMENT

"It's about what you believe, not how you live. As long as you've prayed the prayer to get saved, you can live any way you want. Thank God for grace!"

## LOVE IS FROM GOD (4:7-13)

Here's another test given to see if someone is truly from God- they must love others, because "anyone that does not love does not know God" (vs. 8).

- If we want to be like God, we must love like God.
- There have been many false teachers that have amassed a following teaching a false version of "love" (Jim Jones, David Koresh, The Children of God, "love bombing").

## BUT TRUE, GENUINE GODLY LOVE IS DIFFERENT

1. True love is unconditional with no strings attached, is kind, and it isn't manipulative.
2. True love isn't self-serving, proud, boastful, envious, short-tempered or rude.
3. True love rejoices in truth and isn't accepting of sin.

What is the truest, purest example of love? God sending His son Jesus to die for us (vs. 9-10).

If we've ever wondered if God loves us, we need only to look to the cross.

- God willingly sacrificed His son for us so that we might live through Him!

This love God showed us was in no way a response to humanity's love for God- in fact, it was the opposite- He loved us first! (vs. 10).

- So if He's loved us like this, that's how we're to love each other.

No-one "has ever seen God" (vs. 12), but the love God has for us is made visible and complete as we love one another.

- This is how the world sees God's love- as it's expressed by Him through our lives.
- What's the best witness that we know God and love Jesus? How we love the people around us.
- How loving are you in your family? Your marriage? Your workplace? Your friendships?

## PERFECT LOVE (4:14-21)

John saw the physical Jesus with his own eyes and knew He'd come from God.

- But the false teachers in Ephesus were claiming to know God but denying a core teaching of the gospel- that Jesus had come in the flesh.
- So John provides a doctrinal test in vs. 14-15 as the evidence of the Spirit's presence.
- Someone who believes in Jesus as God's son and savior abides in God, and God in Him.

John repeats an affirmation he made earlier- that God is love and the person who lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

- Recognizing love as a foundational attribute of God's nature and living in it- receiving it from God and extending it to others- is the most important element of our faith walk.
- If we don't know how much we're loved by God, we can never love others fully.

If we abide in His love- receiving it from Him and extending it to those around us- we can have confidence, not fear, on the day of judgment.

- Why? Because "perfect love casts out fear". "Mature" might be a good synonym for perfect.
- Love that is "mature" and casts out fear understands that God loves us on the basis of His character, not our performance- and our love for others comes from Him first loving us.

"We love because He first loved us" (vs. 19)- the secret to growing in love for God and in love for others is to grow (mature) in our understanding of God's love for us.

- If that's true, then hating other people simply proves that we DON'T know God's love for us and we don't actually know God.
- How can someone love an invisible God if they hate His visible image- people He created?

It's a simple, but profound commandment we have from God- "whoever loves God must also love his brother" (vs. 21).

- If your life is dominated by hate towards another person- regardless of what they've done to you or whether or not they disagree with your politics- you're lying when you say you love God (vs. 20).
- Hate is incompatible with the Gospel. Those who've received it must reject hate.

## DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR

- Not every "Christian" teaching is true or Christian. Beware of the spirit of error!
- Not every person that claims to love you actually loves you. You can only know if they truly love you if you know God's love.
- Not every person who claims to love God knows God. If they hate other people, they're a liar.

*Am I practicing discernment in the types of teaching I allow to speak into my life? Or am I letting my emotions and popular opinion lead me astray? If someone were to describe me in how I relate to my family, workplace, friendships or marriage, would they describe me as "loving"? Do I know how much I'm loved?*