

Proof of Life: Testing the Spirits

1 John 4:1-6

Introduction

- Connect with the previous sermons.
- The greater context is a local body of believers deepening in their love for truth and for one another. They are charged by John to prove the Truth in their lives with their actions, being distinguished from the false teachers. So, we must understand that to battle falsehood and heresy we must be people who actually practice the truth we profess – living an overcoming life in Christ Jesus...together.
- This is something of an argument within an argument. If the greater contextual charge is to love one another (**Chp.3 and v.7**), then this is a way in which they show that love, by believing in and celebrating truth, identifying together the falsehood in their presence, even in those who have bought the lie.

Charge to Test the Spirits (v.1)

- **The Beloved**
 - Those loved by God in Christ and those who show that love in their love for one another
- **The Warning**
 - Emphatic: Don't believe everything you hear!
 - Satan is out to destroy the truth in the church
- **The Charge**
 - Test the spirits (Test their claims, their speech along with their actions)
 - Why? To see if they are from God
 - Why? Because many false prophets have come and gone (describing the secessionists again)
 - **John 7:24**, *"Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."*

How to Test Every Spirit (vv.2-3)

- **Know the Spirit of God**
 - **John 15:26**, *"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."*
 - **John 16:13**, *"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."*
- **Listen for the Good Confession...**
 - Jesus is the Christ
 - He has come in the flesh (incarnation)
 - He is God (divinity)
- **Identify false spirits**
 - They do not confess Christ (if they do not acknowledge the full humanity and full deity of Christ)
 - Call it what it is – an antichrist (understand that this is Spiritual Warfare – Satan uses lies and falsehood)
 - Don't fret, you knew this was the case – the many antichrists show the primary message of the one antichrist...denying Jesus as God incarnate, having come to save sinners like you and me!

The Prevailing Nature of the Spirit of Truth (vv.4-6)

- **Do not fear, believer, you have overcome...**
 - You are a Child of God
 - **John 16:33**, *"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."*
 - God's Spirit dwells in you (The same Spirit through whom Christ was raised from the dead)
 - **Eph. 1:13-14**, *"13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."*

- **Rom. 8:11**, *“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”*
- **The World listens to this false teaching**
 - Because they are of the World
 - They preach a self-shaped Christ – don’t be fooled by their “Christ” language
- **Live like the Overcomer you are**
 - Distinct as from God – this is our redeemed, adopted position in Christ Jesus
 - Listen to Truthful Proclamation of God’s Word (This is one of John’s tests of True Believers)
 - **John Stott** (in his commentary) explains the apostolic assertion of John: *“He is carrying a stage further the argument of the first three verses. There the test of doctrine was whether it acknowledged the divine-human person of Jesus Christ; here the test is whether it is accepted by Christians and rejected by non-Christians. There is a certain affinity between God’s Word and God’s people. Jesus had taught that His sheep hear His voice (Jn. 10:4,5,8,16,26,27), that everyone who is of the truth listens to His witness to the truth (Jn. 18:37), and that ‘he who is of God hears the words of God’ (Jn. 8:47). In the same way John asserts that since ‘we are of God’ (6) and ‘ye are of God’ (4), you listen to us. There is a correspondence between message and hearers. The Spirit who is in you (4) enables you to discern His own voice speaking through us (2). So you can recognize God’s Word because God’s people listen to it, just as you can recognize God’s people because they listen to God’s Word” (158).*
 - Discern the true from the false
 - Know the Spirit of truth – it is one of the most loving acts toward your brothers and sisters in Christ and it is one of the most loving acts toward your Christ!
 - **1 Corinthians 2 (READ)**

RESPONSE & REFLECTION

- In our pluralistic and syncretistic society, we must **be on watch**.
- **College student**, you will be challenged with this perhaps more than any of us at this point in life. Don’t lose the core litmus test. Don’t lose a biblical Christology. Don’t lose abiding in Christ in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- **Pray for the Spirit of Truth** to cause discernment in the body.
- **Pray for college students** that they would know truth and discern truth from error...standing firm with the support of the local church, UBC!