

1 John 4:1-6

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Date: 06 November 2016

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[0 : 00] Father in heaven, we ask today that you would sanctify us in truth.

! Your word, Lord, is truth.! Lord, to you we look for our joy, for our redemption, and for our life. I pray these things in the beautiful name of Christ, our King. Amen. 1 John chapter 4 begins like this.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the Spirit of the Antichrist.

[1 : 06] What you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them. For he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

They are from the world, therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us.

Whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of error. In 1995, Newsweek magazine proclaimed that websites would never replace newspapers.

And in December 31st, 2012, Newsweek published its final print issue. Also in 1995, Newsweek predicted that no one would ever buy anything over the internet due to a lack of salespeople.

When it comes to matters of technology trends, it doesn't really matter that much whether our guides get it right or wrong.

[2 : 24] Newsweek wasn't a very good guide on that, but it didn't much affect your life one way or the other. But what about weightier topics? Does it matter where we get our career advice?

Does it matter where we get our parenting advice? Does it matter where we get our financial advice? I would say yes. I think those are weighty things.

Does it matter if they're as confident as Newsweek was in 1995? Those areas of your life that are far more significant than whether you get your news online or in print or where you buy your toilet paper?

But what about the most important topic of all? Does it matter who you go to for guidance, for your eternal soul? And where do we find the right guide?

Is it the guide that has the most followers? Is it the belief system that makes you feel best about yourself? Is it the one with the newest, the latest and greatest ideas?

[3 : 33] Where do we go for guidance for our souls? And how can we tell if someone has it right or if they are in the same position Newsweek magazine was in in 1995?

Now, two weeks ago, in 1 John 3, verses 1-10, we asked the question, Why would a God who needs nothing from us care how we live?

And the answer was so encouraging. God cares how we live not because he's some meddling tyrant, but because he's a loving father.

Unlike any good father, he hasn't left us unprepared to answer hugely important questions like these that we're asking today. And so we see 1 John 4, verse 1, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

A few weeks ago, in the second half of chapter 2, we saw that John wrote this letter to a church under siege.

[4 : 45] False teachers had risen up from among them and then departed the congregation. They had corrupted the gospel, and eventually they went out and were trying to draw people away from Christ, from the gospel, and from the church.

This whole letter was designed to combat that problem, to reassure John's readers that they, in fact, were in the truth. And these new teachers, who didn't care about sin, who didn't care about loving the brethren, who didn't care about the truth of the gospel, were false.

And so when false teachers say, you know, you have it wrong, we have the true teaching, John tells his flocks to look at those three things. The actions, the love, and the doctrines of those who left. Now, we can't see people's hearts. You and I, we don't have that ability. But we can see what comes from hearts. It was Jesus who said, in Luke chapter 6, No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit.

For each tree is known by its fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person, out of the good treasure of his heart, produces good.

[6 : 04] The evil person, out of the evil treasure, produces evil. For out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks. And again, in Matthew 7, he said, Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

You will recognize them by their fruits. Christianity is first a religion of the heart. When someone comes to faith, scriptures tell us that that person is born again.

John says it over and over in this book. Born of God. The Lord takes away our heart of stone, gives us a heart of flesh that beats for him. And that new heart has new affections.

And as Jesus said, From the heart come our words and the fruit of our actions. We love God, so we love his law, which is why it's one of John's tests, our obedience.

We love God, so we love the people that Jesus covered with his blood to redeem, which is why we love the church, and that's one of John's tests for us.

[7 : 13] We love God, so we love his word, through which he speaks to us. And that's why today John has a test for us, a test of truth. And notice how this springs right out of the last passage.

If you were here last week in chapter 3, it ended with these words, Whoever keeps his commandments, abide in God, abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

And today's passage begins with, Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. That is to say, when God gives a person new life, gives them a new heart, adopts them into his family, by the blood of Jesus, he indwells them with his Spirit.

That's chapter 3, verse 24. And now, he says, Since you have God the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, and guiding you into truth, be discerning about other guides.

You notice that I just paraphrased there. John says spirits, and I said guides. The first thing we need to do is ask what John means here, by test the spirits.

[8 : 30] What does he mean by spirits? It could mean that the congregation was being visited by ghosts, or apparitions, or demons. What kind of spirits are we talking about here?

When John says, Do not believe every spirit, I think he's talking about human teachers, who are either teaching in a spirit of truth, or a spirit of falsehood, in the spirit of God, or the spirit of this world. And I think that's what John means for at least two reasons.

First, he explains what he means at the end of verse 1. And test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. And second, he's going to say that in verse 5, they are from the world, and the world listens to them.

Demons are not from this world. They are fallen angels from heaven. And since John says that the world listens to them, he's saying people listen to them. So they, too, being from this world, are probably also people.

So whose job is it, then, to listen to these teachers, to be discerning, to test them, to see whether they are from God?

[9 : 39] Well, John simply begins the verse with the word, Beloved. He's talking to all the children. It's a term of endearment that he has used throughout the letter to refer to the entire church.

That makes sense, because everyone who is born of God has the Holy Spirit living in him. So every Christian today also has access to God's word.

It is a high privilege that we have. If you don't own a Bible, again, we would love to give you one. In verse 4, John is going to say, you are from God.

Here in verse 1, he's telling us to test and see if the teachers we let ourselves listen to are, you guessed it, from God. All this to say, every person is responsible for his or her own faith.

You may not defer to your heritage. It is not enough to come from a Christian family. You must be born again. You may not defer to a pope or a pastor or an author or any other teacher.

[10:58] You are from God. John says, you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you. You are commanded here to test every teacher, including the one speaking to you right now.

That's why our membership affirmation here at Shoreline says, I, every individual here, I am a steward of Shoreline's gospel witness. If any leader begins to teach a false gospel, I will act. I will examine the scriptures and consult that leader in the spirit of reconciliation found in Matthew chapter 18. It's also why in this season of our ministry, we're asking the whole congregation to be a part of helping us improve our proposed statement of faith.

We believe that everyone here is a part of that process. Now, that isn't to say that there isn't a role for leaders or pastors, teachers in the church. The Lord established those roles for a reason.

Older, wiser Christians are a blessing from the Lord. Use them well. But the elders, deacons, Christians and older saints cannot steward your faith for you. What does that look like in daily life?

[12:10] What does it look like to test the spirits? It means listening carefully to the voices within the church and outside the church. It means carefully listening to voices that claim to be from the church, but are really from the world.

So, listen to the preaching from this pulpit with discernment. I am not infallible. Neither are the other elders.

The only power I have, the only message I have, the only thing of any real value I can give you is the truth of God set forth in his word and applied to our lives.

Anything else is from the world and has no business here in this pulpit. Choose what you read with care.

First, read the Bible. We're going to get to that later, but there is no substitute for hearing from God himself day in and day out. Not only is it the best thing to read, but it also shapes our minds.

[13:18] And so it makes us able to test other teachers, other guides, because it is the greatest tool we have in the command to be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

It's to come into direct contact with our Lord's mind and his word. It's also great for you to read Christian books. I want you to be reading Christian books.

They are a huge help, but there is a danger with them as well. The moment we move from the sure and solid word of God to the writings of men, we need to practice discernment.

Remember how Newsweek predicted that no one would buy things online, right? Well, we probably buy nothing else online more than we buy books, which means that bookstores across the nation are folding left and right, and Christian bookstores are feeling the pressure too, which means that they're forced to stock things that sell, which quite frankly means that many Christian bookstores are full of garbage.

I'm not here to give you a list of books and authors not to read. That's not a helpful use of our time. What I'm trying to say is become discerning readers.

[14:44] Of course, the book market is inundated with problematic teachings, books that are more likely to focus on you and me than on God.

Books that bring elements of mysticism into the Christian life, either from Eastern religions or from the Roman Catholic mystics of the medieval period. Best-selling books on prayer that actually admit within their own pages that the practices they're affirming to us are not found anywhere in Scripture. Books about heaven that focus on dead relatives and personal enjoyments and have very little to say about Jesus. Jesus, the pet issue teacher, is very prominent too.

One of the most important and widely read books in academic circles right now today on missions. It doesn't even mention hell in 500 pages.

It has lost its way, I think. Books that tell you how Christian faith is supposed to get a good life today for you. Or books that work to undo the teachings of the Bible.

[16:04] This sin or that sin is now okay. Jesus is one way to God but not the only way. Things like that. And you're going to find those errors in pulpits, Bible studies, all across the country.

And everything I just mentioned to you about books and teaching could also be true of music. Turn on a Christian radio station and you are sometimes just as likely to find a song about you as one about Jesus.

That is not a helpful thing. And music is powerful, isn't it? It gets stuck in our head and so does its message. It communicates with more than just words.

A song's melody says something. So pay careful attention to the music you listen to. And that's what I am so blessed by and proud of.

Those here at Shoreline who lead us in songs of praise. They lead us in songs like the ones we've sung today. This I believe.

[17:09] Oh, worship the King. Don't take that for granted. Not every church is blessed with so rich and deep in musical ministry. Take a moment today after church and thank someone who leads us in musical worship.

And so all of this together has encouraged us to listen to our guides, all the various different guides with discernment is summed up very well by Christ when he says, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

He cares what and how we think. And now, this is actually a great place to use the wisdom of other Christians. If you'd like to grow as a Christian parent, grow in prayer, or get help overcoming a really tough sin, if you want to learn about a particular doctrine or help understanding a particular book of the Bible, ask another Christian who has shown themselves faithful and knowledgeable, talk to one of the elders or to an older saint.

I'm not the only person in this room with theological training, so take advantage of that. What I don't want is for our discernment to turn us into a group of skeptics.

That is not what Christ wants for his church. If, in our discernment, we eliminate grace and charity, we have lost our way as well. Now, just as we said back in chapter 2 when John talked about truth, there are different kinds of problem teachings.

[18:54] You can be in error about how to pray and still be a Christian. You can be confused about how to apply Old Testament law to the new covenant lives of Christians and still be a Christian.

And separate from error, there are legitimate differences of interpretation between believers about matters of church life, say.

Does the congregation vote on everything? Or do the elders make most of the decisions? Do we baptize infants? What are the finer points of the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

There are legitimate differences of interpretation on those matters, and that does not exclude brothers and sisters from the kingdom of God. So there must be distinguished differences of interpretation that are very legitimate, doctrinal errors which do not remove someone from the kingdom of God, and then true heresy, which John is about to talk to us in verses 2 and 3.

There are some errors that actually set us against Jesus, and the guides who teach those doctrines and practices are not from Christ.

[20:18] That is what John wants us to know. In fact, they have the spirit, he says, of the anti-Christ. And so he says in verses 2 and 3, by this you know the spirit of God.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the anti-Christ, which you have heard was coming, and now is in the world already.

There are two errors that we can fall into when we think about our enemy. First, we can see Satan everywhere, and attribute even our own sins to Satan.

The devil made me do it. I have a demon of anger. No, you have a sinful heart of anger. And so it's very easy to overplay our enemies role, but it's also very easy to ignore the enemy, and I think for Christians like ourselves, it might be more that perspective that we have.

We must say with John here that he is real, he is active, he is hidden, he is powerful. As we're about to see in verse four, he is no match for God.

[21:39] But one of his main tactics, especially in a culture like ours, is false teachers, either by outright heresy or by subtle distraction. So we need to be discerning.

There are some ideas about God that if you hold them, it means you don't worship the God of the Bible, and you do not know the living God.

There are some ideas about the gospel that if you hold them, mean you have not believed the good news about Jesus Christ, and still need to come to faith. You are lost in your sins. And that's what we mean when we say the word heresy.

And John confronts one of these heresies here. False teachers, who we know from chapter two, verse 19, have already left the church. We're teaching that Jesus did not come in the flesh.

Let's kind of break that down because he says, he kind of says, in very technical language almost in verse two, by this we know the spirit of God, every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come

in the flesh.

[22 : 50] First, Jesus, he came to this world as a man, Jesus of Nazareth. He had a real hometown. He was born of a virgin to a carpenter's family. He had a real family with real parents and siblings.

We know their genealogy. He had a real heritage. He had real relatives, even a cousin, John, who would go on to be a prophet in Israel. Jesus, a real man.

But Jesus Christ, this is the word Christos, which maps to the word, that's Greek, the Old Testament written in Hebrew, Messiah, what those words mean, the anointed one.

In ancient Israelite practice, the act of anointing an office bearer with oil would set them apart for a consecrated duty. And so this was true of the priests, it was true of the kings.

And the Jews expected not just an anointed priest, an anointed king in each day, but some climax of the the anointed one, someday in the future.

[24 : 01] And so we can see the anticipation that they had, there was coming one day, the anointed one, the Messiah, the Christ. You can see it in John chapter 1 where when Philip finds Nathanael and said to him, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

This extended even beyond what we would normally think of Israel into Samaria. The woman at the well said to Jesus, I know that Messiah is coming, he who is called Christ.

When he comes, he will tell us all things. And so there was an expectation that the Lord implanted in his people that the anointed one was coming. And all throughout the Old Testament, we don't have the time today to look at all the passages that influence and help us understand what was to be expected.

some of the most major ones was that he was going to make an end of sin for God's people and reunite them to the Lord. He was going to usher into a new covenant and that he was going to be a king.

So Jesus, Christ, has come. I think we can find nowhere more poignant than John chapter 3. Some of the most well-known and well-beloved words in all the Bible.

[25 : 28] God so loved the world that he gave, that is, he sent his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God. Jesus Christ has come.

We did not go to him, he came for us and he came in the flesh. It's so important because the entire gospel hinges on that.

Our salvation is totally and utterly dependent on it. That he came in the flesh. Here, Colossians chapter 1, as Paul the apostle tells us.

Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him.

[26 : 39] And he is before all things. And in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body of the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And through him to reconcile himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven.

And hear this, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you who were once alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.

How did Jesus make peace between wicked humans and the Holy Father? By making peace by the blood of his cross.

It is critical that Jesus came in the flesh. How were we made holy and blameless and above reproach so we could be reconciled to the Lord? Paul says, he has now reconciled us in his body of flesh by his death.

[28 : 02] Jesus went to the cross as a man to nail my sin and your sin, the sins of men, to that cross.

if he never came bodily, there is no gospel and there is no salvation. There is no redemption and there is no peace with God.

Friends, it is just as critical that Jesus Christ has risen in the flesh as it is that he went to the cross in the flesh.

We do not have time to talk about that this morning. You will notice we are in verse 2 still, right? I hope you brought snacks. But it is just as critical that Jesus rose bodily in the flesh or else our faith is in vain and so I will point you to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 for your own study and I really want you to go there and study that later.

Paul will say if Jesus did not rise from the grave, our faith is futile. But because he did go to the cross in the flesh, because he did rise from the grave in the flesh, we have a beautiful redemption and a wonderful Lord and an incredible message to proclaim to the world that has no hope.

[29 : 33] So we might ask why did the false teachers deny that wonderful, beautiful message? why would they? The gospel message is so beautiful, why diminish it?

If we look forward just a few verses to verse 5, John will help us out. He says, they are from the world, therefore they speak from the world.

They're from the world, that is they are still outside the people of God, they haven't been born of God, the Holy Spirit hasn't given them new hearts and minds, therefore they speak from the world. That is, they still think in worldly ways. They're products of their cultures, not products of God. And friends, even for us who have been born of God, it's really hard to live in this world and not be of this world and not think in the categories that this world thinks.

We turn on the radio and the songs we hear are proclaiming a worldview. They're saying, this is valuable and this is how to pursue it. And that rubs off on us.

[30 : 50] We talk to our neighbors and if they don't know Christ, their priorities rub off on us too. Their categories of thinking rub off on us. We open a newspaper, turn on the TV, surf the web, every piece of information and entertainment that we take in is produced by a person with a particular worldview.

I'm not saying throw out your TV, I'm not saying get rid of computers, I'm not saying don't talk to people, I'm saying along with John, test the spirits, be discerning. So why did the false teachers in John's day deny in particular that Jesus came in the flesh?

Well, they were conditioned to it, by their culture. In the worldview of most of the philosophers of the Greco-Roman world, the material world was inferior to a spiritual realm, and it's not the same kind of spiritual realm that you and I probably think of.

It was more of an idealized world that no one could really achieve, but no one could really get to, but our world was a bad reflection of it, basically.

And so in their eyes, the physical universe was something to be overcome, come. It was lesser, polluted, and so in contrast even to Christians who buried their dead as a sign that they hoped in the resurrection, Greeks burned their dead.

[32 : 20] Clemation has typically been associated with a pagan worldview. They thought that they were escaping the body. For Christians, our hope is in resurrection on the last day.

So the idea that God would become material and physical, visit the world in flesh, was offensive to them. That's why the Apostle Paul said, we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

the idea that Jesus was crucified was foolishness to the Greeks, not only because what God would die on a cross that's weak, but also because what God would take on flesh in order to ever do that. That was their worldview, and so it came into their teachings. And so these false teachers said, well, we like this Jesus thing, but the whole idea that he became flesh, we think the Apostles got that wrong, because no way, right?

That's foolishness to us. So they changed it up. They blended the true God and the true gospel with the cultural understandings and expressions of their day, and ended up without God and without the gospel.

[33 : 40] And they were leading others astray as well. And the practices of blending the Bible with our culture's sensibilities is alive and well today.

I can't even enumerate all of them. I'll try to think of some. How about our culture's priority on tolerance?

If you want to affirm that everybody is basically right, simply say that Jesus was a great teacher, and ignore what he actually taught, but say that he's a great teacher, and a spiritual example, and leave it at that.

Certainly, he was a great teacher and a spiritual example, but he is God who came for us to reconcile us to the Lord. But you can diminish him to simply a great teacher, then you've got a God that fits nicely in our culture's categories.

ways. What about the naturalistic worldview? The only things that exist are the things we can measure via science. If all that exists is the scientifically explainable and material world, kind of Darwin's universe, well, the miracles of the Bible actually inhibit us from getting across the really important parts, you know, the morality.

[35 : 05] and so we saw in the 1800s, and it is still alive and well today, the rise of theological liberalism. That stands apart from political liberalism.

They're not the same thing. And it's basically been working to demythologize Christianity. Let's ignore all the miracles of urgent birth, the resurrection, those things. They were only their folklore to help us get across the moral lessons that we were supposed to learn.

that, too, is a false God and a false gospel. America is the land of opportunity, and so we like quid pro quo, give some get some, right?

And so the idea that is, I think, very prevalent in the United States probably, if you ask somebody, hey, are you going to go to heaven? What will they say? Probably they'll say, I'm a good person, so yeah, I think God will let me in.

we think that we'll get a pass because our good outweighs our bad. First off, the Bible teaches us that that's simply not true, and secondly, God would never have needed to send his son to die on a cross for our sins if the good simply needed to outweigh the bad.

[36 : 24] What about the American dream? There's a gospel of that, too, isn't there? Now, there are a couple of different versions of the American dream. There's the prosperity one, and so that has become the prosperity gospel.

That's a thing, you know, Jesus of health and wealth. There's also the self-esteem American dream, I think, that has come into its own in the last couple decades, and that gives us the Jesus of positive thinking, a Jesus that is all affirmation and has nothing to say about sin and suffering and repentance.

That, too, is a false gospel. our culture likes to say it's all connected every which way. So, they diminish Jesus to a Jesus that looks just like all the other teachers of all the other religions, boils everything down to loving one another.

And actually, if you think about it, if you say Christianity is really just about loving your neighbor, that's what we would call in Christianity legalism, and it sets up a performance based religion, it sounds nice because it's love, right?

But how much do I need to love? How often do I need to love? Can I judge that guy and say, oh, you know, he's not doing so great, but I'm doing great, right?

[37 : 52] Because, you know, I know in my heart I really love that person, something like that. When we boil down Christianity to simply love your neighbor as yourself, first off, it's impossible, secondly, there's no gospel in it, there's no Christ in it.

Our culture loves celebrities as well, and so many Christian sects have gone off the rails following celebrities. Think of the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormon Church, religions that were founded by charismatic individuals.

Celebrities, if you will, and they, both of those deny outright that Jesus is God. What about our culture's value on autonomy?

There is nothing more sacred in the United States than the individual and their ability to decide what they want to do. Now, we do want to affirm freedom.

We think that is a good thing, but it bleeds into a Jesus who doesn't require anything from his followers.

[39 : 06] I can follow Jesus but have my own way in everything. We can't have made it this far through 1 John. Look back to the many lessons he's given us about obedience and think that obedience isn't critical to the Christian life.

now, remember it is not to get saved that we obey God, but it is precisely because we have been saved that we obey God. Jesus said, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take

up his cross and follow me.

It means die to yourself, I am your king. God. Now, these are all false gods and false gospels and we could list many, many more.

But the purpose of John's message here today is not to list out every conceivable error. It is to encourage us to be discerning.

Now, with so much error, with so much lying, with so much falsehood, with every overwhelming wave after wave of falsehood about God and the gospel, what chance do we stand?

[40 : 19] Because this is the air we breathe around us, isn't it? The gods of autonomy and tolerance and celebrity.

John gives us a beautiful hope in verse 4. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. I want to point out simply three things from this verse.

First, every worldview that doesn't come from God is from this world. There is no such thing as neutrality. When we are told messages that contradict his sure testimony, we must recognize that those are at best a distraction and at worse, an attack on the truth.

There is no middle ground. Our enemy wants to dislodge, distract, devour, and destroy us. Be on your guard.

But second, and encouragingly, John has repeated over and over that Christians are born of God. And here he says, you are from God. Part of that means we have been given new hearts.

[41 : 37] Part of that means we have a new identity and family in Christ. And part of that means that God the Holy Spirit abides in us. And as we'll see next week, that has lots of ramifications.

Here today, Christians have a power for living that goes beyond their own limits. God gives us supernatural strength to defeat sin, to live in love, and what is particularly important today for this passage is that he empowers us to live and to remain and to abide steadfastly in the faith once delivered for the saints.

That is why he says, you are from God. He's so sure that those who are from God, will make it home safely to God.

He's so sure that he puts the next phrase in the past tense. You are from God and have overcome, as if it's already been accomplished. A victorious Christian life from beginning to end, already completed.

And tied to that is the third point I'd like to make about verse 4. As we're about to see in verse 5, overcoming the Antichrist is an act of discernment.

[43 : 03] We overcome by holding fast to Jesus, holding fast to the true gospel, holding fast to his word. For those of us who were here last fall as we went through the book of Ephesians, Ephesians 6 has the largest teaching on spiritual warfare in all of the Bible.

And what is Paul's encouragement to us throughout the whole section? Over and over and over he says, stand. Stand firm in the faith.

That is spiritual warfare. That is our job. And so John concludes today saying in verse 5 and 6, they are from the world, therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.

We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us. Whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

We have already discussed how the false teachers were speaking from the world. The world that at that time thought that the physical was wrong and lesser and problematic.

[44 : 14] So they stripped the message of Jesus of those ideas. We have also talked about how many today are tempted to speak from the world. Jesus the great teacher, Jesus the health and wealth machine, Jesus who's not really king overall but leaves me in charge of my own life.

If we're going to follow this instruction to test the spirits that is to discern what kind of teaching you're hearing what spirit does it come from how do we prepare ourselves?

What must we do? We see it here in verse six. When a teacher tests a student there is a grading rubric. When an engineer tests a design there is a performance specification.

When a Christian tests a message we have God's word. That's why he says in verse six we are from God and he is from you are from God to we are from God and here I think he's talking about the apostles.

Whoever knows God listens to us. If you are in Christ you will listen to his apostles who have recorded the apostolic testimony about Jesus in the Bible.

[45 : 36] We can test the spirit of every teacher against the message of the apostles but we can't do that unless we know what they have said.

So this passage drives us to God's word. And we simply ask do you read it? Do know it? Are you seeking God out in his word? Or do you wait until Sunday to hear? Now God's word preached is really important.

I've dedicated my life to that. I think that is really important. But if this is the only time that you are submitting yourself to God's word, you are leaving yourself open the other six days of the week to all the world's messages.

Next time you turn on the radio, will you believe that message or the message of Christ? Next time you turn on the TV, open a newspaper, talk to a neighbor. The next time someone says to you, God told me X, Y, or Z, do you know enough of the Lord's word to evaluate that statement?

[47 : 01] Or are you a sitting duck? When the Lord takes you from this area, I'm under no illusion that everyone sitting in this room is here for forever, when he takes you from this area and moves you somewhere else, will you find yourself in a Bible believing, Bible teaching church that makes the preached word a priority or will you not?

I hope that you will. There's a special duty here for parents to raise their children in the instruction of the Lord. Parents, read the Bible with your children, even when you don't think they're old enough to understand it.

Pray with them, pray for them. This passage delves deeper than simply what doctrines do we profess.

Christianity isn't a religion where having the right information is what cements our status with God. No, faith is confident hope in a person.

That person is Jesus Christ. We aren't saved by believing in a doctrine of justification by faith. We are saved by believing in him.

[48 : 21] We are saved by believing in Jesus Christ who has come in the flesh. Second, it builds deeper than simply information because it impacts every part of our lives.

Christ can't be Lord of your life and that not impact the way you live. so when you lose something that the world considers completely most valuable will you speak to yourself from the world and say that you are undone or will you look to Christ who came in the flesh and lost his life for you so that nothing could ever undo you.

When you go without the treasures of this world the respect of this world for singles the intimacy of this world will you speak to yourself from the world and say I'm missing out I deserve better will you look to Christ who left the treasures of heaven lost out on glory to come and reconcile you to himself how will you encourage others will you go to the scriptures or will you speak from the world and lastly what will we do when the scriptures contradict us will we listen to John and the other apostles or we listen to the world that's going to come up next week when we think about how we act towards other people because we've been born of God so friends let's test the spirits let no one deceive you and friends let's rejoice

Jesus Christ has come for us in the flesh and he is coming again one day let's pray father this is an incredible word you have given us your son he came from heaven to seek us out give us new life lord let us not listen to the world but let us listen to you father i pray that you would guard us and keep us from the world so that we may be a light to the world we pray these things in the name of Jesus and for his name sake amen now friends i can think of no more fitting way to proclaim jesus christ has come in the flesh and to celebrate the lord's supper together the lord made us for himself but we have gone astray and so after other things we are going to be blessed by that next Sunday a message about god is love and he is love so he sent his son to rescue us from our sin and it is critical that he came in the flesh to rescue us that's what we read earlier today in Colossians chapter one in him all the fullness of god was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven making peace by the blood of his cross and you who were once alienated and hostile in mind doing evil deeds he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death in order to present you holy and blameless and a brov!

[52 : 21] reproach before him friends earlier in first john we read if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness let's now in private prayer bring to mind and then confess to the lord our sin that Jesus brought in his flesh to the cross for us to brothers brothers!

brothers!