

So That You May Know

An Expositional Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 16- The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error

156. Testing the Spirits- Part 7

WAOY Thursday-Monday 02/21-25/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to continue to examine what John taught about "Testing the Spirits". So let's open our Bibles and read **1John 4: 1-6-** again together:

- 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**
- 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;**
- 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.**
- 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.**
- 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them.**
- 6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.**

Now on the last broadcast, we were going over verse 1- so let's read that verse again together:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Now on the last broadcast- I was showing you how that the fourth verse of Jude tells us that the false prophets that John is talking about here in this verse will attack the Christian Faith along three main lines:

1. The Grace of God
2. The Character and Nature of God
3. The Person of Jesus Christ

And we talked about how that throughout the 2,000 year history of the Church- these are the three areas that all heresy fought against and so these are the three areas of Christian Doctrine that are what is called, “essential” to the Christian Faith.

Now over the 2,000 years of Church history, there have been thousands of attacks against these three areas- but when you examine these attacks- you find that they all migrate into one of seven basic roots or groups. So from that we can say that there are seven major heresies or false teachings from which all of the many heresies come from. And on the last broadcast- we talked about the first group- the Judaizers or the legalists and I want to continue to discuss that first group today.

Now first of all- we have to say that many times today we call someone a legalist for a variety of reasons. Technically- there is only one legalist and that is the person who is trying to earn Salvation by what he does. Those people who through various means are trying to deserve Heaven or who are trying to develop their own personal righteousness to the point where they feel as though God should grant to them eternal life are the true legalists.

So by definition- legalists or Judaizers are lost people who are deceived into thinking that they must become good enough to deserve Heaven by keeping certain rules or by following certain teachings or by doing religious things. By doing this- those people do not comprehend the majesty of Grace and they are trying to get paid a wage- which in this case is Salvation in return for their labor- which is what they do to become better. Legalists ignore Grace; they lower the glorious death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ to the point of uselessness. Legalists think that Salvation is about us becoming moral and not what it really is- a free gift of Grace from a Sovereign God to undeserving sinners.

And I will tell you this- that we have done a very poor job over the last century in teaching Grace to our people and as a result- people have all kinds of strange thoughts about Salvation that are not Biblical and as a result- the heresy of the Judaizers is running rampant today.

You see, we understand Law. Law is easy for human beings to understand. Law says: "You do well- and God will bless you and you sin, and God will curse you". That is Law and that is easy to learn- even pagans understand Law. And today in many, many people's minds- not only is Salvation based upon Law but also physical healing as well as blessings are all based on that same concept of Law- you do good and you get good; you do bad- and you get bad.

But what is not so easy to learn beloved, is Grace. Grace is not Law. Grace transcends Law. Grace is unmerited favor; undeserved special treatment; unearned love and the concept of Grace runs counterintuitive to human understanding and therefore Grace must be taught and it must be learned- because it isn't easy to understand. This is why Jude says that Grace is one of the issues that most all heresy fights against- and so we need to study Grace and we need to learn Grace and we need to comprehend how Grace works so that we can successfully fight against those false teachings that fight against Grace.

What everyone has to get into their minds is that we are not saved because we did good- we are saved by Grace. No one is saved by Law- everyone is saved by Grace. Noah found Grace in the eyes of the Lord. God didn't choose Noah because of something good that Noah had done or some quality that Noah possessed- no, Noah found Grace in God's Eyes. He didn't deserve God sparing him; he didn't earn it and he was not worthy of it. Later on, the Bible says that Abraham believed God and that ability to believe that was granted to Abraham by Grace is what as counted to him for righteousness. Even Moses- Law giver was not saved by the Law that God gave him. Moses was saved by Grace- the same way that we are saved by Grace. God doesn't have different ways to save people- all men are saved by Grace. No man deserves God's favor; all men deserve God's judgment- because all men are sinners. But God grants Grace to everyone who is saved.

This is what the Judaizers were trying to tear up. These men were teaching that Grace was fine- but it wasn't enough; it wasn't sufficient to save the Gentiles and these legalists were teaching that the Gentiles still had to do something to deserve to be saved- in their case it was being circumcised and keeping the dietary laws- but in our day it is any number of human requirements that are added to Grace so that men may be saved.

You see, dear friends, we did not earn Salvation- yea we cannot

earn Salvation for the simple fact that we are all sinners. The harsh reality of sin is the great equalizer of all mankind- because all men sin. Jews sin as well as Gentiles. Church people sin and well as atheists. Buddhists sin as well as Muslims- all men sin and all men- because of their sin- are in dire straits with a holy and righteous God. This truth is what makes the heresy of the legalists so preposterous.

Here's why. Let's say for example that you are trying to go to Heaven and you believe that God is holy and thus the only way to go to Heaven is to become holy. This concept is the foundation of every single religion and man- made philosophy on earth. All religions teach that in order to go to Heaven- you have to be holy and righteous. So every religion except Christianity teaches that in order to go to Heaven you have to do certain things and stop doing certain things in order to become righteous enough to earn Heaven. Buddhists teach that if you don't get good enough in this life- you will be reincarnated and you will come back as a dog or a flea or a cow and you will run through this life as many times as necessary until you reach that place of righteousness. Islam teaches that the only sure way to become righteous enough to earn Heaven is to blow yourself up pursuing jihad.

Humanists believe that if you get enough money and by following certain moral codes that through evolving science and technology- you can become a good person. Other false religions teach that if you attend Mass or if you speak in tongues or if you are baptized or any number of things- you will be good enough to earn Heaven.

All of that is false beloved. Because as soon as you start down that road of trying to earn Heaven or to develop your own righteousness through what you do- you run into a very serious problem right off the bat. If you are trying to go to Heaven based upon good works- if you are trying to earn Heaven; if you are working real hard to develop your own personal righteousness so that it will be good enough to get you into Heaven- here is what you have to do. You have to keep every single Law of God. But it gets worse. Not only do you have to keep every single Law of God- but you have to keep every Law- all of the time. But it gets even worse than that. Not only do you have to keep every single Law all the time- but you have to keep every Law all the time and you have to keep every Law in thought, word, and deed. If you break just one Law one time- even in thought- listen to what **James 2:10** says:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.

The problem with trying to earn righteousness is that as soon as you sin- you have lost all the progress that you made up to that point. And it doesn't matter whether you broke one Law or all ten- if you break *any* law- you are a transgressor of the law and you are not righteous because you have sinned. So the harsh reality is that no one who is trying to earn Heaven can ever possibly accomplish it because one sin puts you back at square one.

The net result of this dilemma is that only those who are just like God in thought word, and deed can ever earn Heaven by what they do. Only those who are just as righteous as God is- can actually *deserve* to go to Heaven. And this unarguable fact doesn't make Salvation difficult for human beings to earn- it makes it impossible for us to earn. But because it is impossible- it is a miracle and because we don't deserve it- then Salvation is by Grace alone and because it is not based upon any human works- Salvation is through Faith alone and because it is Christ's spotless Righteousness that makes me fit for Heaven and not my own righteousness- then Salvation is because of Christ alone.

So Grace was attacked full force through the error of the Judaizers and James and Peter and Paul saw that this was a serious enough challenge to Grace to convene a Church Council to decide the matter. And the body of teaching that came out of that Jerusalem Council helped to make up the Doctrines of Grace that the Christian Church still confesses today- some 1900 years later.

You see the reason that Church Doctrines are formulated is so that believers will have solid, Scriptural teaching that successfully refutes and defeats the heresy that it pertains to. It is through the fires of battle that Divine Truth is learned and applied. Heresy always comes first and then the Church develops sound Scriptural truth to fight against the error of the heretics.

And this is why, brothers and sisters, we all need to learn Doctrine and we need to teach Doctrine today. And this is why we need to learn and be taught about Church history so that we won't make the same mistakes that those who came before us made and so that we will not twist the Scriptures or misapply them like some of them did and so

that we will not go down dead end streets like many of those who came before us did.

So even though satan meant the attacks by the Judaizers for harm- to destroy our understanding of Grace- God turned it for good and as a result of Grace being challenged by the legalists- strong, Biblical teaching about Grace came out of that struggle that is able to edify us even today when the modern legalists rear their ugly head in our day to pervert the right way of the Lord.

Because James and Peter and Paul tested the spirit of the Judaizers and because they refused to budge one inch about Grace- legalism was soundly defeated 1900 years ago and the Biblical concept of this Amazing Grace was preserved for us today to enjoy and rejoice over.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.