

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

159. Testing the Spirits- Part 10

WAOY Thursday 02/28/08

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 just who John was referring to here in verse 1 by looking at the three major heresies that attacked the Church during the age of the Apostles.

And on the last broadcast- we were talking about the second major attack against Grace called Antinomianism. As you recall the Judaizers attacked Grace by *ignoring* it and by teaching that Salvation was the result of what we do. Paul and Barnabas and Peter and James tested the spirit of the Judaizers and found them to be not of God and so they confronted them and defeated them at the Council of Jerusalem as recorded for us in **Acts 15**.

Antinomianism, on the other hand *abused* Grace by teaching that after we are saved- we are free to live anyway we want to without any restriction on our lives whatsoever. So legalism or the heresy of the Judaizers was all Law and Antinomianism was lawless.

So as Jude taught us in **Jude 4**- all false teaching is either an attack against Grace or against the Character and Nature of God the Father or an attack against the Person of Jesus Christ.

So last time I was showing you that even though Grace is the cornerstone of the entire Bible- Grace is less understood today than it was when Adam received it in the Garden 6,000 years ago.

You see, Grace is a mystery and no other religion or man-made philosophy speaks about Grace. Therefore, Grace must be taught from the Scriptures or it will be misunderstood and perverted very quickly in the mind of Man.

The first two heresies to attack the church- Legalism and antinomianism attacked the Grace of God from two different sides. The Judaizers or the legalists ignored Grace while the Antinomians abused Grace. So on the last broadcast- I was showing you what Paul taught in Romans 5 & 6 that helped the Church to successfully defeat Antinomianism in the first century. So let's read again **Romans 5:6-8**:

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Now Paul had written **Romans 4** to defeat the heresy of the Legalists by teaching that Justification is by faith alone apart from any works. And Paul used the patriarch Abraham as his example to discredit those who taught that Salvation was the result of human effort.

But here in Chapter 5- Paul is teaching about Grace and showing us the Grace is indeed unmerited favor, undeserved special treatment and unearned love. So, Paul startled the Judaizers of his day by saying in verse 8:

... while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Now the concept that a holy and righteous God would take on human flesh and die for unworthy and wicked sinners literally blew the collective Jewish mind. How dare Paul teach that God would stoop to such a degrading place as to die for the sins of people who are evil. How dare he teach that God would give Grace to people who did not deserve it and who had not earned it.

But Paul was just getting started and he continued to insult everything that the Jews had been taught by writing verses 9-14:

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath *of God* through Him.

10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned —

13 for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Justified by the Blood of that rabble rouser- Jesus? Are you kidding me? The guy who said that His Father was God? That nut? The average Jew of the first century must have surely thought that Paul must be losing his mind. Was Paul actually teaching that God justifies people who are sinful and not righteous? Yes, that is exactly what Paul taught. Well that just doesn't make any sense. Anybody worth their salt knows that we have to keep the Law to be justified and here Paul is saying that men are justified outside of the Law. How could this be?

The key to this passage lies in verse 12 – so let's read that verse again:

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death

through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned —

Here Paul is repeating what Jesus and John both taught that all men are sinful- even the Jews are sinful- even the Jews who are trying so hard to keep the Law- that they too sin. Well, what are we to do about that? If all men sin then no man perfectly keeps the law and if no man can keep the law and yet only those men who are righteous can go to Heaven- then that must mean that nobody goes to heaven- because all men sin.

This harsh stark, bleak unarguable fact that all men sin is the great equalizer of the entire human race. All men sin- therefore no man is worthy of Heaven because Heaven is reserved only for the righteous. Only those who perfectly keep the law in thought, word, and deed are truly righteous. Any transgression of any law one time in either thought, word, or deed immediately classifies you as being one thing and one thing only- a sinner. As far as the Law goes- there is no such thing as close calls- this isn't horseshoes or atomic bombs where close counts. As far as righteousness is concerned there is no such thing as being kinda- sorta righteous. You either are or you're not and if you're not perfectly righteous- then you can't earn Heaven.

So if you can't earn Heaven because you are sinful- how does anyone go to Heaven? Grace. You see, dear friends the reason that legalism is so evil is because it teaches that Grace isn't enough. But if God's Grace isn't enough- why in the world would we ever think that something we did would be good enough?

Jesus taught this same thing when he told Nicodemus in **John 3** that he needed to be born again. When Jesus said that to Nicodemus- He was in essence telling this ruler of the Jews that all of his effort to make himself righteous had failed. Jesus was telling Nicodemus that all of his sacrifices and all of his carnal washings and all of his Sabbath observances did not make him any more righteous than a prostitute was and that if Nicodemus was not born again- he would never even see the kingdom of Heaven. Now let's read more about what Paul taught about Grace by looking at **Romans 5:15-21**:

15 But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

16 The gift is not like *that which came* through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment *arose* from one *transgression* resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift *arose* from many transgressions resulting in justification.

17 For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

21 so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Law entered, Paul said in verse 20 so that as we work real hard to earn our own Salvation- all that we would see is how sinful we really are. Now what did Paul teach was the result of us seeing how sinful we really are? Look at the last part of verse 20:

... but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

Because the Law is a schoolmaster which cannot save us but only shows us our great need of a Savior- thus by our sins being magnified in our own eyes- we are left as being helpless, hopeless, wicked sinners.

Now why in the world would God want us to see that we are nothing but helpless, hopeless, wicked sinners? So that we will cry out to Him in utter desperation for Mercy and Grace. And this is what Paul meant when he said:

... but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

If we think that there is some way that we can earn Heaven- we will take that way. If we believe that there is any way that we can develop our own righteousness- we will take that path. But if we have become convinced by our best efforts to keep the Law that we are utterly

depraved and incapable of living without sin- then and only then will we cry out to God for Grace.

Now as magnanimous as Grace is and as glorious as Paul taught it here- the second group of heretics- the Antinomians took this glorious truth about Grace and they perverted it- especially here in verse 20.

The Antinomians twisted verse 20 to mean that Grace abounds where there is sin so therefore sin is not only not a hindrance to Grace- sin- in the Antinomian teaching- is actually preferred.

So the Antinomian heretics taught that since Grace abounds where sin abounds that- as believers- we need to sin with abandon and do whatever it is that suites our fancy and God will be greatly pleased.

Now obviously Paul was not teaching that in this verse. He had tried their spirit and found them to not be of God and Lord willing, on the next broadcast- we will get into Paul's rejection of the Antinomian heresy. So please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the **Epistle of 1John**. May God help us all.

© 2007- 2023 by Enjoying God Ministries, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America
Enjoying God Ministries, Inc. PO Box 147 Saucier, Mississippi 39574 www.covenantofpeace.net

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from The New American Standard Bible © 1995 by The Lockmann Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse Journey through the Epistle of 1John. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

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.