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TOUGH MINDED CHRISTIANS

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Today we want to look at a very powerful scripture verse found in 1st John 4:1, **“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”**.

Christianity, and rightly so, has been characterized as a religion of love, but it is important not to take that emphasis to an unhealthy extreme. Regretfully, Christianity has been hijacked by those who say that God is simply a God of love. I often hear people say God does not judge and that He is a God of love and that is all: that my friend, is a cloak and excuse for not living right and desiring to embrace false doctrine. If, in the name of love, we uncritically accept every idea or value of others, we open ourselves up to error. Too many people today have departed from the Word of God and are now embracing the ideologies of men and that not of the Holy Writ. As a true believer, our values and principles are solely based upon the God of the Bible. The Word of God never asks the child of God to put their brains in neutral when it comes to matters of faith. A true believer is very studious when it comes to the scriptures and the Holy text.

There is no doubt that the New Testament teaches love far beyond that of the Old Testament. The fact that God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son, allows everyone who wills to enter into the kingdom of God if they are born again. Jesus was very clear to Nicodemus in John 3:3, **“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”**. If a man is not

born again he cannot see how great the love of God truly is. As the apostle John is inspired to write his epistles, he speaks repeatedly of the love of God and how the brethren should love one for another. Jesus himself said in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”**. It is emphatic that God is a God of love and that fact cannot be refuted. But John also puts an astounding premium upon truth, not the wishy-washy opinions of men that try and pass for the “truth” in our society. Today, there is a plethora of uncertainty when it comes to true doctrine in the modern church. Things such as the baptism in the Holy Ghost, same sex marriage, alcohol consumption, and a host of other sins are being debated within most denominations. For that reason, there has been profuse condemnation bombarding the true Christians who judge and adjudicate everything by the Holy Scriptures. Christians who embrace the entirety of the scriptures are considered hateful and haters when they oppose false doctrine or error. The apostle John challenges each and every one of us to test the spirits and see whether they are of God. Many will now ask the question, how do we try the spirits? The only way to test any spirit and the validity of that spirit is by the Word of God. As children of God we are never to fall under the spirit of delusion neither of error. We read here in 1st John 4:6, **“We are of God:**

he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error”.

True Christians embrace the infallibility of God’s Word, and those who are not biblical Christians will not hear the truth and they will fall into error. Those who fall under the spirit of error will always portray the true biblical Christian as a hater and hateful. Because we do not embrace their fallacies, they declare we are hateful and do not possess nor manifest the love of God; how judgmental they are? The truth is, those who fall into error and false doctrine always attack the truth. The apostle John says in 1st John 3:11-12, **“For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother’s righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you”**. Those who embrace false doctrine and error are the true haters of God, but accuse the redeemed of being the evil ones. Cain was of the wicked one and murdered his brother because his works and doctrine of belief was evil. Abel’s doctrine and belief system was righteous and Godly because it was aligned with the Word of God. The children of God are admonished to love not the world and the false doctrines that the world presents. We read in 1st John, **“2:15-17, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust**

of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever". It is imperative that every tough-minded Christian distinguish the things of the world from the things of God. If we do not discern the things of the world, we will certainly fall into false doctrine and error. A true follower of Christ is never frightened when their doctrine is called into question because their doctrine is solely based upon the Word of God. Men become angry when their doctrine is challenged because they are uncertain and have no scriptural backing. We are told to try the spirits whether they are of God. There are many definitions concerning Antichrist and the spirit of antichrist. Any doctrine that is not founded upon the purity of God's Word is a doctrine of antichrist. We read in **1st John 2:18-19**, "**Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us**". As I previously stated, false doctrine and error is the spirit of antichrist. People who embrace false doctrine will ultimately break fellowship with the true children of God because they continue to embrace error and oppose the truth. Broken fellowship demonstrates they were not of us, according to the scriptures. All the apostles warned us to challenge spiritual things. Paul the apostle echoes this same appeal to the tough-minded Christians when it comes to our faith, for he declared in **1st Corinthians 2:14-15**, "**But the natural man receiveth not the can he know them, because**

they are spiritually things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth (or discerns) all things, yet he himself is judged of no man". The true child of God will have the mind of Christ: they will be thorough concerning discernment, loving towards all men, and fearless in the face of judgment. Christians are not cowards but rather they are meek and lowly servants. Are you mature enough to be discerning on the issues of faith and doctrine? You see, we have been forewarned that many believers in the end will depart from the scriptures and give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Paul the apostle declared in **1st Timothy 4:1-2**, "**Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron**". This is a dual witness with the beloved John that we must test or prove every spirit and doctrine that we encounter as Christians. Many false prophets will continue to arise here in the last days and espouse doctrines that are of the devil and not based upon the Word of God. Regretfully, people who are not discerning will follow their heresies and mendacities. The Word of God is the absolute standard in which every teaching and doctrine must be approved. However, we have entered into a time when people disregard the Word of the Lord and choose to believe man-made doctrines. That was the same spirit of antichrist that fought Jesus Christ while He was here upon the earth. Jesus warned of false teachers and false doctrine found here in **Matthew 15:8-9**, "**This**

people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men".

Today, you are witnessing the words of Christ our Lord: people honor God with their lips through the traditions, commandments, and doctrines of men; thus, their worship is vain. Never before has there been such reckless abandonment when it comes to preaching a pure unadulterated word from the scriptures. The longer I serve God and abide in His Word, I witness more and more error as it pervades and permeates the modern church. I pray that the Holy Ghost will grant you unparalleled discernment in testing every spirit whether it is of God or of the world. Deceivers and their heresies will grow exponentially here in these last days. If you abide in the Word of God and the Word of God abides in you, you cannot be deceived! The Word of God will point out the error as soon as it tries to find a place of residence within your heart. My prayer is that the Holy Ghost will daily order your steps in His Word and that no sin or iniquity could ever have lordship or authority over your life. Until next month, my wife and I continue to covet your prayers because we feel them each day as we work the works of God. Embrace the Word of God and you will remain a though-minded Christian.

Serving With You All,

Pastor David W. Lankford