

# So That You May Know

## An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

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

#### 171. Testing the Spirits- Part 22

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WAOY Thursday 03/20/08

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 looking at verse 5- so on today's broadcast- I want to see verse 5 in light of verse 6- so let's read those two verses again together:

- 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 what John meant

when he said here that the antichrists of his day speak of the world and the world hears them by looking at an Old Testament example in **Ezekiel 13** of the pillow prophets of Ezekiel's day.

These false prophets were called "pillow prophets" because they would place pillows under the elbows of the people who listened to them so that the people would be comfortable as they were being deceived. So this is symbolic of the message that these people preached which promised great wealth and prosperity and continual blessings in spite of God's clear proclamation of judgment. The pillow prophets preached and taught a message that lulled God's people into being covetous and materialistic and to forget about humility and righteousness.

But even when God told Israel very clearly to repent because He promised that He was going to bring judgment upon them- the pillow prophets taught them to ignore the prophets of doom because, they said, God was love and God would never bring destruction to His own people.

The sad ending is that the overwhelming majority of Israel chose to listen to the pillow prophets and ignore Ezekiel's warning and God did indeed bring tremendous calamity to Israel which eventually saw them being carried off into captivity by the Babylonians for 70 years.

In John's day- the Gnostic mystics had infiltrated the Church and were teaching the people to stop being concerned about Heaven and quit worrying about having to stand before God and give an account of everything done in their lives- concentrate more on the here and now. So the Gnostics wrote many books which undermined the true Gospel and they taught that God wanted the people of God to be healthy, wealthy, and to accumulate more of this world's goods. They preached that financial and material gain was a sign of God's good pleasure and that to suffer in any way meant that God was angry with you.

The Gnostics taught that Jesus was either not a real human being or that He as a man- but was certainly not God and the Gnostics taught that the way to Heaven was not through repentance and being born from above- but was through developing the human mind through secret knowledge. So John is writing this Epistle to warn the Church about these false prophets and John is writing so that God's people will hold what they are being taught accountable to Scripture and to challenge any man who deviates from the Word.

Now so far into this study- we have already seen that by testing the spirits- we have three very important distinctions between the true

men of God the false; and between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. And we have already gone over the first two characteristics of a godly ministry in that a true man of God is #1 consumed with a vision of Jesus and #2- a true man of God practices and preaches the beauty of a life of self-denial.

So today- we come to the third characteristic of a godly ministry- and that is that a truly godly ministry has a holy boldness against sin. In other words- a godly ministry sees sin as the single biggest problem with man and so because everything else pales by comparison to how huge and how important sin is to God- a truly faithful and godly ministry never condones nor whitewashes sin but blows the trumpet loudly and often so that the people are sufficiently warned about how vicious and devastating and horrible sin is to God.

And this is almost a lost art today because you and I live in a day when sin is viewed entirely different than it was with those in the Bible. For example- how long has it been since you or anyone else that you know has actually prayed this prayer that David prayed in **Psalms 119:11:**

**Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.**

The King of all Israel was so concerned that he might transgress against God- that he took the time and studied God's Word and read and studied it so much that it became hidden or tucked away in his heart – not so that he might be puffed up with his knowledge and not so that he could manipulate God into giving him what he wanted- no, David was not after a new chariot or a new palace or a new robe- David hid God's Word in his heart so that he wouldn't sin against God!

How strange David's words seem to us today who have sat under the teaching of pillow prophets who teach that basically God exists in order to do our bidding- rather than teach that we exist to do God's bidding.

You see, beloved, the pillow prophets of our day are just like the pillow prophets of Ezekiel day and the Gnostics of John's day and they teach that sin is not that big a deal.

Now to be sure- many of them say that sin is bad- but as they teach that listen carefully as to *why* they teach that sin is bad. The pillow prophets teach that sin is bad because of the negative results that sin brings to man. That the pain that we get when we sin is why

sin is bad; that the anguish that sin brings is why sin is bad; that the suffering that we cause to other people; the financial burden that sin brings; the jail time; even the way that sin kills is the reason that sin is bad.

And sin does cause all of that. But the real reason, dear friends, that sin is bad is because sin offends God. Sin is a reproach to God. Sin insults God. Sin brings dishonor to God. And the fact of the matter is that only saved people love God enough not to want to offend Him. Lost people couldn't care less if God is offended or not- they only care about how sin affects them- which is why lost souls constantly seek to find a way to sin without any repercussions.

For example- the difference between how saved people and lost people view sin is that saved people do not want to commit the sin of adultery because it brings dishonor to God. So a saved man will not engage in activity that affords him the opportunity to look and lust in the first place and a saved woman will dress modestly so that men won't look and lust.

But lost people don't mind the sin of adultery itself- they just don't want the negative results of the adultery. They don't want the wife to find out; they don't want the disease that comes with the adultery and fornication and they certainly don't want the baby that results from the sin. You see, they don't mind the sin itself and they don't mind engaging in the sin repeatedly- they just want deliverance and salvation from the painful results of the sin.

For many, many years- the secret sin of adultery was not hidden for very long. It was soon discovered because the woman became with child. But with the invention of the pill and abortion- lost people today can continue to sin against God and be relieved from at least some of the immediate results of their sin. And we are not better off because of that because the result of diminishing some of the immediate negative results of this sin has only caused more of this sin to take place.

The point here is that saved people do not want to sin and lost people don't want to pay for their sin. I call that the Nineveh syndrome.

You may remember that the people of Nineveh in the Old Testament were exceedingly wicked. And God sent Jonah to warn them to repent. And finally, Jonah obeyed God and preached repentance and 600,000 people turned from sin as the result of one warning- and God turned from His Wrath.

Another generation grew up that did not know God and they too sinned before God exceedingly. God sent the prophet Nahum this time to warn them to repent and this time their answer was to build a wall. The people of Nineveh reasoned to themselves that if they could just remove the *penalty* from sin- if they could just find a way to stop God's Judgment against their sin- they would then be free to sin with abandon. So you see the people of Nineveh were not broken over their sin- they cared nothing about how their sin affected God- they just wanted to find a way to avert God's wrath against their sin.

So Nineveh employed science and technology to save them from God's wrath so they could be free to continue to sin without any penalty. So they built a wall that was over 100 feet high and was wide enough at the top for 4 chariots to run abreast. The leaders of Nineveh said to themselves- "*God can't tear down this wall*".

The wall served to make the people comfortable in their sin- without repenting. The wall encouraged them to do whatever was right in their own eyes without any remorse or guilt- because this man-made wall would keep the people safe and prosperous without having to love and serve God. The pagan prophets of Nineveh prophesied peace and safety and prosperity to the inhabitants of that great city- even though they worshipped false gods and sacrificed their children because they trusted that the wall would keep God's judgment away from them.

Well, guess what? God tore down wall and all and God utterly destroyed Nineveh to the extent that God promised that there would never again be built a city on that site- and today- the ground where Nineveh stood is of such a soil composition that it will not sustain a foundation.

So the Nineveh syndrome is anything- any message any doctrine that brings comfort and peace to a person who is lost or who is sinning without them first repenting and getting their heart right with God. And the pillow prophets promote the Nineveh syndrome.

For example- a very famous, nationally known pillow prophet teaches his follows from his crystal cathedral that Jesus didn't come to save you from your sins- He came to save you from low expectations and of not fulfilling your dreams. And that is exactly what the false prophets of Ezekiel's day and the Gnostic heretics of John's day taught.

These false teachers say these things because they have no

foundation of holiness upon which to build. **Ezekiel 13:14** says: "**Their foundation is laid bear.**"

The pillow prophets were building walls with untempered mortar and painting the flaws over with whitewash. Worst of all, **Ezekiel 13:22** says that their message and manner "**disheartened the righteous because of falsehood**".

The net result is that the teaching of the pillow prophets only strengthens the hands of the wicked. In Ezekiel's day, God accused them of damning souls by ignoring sin. It grieved God that compromising children of God were being encouraged rather than exposed. Lightness about sin only confirmed them in their compromising.

I hear many people say today that God hasn't called them to preach against sin- but God has called them to only encourage. But **2Timothy 4:2** says that the one true living God has called every single one of His spokesmen to "**preach the word**" and to not be ashamed of the Gospel. So it makes you wonder who these people are being led by because the God of the Bible will not permit pillow prophets to call evil good and to pamper backslidden Christians who need to repent. Absolutely we are called to proclaim the wonderful Gospel of Grace, Mercy and Pardon. But the man of God is also commanded to "**Lift up his voice, cry aloud, and spare not -- showing my people their sins.**"

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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