**Title: Testing the Spirits**
Text: 1 John 4:1-6
Date: January 19, 2025

Good morning, everyone. It is so wonderful to see you all. If you would turn your Bibles if you have them for your great benefit and joy, I would ask that you would turn in them to 1 John 4. 1 John 4 we're going to be reading from verses 1-6. 1 John 4:1-6. I would ask, I'm sorry that you just sat down, but that you would please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. It's fitting, we just read Revelation 2 today. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the church.

*"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, for many false prophets have come into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit who confesses Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, who you have heard is coming and is now in the world already. You are of God little children, and you have conquered them, because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. They are of the world on account of this they speak of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. The one who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit."*

This is God's word; would you please be seated.

Would you please pray with me. Father after singing these songs I can't help but think the words of the psalmist that this is what we ask of the Lord, this one thing we seek after, that we might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our lives forever to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. To turn our eyes upon Jesus, to look full in his wonderful face, to inquire of him forever, to learn at his feet forever. Father, we know that that is your promise. We pray that as our hearts desire and Lord we pray that even now the teaching of your word Lord that we who have an ear would hear. That we would bend our ear to the words of the risen Lord through his word. To hear the one who holds the seven stars in his hand who is speaking to us today who is speaking to his sheep Father let his sheep hear. And let your servant be faithful to what he is saying.

We ask for your glory in Jesus' name, amen.

We've been working through the letter of 1 John over the past year and a half or so with a reminder every time that we have a sermon on 1 John. This one to remind you in case you have forgotten that the big idea of the letter of 1 John he reveals in the first couple verses that John writes about all things concerning the life. He proclaims the word, the eternal life who has come in the flesh, Jesus Christ too believers. Because they are believers so that they might live into, and their lives might reflect their status as those who are in Christ in assurance in holiness and obedience and in love.
Which all will lead to, John says the purpose, a rightly ordered intimate fellowship with a triune god and therefore also with each other for fulfilled joy.

And John divides his letter up into two main sections, God is light in 1:5 and he shows the implications of that. And then we should love one another in 3:11. And we find ourselves in the middle of this second section, to love one another where John teaches about the self-sacrificial love of Christ that we learned has already preserves life by sacrificing itself. It does not steal life by preserving itself. We also learned that when we fail to love sacrificially when we fail to live as people of the truth, we fail to love in deed and in truth and our hearts wrongfully condemn us as if we are unbelievers. We must remind ourselves as John told us that God is indeed greater than our hearts and that he knows all things.

We have this confidence in Christ we can reassure our hearts before God, rejoice in the confidence we have, and continually remain and abide in Christ a reality that is confirmed in us. As john says at the end of chapter 3 by the evidence that the spirit lives in us. As John says, *"by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given to us."* And John uses this mention of the spirit at the end of chapter 3 to kind of play on words and transition to his next section in chapter 4 where he says, *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits if they are from God."* Now this is a pretty unique command, to test the spirits. I've never heard this before; this is kind of an odd command in scripture. How do I test spirits? Are these spirits walking around? Do I have to commune with them through some kind of medium? Do I speak with angels or demons? What do I do?

Well, John immediately clarifies for us what he means in the next phrase when he says, *"because many false prophets have come into the world."* And he goes on to say in the next verse that if we know we are hearing the spirit of God or the spirit of the antichrist by what a person confesses by what they say by what they are speaking. John is obviously in the context of false prophets and confessing Jesus Christ or not is talking about true and false teaching. Discerning or testing the spirits therefore means testing the teaching of people who claim to be speaking the words of God to see if they are speaking motivated by and driven by the spirit of God by whom we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord or by the spirit of the antichrist which he says is already in the world in verse 3. In a world where nearly everyone's voice can be heard and claims about the truth, about reality, about who God is, about who we are, about what's right can be made by anyone, can be heard by anyone.

Where everyone has a technological podium by which they can pronounce their teaching and their prophecy to the world. We need to hear john's plea today that we can love one another well by testing the spirits. We need to protect the fellowship we have together and hold fast to the faith, hold fast to our confession by discerning deceit from doctrine. And that is our main idea for today, discerning deceit from doctrine test the spirits, test the teaching, test what people are saying. Discern deceit from doctrine and John gives us two main ways or two main steps to go in in order to do this.

Well, he first wants to say, hey this is the motivation in verse 1 for why we should test the spirits. The motivation and then he gives us the means and practical steps by which we might actually test the spirits to discern if they are from God or not. To discern deceit from doctrine. So, discern deceit from doctrine, here's the motivation for it in verse 1. And hear the means for how to do that well in verses 2-6. Let us want, let us love one another. How? One way by testing the spirits to see if they are from God.

So, first John tells us the motivation or the reason behind the command to test the spirits or to test what people are saying. He says *"for"* a little word there in the middle of verse 1. For or because maybe, *"many false prophets have come into the world."* Why should we test the spirits because there's a lot of false prophecy around. There's a lot of false teaching in the world right now. Why is this a fitting motivation? Why is this a fitting motivation to test spirits?

Well notice what they are. They're false prophets and what does that mean? That does not mean that they're just people kind of sharing an opinion or maybe this is true I don't know. That they don't have this neutral view of reality. That oh really, it's just all subjective I'm not going to impose anything on you. No, they don't have a take it or leave it opinion on the world. They are purposely claiming something to be absolutely true about life, in reality that is meant to bind your conscience. They're making claims in the place of God for the voice of God. They are prophets. They are claiming whether out of a false god or whether they or I think they are claiming things about the true god of the bible. They are making claims, they are saying things, they are teaching espousing universal truth that are meant for you to agree with and to follow lest you be called false or a heretic or something in their frame of mind. They are dangerous. The motivation is right because they are not carrying a neutral message. They are as John says in verse 3, *"the spirit of the antichrist that is coming and is now already in the world."* They are end times false teachers who are trying to lead you astray. That is who they are.

Jesus himself warns us of this in Matthew 24:23-24 that is disciples to be confronted by false teachers. He says, *"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' don't believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible,"* you guys us, *"the elect."* The false prophets and antichrists are not neutral individuals. They are trying to lead astray, if possible, the elect of God. As Paul warns Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:3. Says preach the word why, *"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."* It's because of who they are because of what they are that this is a proper motivation and also look what he says that little adjective. There's many of them. There's not just one or two running around. There's many of these false prophets. The parallel passages for this in John is 1 John 2 where in verse 18 he says, *"now many antichrists have come."* They're already in the world. Maybe you might not consider there to be a lot of false prophets in the world.

Maybe you don't I mean it's not really politically correct to call people false prophets but that's what they are. Whether it is from a different religion whether it's Islam or some kind of spirituality religion. Roman Catholicism whatever it might be. Or whether it's the religion of the age expressive individualism and a claim of subjective truth that feels pretty objective. You must treat me this way, you must say this is true, you must say that this is an objective reality. They are all false prophets of their own gods. Of their god of self. Their subjective truth becomes a demanded objective truth. These people might even use the name of Jesus who apparently gets them and who allows for their anti- Christian actions and demands. Well, it may not immediately seem like it friends, there are many false prophets in this world, many. The motivation for being careful for not believing everything you hear, for testing the spirit of a person's words

is because the world is filled with people who are prophets of false gods and are trying to lead you and I away from the faith of Jesus Christ.

There is a great need, a great need for all of us here to be discerning. Information travels so fast. You hear so many things. So many voices are speaking into your lives every single day be discerning. Young people especially, please be discerning. Be discerning. Discern deceit from doctrine. There are many false prophets in the world and thankfully John does not just leave us there, but he also tells us in the following verses not only the motivation but the means for how to do this well for how to discern deceit from doctrine. He tells us this in an inclusio. It's kind of like a sandwich, the two priests the two pieces of the bread on this sandwich is in verse two. *"By this you know the Spirit of God."* And then the end of verse 6, *"By this we know the Spirit of the truth and the spirit of deceit."* So how do we know the spirit of truth and spirit of deceit?

Well, it's in between this sandwich. It's the meat of this sandwich. So, John tells us this in verses 2-6. He tells us three means of testing the spirits. Their confession, their comprehension, and our consolation. Number one their confession, that's in verses 2-3 & 5. Their comprehension in verse 6 and our consolation.

So, first of all the most obvious as he immediately says is their confession. What they say in verses 2&3 and verse 5. Following what Jesus said in Matthew 12:34 that *"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."* John tells us that the way to know the spirit or the heart of a person, what they're speaking according to who motivates their actions is to know if they're God of the world is by hearing what they confess with their mouth. He says this is the rubric or the line for recognizing the spirit of God and the spirit of deceit. He says every spirit who confesses Jesus Christ, I know that a lot of your translations have that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, but the object of the verb is Jesus Christ. You can see that in verse 3, *"every spirit who does not confess Jesus is not of God."* The central confession, the line drawn in the sand, the difference that you can know who is of God and who is not is if they confess Jesus. If you don't confess Jesus Christ, you can't be a Christian. It's in the word Christian. That's the line drawn in the sand, that's the standard, the rubric that we have to follow. Do you confess Jesus?

When Hebrews 4:14 exhorts us to *"hold fast to our confession."* He's telling us to cling to the one singular confession of the church that Jesus Christ is Lord. That's our confession and that confession that Jesus Christ is Lord can only be done by those who have the spirit of God indwelling them. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:3, *"no one says 'Jesus is Lord'"* genuinely *"except by the Holy Spirit."* The true confession of Jesus Christ can come out only of the regenerate heart. The confession of Jesus can only come from a heart that has been made new by the holy Spirit. It's our central confession, it's what sets us apart from all other religions.

Is our only hope that we might confess Jesus Christ our savior the promised anointed one in whose name we have received eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, redemption. And if this confession of Jesus is so important and is the true dividing line between Christian and unbeliever between heaven and hell between eternal life and eternal death then we have to make sure we're confessing the right Jesus.

This is the key phrase that John puts in verse 2, *"whoever confesses Jesus Christ having come in the flesh."* And then in verse 3 it's hard to see but the sense of the grammar there is that the same Jesus I just talked about, the one who came in the flesh that guy you have to confess him in order to be of God. It is not enough that you can simply just confess a Jesus.

There's a lot of Jesus out there that people say the Jesus that gets people all over the commercials and things. The Jesus that allows sin that condones it because he's loving or whatever. That Jesus doesn't save people he doesn't that Jesus is not real he's a false Jesus. John wants us to confess the right Jesus, the Jesus that can actually save you. The Jesus who has come in the flesh, the God man who is fully God and fully man, that guy. That's the Jesus that you need to confess to be saved to be truly of the spirit of God.

The letter of 1 John is uniquely focused on the veracity of the incarnation of the son the second person of the trinity. For instance, we see in 1 John 1-2 the emphatic affirmation that John and his counterparts saw and touched Jesus Christ the word the life who came from the Father. That which from the beginning that which we have heard which we have seen with our eyes which we have beheld, and our hands have touched concerning the word the life. And again, we have here that John focuses on the fact that confessing Jesus means confessing that he has actually come in the flesh that he is God incarnate.

Many have speculated that John is dealing with the heresy of Gnosticism or Docetism which means that because human reality and physical things are inferior and not as good that God could surely never ever participate in any meaningful way with humanity. That he would never actually become man and so really Jesus was just God in a skin suit or he was like a projection that seemed physical. So that means Jesus could do all the things that he did but without actually being God in the flesh being a man. The other thing that could possibly be the heresy in view here could be known as Arianism or adoptionism where Jesus Christ is not the one who came in the flesh because he didn't come from anywhere, he's just a man. He was always in the flesh. Jesus is just a man who got elevated to the place of God is not himself God, he just was endowed with certain rights and certain abilities and certain honors but he's just a man like you and I. The question is then why is it so important that this confession is the right one?  Why couldn't I just confess a Jesus who is just God in a skin suit who wasn't actually fully man. He didn't have a human soul or human mind. Why couldn't I just confess a man who was endowed with divine abilities and who died supposedly for my sins.

What's so wrong with that? Why can't I just confess any Jesus i want? The coming in the flesh, Jesus coming in the flesh is important for at least two primary reasons. First If Jesus is not fully man, then we do not have salvation. Gregory of Nazianzus was an early church father who was about a third or fourth century. He says what is not assumed is not healed. In other words, what is not taken on by Christ, whatever is not is not assumed by Christ is not redeemable by Christ. If Christ was not fully man, then he could not have fully redeemed humanity from sin. Colossians 1:21 says, *"And you, who once were 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."* Hebrews 2:14-17, *"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood,"* us, *"he himself likewise partook of the same things, in order that through death he might destroy the one who has power over death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who*

*through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."* We could not have the way the truth the life if he didn't become man. We could not have a merciful high priest if he did not become like us in every respect. He had to bear our griefs and our sorrows to bear our sicknesses and our diseases to bear our broken and imperfect human bodies so that our bodies could be made like his glorious body, right. He had to bear our hearts so that our sinful hearts could be made new. He had to bear our minds so that our sinful thoughts could be purified, and our conscience could be purified. He had to bear our souls so that all that is within us would bless his holy name. In his body, we have forgiveness of sins in his body and blood, we have redemption, we have healing, and we have true eternal life, reconciliation to God.

In the context of 1 John fellowship with God and with one another is the whole point of the letter and we cannot be in fellowship with God if he never revealed himself in the flesh. If he didn't reconcile, Colossians 1 reconcile to himself in his body and flesh by his death. We would never know God because we can't see God, John 1:18, but the only begotten God, he has made him known. We cannot participate in the true eternal life to know God and his son Jesus Christ if he never actually came as a man. That's number one.

Number two. If Jesus is not fully God as in if he didn't come from anywhere if he's just a man with endowed privileges, then he is just like every one of us. And if he is just like everyone else, he is a sinful man who is in just as much need of salvation as we are. The underlying principle for this is Psalm 3:8 which says, *"Salvation belongs to the Lord."* Revelation 7:10 reverberates the same truth, *"Salvation belongs to our God…. and to the lamb."* If salvation belongs to the Lord, it can only be accomplished by the Lord if God alone can save. If Jesus is not God, he can't save us. He can't save us if he's not God because only God can save. God alone can be our perfect Passover lamb because he alone is perfect.

And once again fellowship with God John's point in the letter cannot be had if Jesus isn't God himself. If we have not truly seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we can't be transformed. We can't have fellowship with God. We have no hope of living in fellowship with God and with his son Jesus Christ. These two reasons are the reasons why we must confess the true Jesus. The Jesus as having come in the flesh because what is not assumed is not healed and God alone can save. If we hear in the teaching and confession of others either explicitly or implicitly that they do not confess that Jesus is Lord, they are a false prophet. They are a false teacher. They are an anti-Christ as what John says.

But also, John takes it a step further. It's not that they merely failed to confess the true Jesus and what they say but they also in verse 5, they are of the world. On account of this they speak of the world and the world hears them. In other words, their speech sounds like the sinfulness of the world. Their content of their speech is likable to the teaching and the ears of the world. The speech caters to the desires of the world. That's the tricky part because people can say Jesus and then blend it with world. And John wants us to be careful about that. Listen to how their speech might cater to, might be tainted with, might sound like the sinfulness of the world.

A modern example of a prominent false teacher whose speech is tainted with the cares and desires of the world is a pastor by the name of Andy Stanley. It's a very famous pastor. He's on tv. He's on the internet. His church is very large and he's very influential. He uses the bible to preach. He even says some nice things some true things but hidden in those external disguises are statements that are of the spirit of the antichrist. He has suggested on multiple occasions, the only reason I'm saying this is because he's very popular. He has suggested on multiple occasions that the bible is not strictly against homosexuality. And he even held a lgbt conference at his church in order to promote a "quieter middle ground" for the topic of homosexuality. In which those speakers spoke directly against biblical Christianity and said that you could be both homosexual and a Christian. More fundamentally, he said the issue "the issue has never been, is the bible true. The issue has always been who is Jesus" and that might sound kind of good, but the context is a sermon in which he said that it was all about the fact that we don't need the bible. We just need Jesus and the cross to be saved. In fact, the bible can be completely full of errors. We can unhitch ourselves from the Old Testament and just focus on Jesus. The problem is that if bible is not true, neither is the word about Jesus.

Also, James 1:21 says *"that it is the implanted word that saves our souls."* 2 Timothy 3:15&17 that a person is *"made wise unto salvation…. makes a man complete lacking in nothing…. through the breathed-out word of God."* He's one of many examples but friends by testing the spirits, by testing what he is saying to see who he is we hear that Andy Stanley is a false teacher who denies the validity of scripture and its clear teachings which undermines any claim he might have that Jesus Christ is the one who came in flesh for our sins. Quick application here is just friends, let us daily confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Let us hold fast to that confession for the sake of your own soul. Devote yourself to the word of God. Devote yourself to that confession daily. Confess that Jesus is lord, I believe it.

Lord, give me more faith for the sake of our fellowship here. For the sake of protecting one another let us hold fast to our confession. And to do this well the church has utilized a particular tool for the last 2000 years that helps individual, Christians, and local churches hold fast to our confession by summarizing core and essential biblical truths in a concise manor. And these tools are called confessions and creeds. Historical church confessions and creeds are a goldmine of helpful concise deep biblical teaching that we often neglect because of the misuse of them by other people. Now I would ask just to take a look at these whenever you have questions, whenever you're concerned, whenever even just a daily practice to confess what is true, the central truths of the Christian faith in order that you might follow the command of scripture to hold fast to that confession.

Let's listen to the words of the Nicene creed, "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and he sits on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead whose kingdom shall

have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, and who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one, holy, catholic or universal Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen."

That is our confession. That is what we were to hold fast to is why I ask to just utilize these things. Obviously stay devoted to the word above all things but also utilize text that try to summarize systematically the confession of our faith. John not only tells us to pay attention to what they say but also who they hear their comprehension not only their confession. John says in verse 6, *"We are of God. The one who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us."* John points out that we who are of God, we who know God can hear one another. We speak the same language. We understand the word. We embrace it with joy. You hopefully are sitting here today and are embracing the word of God with joy. You understand it. You revel in it. You love it. You understand it. For false teachers though, those who are not of God, they do not hear us. They speak of the world and the world hears them, but they can't hear us. It's like as if theirs we're speaking a different language.

A good illustration of this is I married a woman who is in nursing and who is in Air Force ROTC, those two worlds together. And so, I often hear vocabulary and words and statements that to me, they just sound like a completely different language. Like I don't know what they mean. For instance in nursing, she might come home from nursing class or something or a clinical and she might say, today in the ICU I saw an intubation a bronchoscopy an echocardiogram and a patient with a balloon pump and I don't know half of what those things are. I'm like cool, that's awesome. She might come home from ROTC and say I need to print off some conop for some poc before lead lab. And I'm like what like what are you saying? I live with her every day. I still don't understand. It's like she's speaking a different language. I'm just like I'm going to go back to Greek and Hebrew you can keep talking about that. It doesn't matter how much I hear it, how much I'm around it, how clearly Ellie might say it, I still don't understand. I'm not of the nursing and military tribe or the lingo that it has. This is kind of like what John is saying here.

We who are believers hear the word taught and hear the gospel preached and we rejoice in it. We respond to it, we understand it. We embrace it but unbelievers can be in churches, can hear the word preached and hear the word taught and they just don't understand. They just don't hear it. I know that all of us here probably have known someone that was like that. Just please believe it's Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Don't you see? I just don't hear it. John says that when we see that deafness happen, especially with false teachers, we know that they are truly false teachers. When we try to share the gospel and we try to correct them, and they refuse. That shows that proves that they speak of the spirit of the antichrist. They are of the world. Therefore, they do not hear us.

Just some applications for the two means so far. Number one identifying false teachers through what they say and who they hear is a way that we can love one another. Now this is the second time that John has taught on false teaching. And you might be wondering why is he teaching this, we just saw this in 1 John 2. Why is he doing it now?

Well, because he's in the section of loving one another and he's trying to show us that identifying false teachers, showing others hey, Andy Stanley, he's a bad guy. Please don't listen to him. That's an act of love towards one another. That's speaking the truth to one another in love. Please let us partake in this. Let us watch out for one another's souls by helping one another see maybe some blind spots that we might have. The people who might be wrongly influencing us. Number two identifying false teachers through what they say and who they hear is a way we preserve the fellowship we have with God and with each other. Think of how keeping false teaching out of the church encourages right fellowship with one another.

Think of how our fellowship might be affected negatively by false teaching within the church. Think of how our fellowship can be strengthened by not just the presence of right teaching but by pointing out wolves who are in sheep's clothing. Let us watch over ourselves and one another closely in these ways for the sake of our fellowship and for the sake of our love for one another.

Third and finally John says that we can look out and discern deceit from doctrine by our consolation or what we are. This is not so much like a practical you can look for this thing and do it, but John is trying to encourage or console us in the midst of this task, this difficult task of discerning deceit from doctrine with these words in verse 4 right in the center of his treatise. You might be hearing some of the things I'm saying, and you might be a little bit overwhelmed, you might be a little anxious, you might be saying you mean to tell me that there are all these false teachers around and I don't even see them. This is a hard task. The risk is so high. People's souls are on the line. My soul is on the line and I'm going to go up against all these people with all their opinions and all their claims about Jesus and God and the bible and if it's real or not if it's reliable and I don't I don't know how am I supposed to do this? This is a tall task. I have my own sin to kill, my own walk with Christ to follow. How am I supposed to devote also time to this. I can't take on all these anti-Christ too. And if you're feeling anything like that I understand. And these teachers are tricky. They're hard to know what they're confessing, if they're of the truth or not.

Many times, the enemies are in supposed churches and our supposed pastors. And John hears this, he knows this and so he turns to us and speaks with pastoral care. He anticipates and understands the worries of our hearts. He understands the gravity of the situation and so he throws a theological atom bomb into this text to console us, to encourage us as we discern deceit from doctrine. He says these beautiful words, *"You are of God little children, and you have conquered them or overcome them because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."* John see, loves a consolation of encouragement is to say here's what you are and here's why you are that way. John tells us once again that we are of God. We are children of God.

We've been born of God. We've been born again by the spirit of God. We have been dwelled by God's spirit, given a new heart, made a new creation, and have entered into a biding fellowship with his son. He's told us that over and over again in this book but more unique in John's letter is what he says next, *"you have conquered or overcome them."* That is the false teachers.

You and I who are children of God, this is what John is saying. You and I who are children of God, little children, you have conquered or overcome false prophets already. Say past tense reality with present effects. John says this also earlier in 2:14, he says, *"I write to you, young men, for you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have conquered the evil one."* What? That's a crazy statement to say John. We believers have conquered the devil himself and have by association have won the victory have overcome all of his minions on earth as well. That's not me twisting John's words. That's not me theologizing over the text. That's just straight grammar. That's just Bible glorious grammar.

We have conquered the evil one That's an amazing statement. An amazing statement to say. The battle is over. Their words mean nothing. Their teaching has no effect. It doesn't matter for you Christian; you have already conquered them. Don't fear them. That's what john's saying. And you're saying why, how can you say that? And he says *"for"* because once again, *"for the one who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."* Once again, John has told us. 1 John 3:20, 1 John 2:1, all the chapters so far in this book that God the son abides in believers by faith.

As Ephesians 3 says, *"Jesus Christ abides in our hearts."* He makes his dwelling place in our hearts by his spirit. The Father and his Son, John 16, make their home in us by the spirit of God. And another way to talk about this is our union with Christ, our fellowship with him, and by faith and he comes to dwell in us and us in him. Everything that is true of Christ becomes true of us, everything. In him we have become the righteousness of God. He is our wisdom. He is our sanctification. He is our holiness. He is our forgiveness of sins. He is our king. *"We have been raised with him and seated with him in the heavenly places,"* Ephesians 2. And because of that intimate dwelling that union that fellowship we have with Jesus Christ for all of his benefits all of his identity becomes ours. We also are considered conquerors in him, conquerors.

You see Jesus's cross was not a place of defeat while the resurrection was a place of victory. Jesus's cross was the place of victory where Jesus' rode in to battle and defeated the devil as we read earlier in Hebrews 2:14. He destroyed the one who has power over death through death. That is, he destroyed the devil, and he delivered all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Jesus Christ and his cross is the place where our victorious warrior king crushed the head of the serpent himself. He truly conquered and he delivered we who were slaves into freedom in his name. The devil might be a strong man as Luke 11 says, but Jesus Christ as Jesus says in Luke 11 is a stronger man who comes from the house of our hearts. And he says quote, *"attacks him and conquers him."* Same word John used here in John 16:33. Jesus is speaking to his disciples he says, *"In the world you have tribulation. But take heart; I have conquered the world,"* already.

Revelation 5:1-5 say, *"Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?' And no one in heaven or earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, 'Weep no more; behold, the Lion of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and it seals.'"* Behold my friends Jesus Christ the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, he has conquered, he has conquered. Like the words we so often

sing, we are fighting a battle that he has already won. We know how the story ends. We will be with him again, but you know what is also true. We already know what the story is. He's already here with us. He's already won the victories. He's already conquered. He rules and reigns the king of the universe right now and because of our faith in him we have conquered with him. We have already won. We have already overcome. Sin has no power over us, death has no sting for us, the devil has no effect on us, and false prophets have no place among us. Jesus Christ has made us conquerors in him. As Paul says, you are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Be encouraged my friends, be strengthened, be strengthened. Jesus Christ has conquered the devil and therefore all of his minions, all of his false prophets, all of his antichrist, and we in him have as well. Oh, glorious victory that overcomes the world. Revelation 7:1-7 is the words of the risen lord himself to the church of Ephesus who commends them for doing exactly what John says here. For not bearing with those who are evil but testing those who have called themselves apostles and are not and have found them to be false. Unfortunately, the church of Ephesus started not doing that. They started going away from that first love that they had. And he calls them to repent and today that's a good encouragement for us a good example for us. It can be done well, and we can also get out of the habit of protecting one another from deceit by discerning deceit from doctrine.

But additionally on top of that this passage in Revelation 2 includes a promise to those who continually follow in this way. The risen Lord says*, "to the one who conquers."* Same word that John uses here, *"to the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God."* The logic here friends is that are you a conqueror? Have you conquered? John says yes. His texts do not contradict. John says yes you have already conquered and therefore what is true of you according to Jesus Christ's promise. You are granted to eat of the tree of life and live in the paradise of God forever. For those who have faith in Jesus this is our true reality. This is who we are what we are. We can confidently go into battle knowing that Jesus Christ has already won. Knowing that in him we have already conquered.

So, cling to that promise friends, cling to it. Cling to Christ as we discern deceit from doctrine. John has told us today that we need to test the spirits. For the fellowship of the gospel and the love we have for one another should propel us to protect the gospel and our brothers and sisters from false teachers. There are many false teachers today, so I ask you as your brother, please be careful. Please stick close to the word of God devote everything you have to cling tightly to our God and his promises in his word. Watch out for what they say. Make sure they're confessing that Jesus is indeed God who came in the flesh. Pay attention to who they're listening to and cling to the promise. Be consoled, be encouraged that Jesus Christ has conquered. That we are conquerors in him. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Love your bible, utilize creeds, protect yourself and one another from false teachers and rest in your Savior, your King our Lord Jesus.

Let's pray together.

Our Father we are so thankful for this day. And Father we ask even now that you would strengthen our faith in your son Jesus Christ. That by believing in him we would participate in the eternal life that is

already ours in him. Father keep us, we know that we cannot do this life for ourselves. We know that with the many obstacles that Satan puts in our way that we need you. We need you. We ask that you would preserve us by your grace this week until eternity for your glory.

In Jesus name, amen.

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