



Gospel of Grace
FELLOWSHIP

1 John 4:1-3

How to Test the Spirits

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Serious Spiritual Danger

1 John 4:1a (NASB)
Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. . .

- “Test” is imperative and means to examine so as to determine the true nature of something
- Not every belief or practice deemed “spiritual” is from God
- “Beloved” is John’s tender address to the church
- We all must take this action

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False Prophets

1John 4:1b (NASB)
because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

- The spirits motivate the teaching done by real people who make religious claims
- These are false “anointed ones” who are therefore antichrists (false christ)
- “Gone out” is *exerchomai* an is used of Judas in John 13:30
- “World” here implies the domain of darkness

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The True Confession of Christ

1John 4:2 (NASB)
 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

- “Every spirit” is comprehensive, this test is decisive
- This confession will be consistent (John 15:26)
- The Holy Spirit motivates confession of the true doctrine of Christ
- Not confessing reveals deceivers (2John 1:7)

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Silence Is Denial

1John 4:3 (NASB)
 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.

- Failure to proclaim a robust, biblical doctrine of Christ leaves the door open to antichrist
- Deficient faith fears man (John 12:42, 43)
- Denial and failure to confess lead to the same result: antichrist spirit (1John 2:22, 23)

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Denying and failing to confess	Confessing and abiding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪1Jn 2:23a (denies the Son and does not have the Father) ▪1Jn 4:3 (does not confess is not from God) ▪1Jn 4:5 (from the world) ▪1Jn 4:5 (the world listens to them) ▪1Jn 4:6 (spirit of error) ▪2Jn 1:9 (does not abide in the teaching) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪1Jn 2:23b (confesses the Son and has the Father) ▪1Jn 4:2 (confesses; is from God) ▪1Jn 4:6 (we are from God) ▪1Jn 4:6 (he who knows God listens to us) ▪1Jn 4:6 (spirit of truth) ▪2Jn 1:9 (abides in the teaching)
Spirit of Antichrist	Spirit of God

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Implications and Applications

- Beware of vacuous spirituality
- Know and confess the doctrine of Christ
- Liturgical “confession” is inadequate

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Some Spirituality Is Toxic

2Timothy 3:5 (NET)

They will maintain the outward appearance of religion but will have repudiated its power. So avoid people like these.

- “Religion” is *eusebia* (godliness); in this context it means “externalized piety”
- The power of God comes through Christ and the true gospel not merely being “spiritual”
- Popular piety today is often expressed in a universalist spirituality (panentheism)

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Know and Confess the Doctrine of Christ

John 1:14 (NASB)

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- Christ is co-eternal with the Father
- Christ is the Creator (John 1:3)
- Christ the only begotten is uniquely God and Man
- “Dwelt” is literally “tabernacled”
- “Grace and truth” allude to God on Sinai

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Rote Liturgy Is Not Confessing

Isaiah 29:13 (NASB)

Then the Lord said, "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,"

- Church leaders will often do a liturgy, the substance of which they do not believe
- The "good confession" (1Timothy 6:12, 13) will be made even in a hostile situation
- What is preached is our real confession

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9

