

“but test the spirits...”

Introduction

- 1. There is a lot of value in testing things.**
 - A. What would our world be like without the testing of food or water?**
 - 1) Hoping we made it back to the house before the heat spoiled our food would be the least of our worries. - we would be concerned about the quality of our food in the first place!**
 - B. What would our world be like without a **standard** to test things?**
 - 1) The price of gas that we are paying might be for half a gallon, one third of a gallon, or two thirds of a gallon. Who would know?**
 - 2) With no meter to tell if a current was passing through a circuit, we would have a 50/50 chance of not being electrocuted every time we worked on a light socket. Go ahead — you take the chance!**
- 2. It is clear that we need standards of testing in our daily lives.**
 - A. God has given us a standard by which He demands we use to test the various teachings that come our way.**
1 John 4:1-6
 - B. The health and safety of our soul **depends on it.****

Don't Believe Every Spirit

1. **"SPIRIT" is "the spiritual proclamation by a human personality"**
 - A. **"False Prophets" are the human personalities with a spiritual proclamation, but not from God.**
 - B. **"Every spirit that confesses (human personality) that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God" (Spiritual proclamation) 1 John 4:2.**
2. **"SPIRIT OF TRUTH" — "SPIRIT OF ERROR" (v 6).** A person's disposition favorable toward truth or a person's friendly disposition towards that which is error.
3. **John's inspired command may sound strange to the world we live in today.**
 - A. **He says "don't believe every spirit" – yet the world may call us intolerant. Was Jesus intolerant of the Jews?**

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

- B. **John says "don't believe every spirit" – yet the world may call us unloving (1 Corinthians 13:7).**
 - 1) **While love demands that we assume the best motives behind the actions of a person (believes all things, hopes all things), it does not demand that I be blind concerning that person's teaching.**
 - a. **John does not want us to be "blind" and fall in the pit with the false teachers! Jesus said: Matthew 15:13-14**

Test (Prove) the Spirits (Verse 1)

1. **“Test or Prove” – prove by testing the quality of something. To see if something is genuine or not (Acts 17:11).**

1 Peter 1:7 that the **genuineness of your faith**, being much more precious than gold that perishes, **though it is tested by fire**, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

1 Corinthians 3:13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and **the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.**

1 Timothy 3:10 But let these also **first be tested**; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

2. **There is certainly an immediate reason for testing: Many false prophets are out in the world professing error.**

The Nature of their teaching:

- A. **Denying the Deity of Jesus – Jesus did not come in the flesh**

- 1) **“spirits” have assumptions that need to be proven because they normally lead to further false doctrines.**
- 2) **The spirit of the anti-Christ – those who by the character of their teaching are “against Christ”**

3. **A genuine standard is demanded: Apostolic authority (v 6).**

- A. Apostles: *“We are of God”*
- B. *“Hear us not”* – then not of God
- C. By this you **KNOW** the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

- 1) ***** Not only is the standard being given, but the character of the person is revealed who will not heed the standard!**

4. **The apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit to present unquestionable truth!**

John 16:13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

A. We can confidently take the apostles teaching and apply it to determine the genuineness of the spirits who profess various teachings.

1) **The apostles "letters" and "words" form the traditions which, when taught, we can confidently "hold to" in determining the genuineness of others.**

2 Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the **traditions** which you were taught, whether by **word** or our **epistle**.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks **disorderly** and not according to the **tradition** which he received from us.

B. The apostles' teaching is that which we can "learn" and apply to determine the genuineness of others.

Romans 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the **doctrine which you learned**, and avoid them.

C. We must hold to the pattern set forth by the sound words of the apostles and apply what we learn in order to "test the spirits."

God's Blessings bestowed upon those who "test the Spirits"

1. **Victorious children of God are distinguished from the world – instead of children of God in name only being in darkness with the world. (1 John 4:4-5)**

A. **True children of God have **OVERCOME the world** by not being captivated by the false teachings of those of the world.**

B. **The Devil is behind every false teaching (1 John 5:19)**

1) **The devil lies and twists truth to the soul's destruction**

Genesis 3:3-6 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You **shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.**' " Then the serpent said to the woman, "**You will not surely die.** For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

2 Corinthians 11:13-16 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, **transforming themselves** into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, **whose end will be according to their works.**

2) **God's word provides the faithful standard to expose error and through understanding and acceptance one determines the honesty of his heart.**

John 3:19-21 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone **practicing evil hates the light** and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who **does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen**, that they have been done in God."

2 Timothy 4:2-4 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, **they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth,** and be turned aside to fables.

C. If servants of God are not faithfully testing the doctrines of men, then how will those captivated by the devil's will ever see the need to escape?

2 Timothy 2:24-26 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility **correcting those who are in opposition**, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and **escape the snare of the devil**, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

2. Behind every blessing is the truth that we can know and understand the truth of God's word.

John 8:31-32 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, **"If you abide in My word**, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and **the truth shall make you free."**

Conclusion

- 1. To "test the spirits" is a command that all of us need to obey – not just elders, deacons, or the preacher.**
- 2. The church will only remain pure and right in the sight of God when all the members are "testing the spirits," ensuring that we are practicing only God's will for man.**

