

Dr. Cecil A. Fayard
Elliott Baptist Church
August 31, 2003

A Warning Issued

I John 4:1-6

INTRO: I John 4:1-6 is a warning against false teachers and false spirits. In this passage John tells us about:

- I. Two spirits:
 - A. The Spirit of truth
 - B. The spirit of error
- II. Two messages:
 - A. The message of truth
 - B. The message of error
- III. Two kinds of preachers:
 - A. False preachers- "John was not opposing people who were professed pagans but people who claimed to possess the Holy Spirit, and who claimed to speak with profound spiritual insight" (Vaughn 92). The Bible describes these folks as wolves in sheep's clothing.
 - B. Preachers of the truth- Gospel preachers.
- IV. Three groups of people:
 - A. Vs 4, "Ye"- these are the saved.
 - B. Vs 5, "They"- the lost.
 - C. Vs 6, "We"- primarily the Apostles, and then all the true preachers.

I. VS 1, TRY THE SPIRITS

- A. Why are we to "try the spirits"? John says: "Because many false prophets have gone out into the world."
- B. We are not to believe every spirit. It is sad to see folks falling for anything with the name of Jesus attached to it. We are not to believe every message that comes along.
 1. Note well the words of I Thessalonians 5:21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."
 2. "Try the spirits." "Try" is the Greek word *dokimazo* meaning "to put to the test to see if they are genuine."
 - a) We are to put things that we read and hear to the test to see if they meet the standard of the Bible.
 - b) Writing and preaching that is contrary to the Bible is to be rejected. Visions and new revelations that are contrary to the Bible are to be rejected.

- c) "Try" is an unusual word in that it means to "prove with the desire that the object testing may pass the test." We are not to be so critical that we cannot enjoy preaching. We are not to be eager to find a demon under every rock.
 - C. "Whether they are of God."
 - 1. We are not to judge doctrine by miracles, but miracles by doctrine.
 - 2. A miracle contradicting the teaching of Christ and His Apostles is not "of God."
 - D. "False prophets" claim to be instruments of the Holy Spirit, but are in fact instruments and spokesmen of an evil spirit.
 - 1. Note the word "many."
 - 2. "World" – means the world of men, women, boys, and girls. False prophets have gone out to deceive this world.
- II. VSS 2-3, MARKS OF THE FALSE TEACHER AND MARKS OF THE TRUE TEACHER

- A. Verses 2-3 plainly teach us that the test to be used in distinguishing the true from the false is doctrine.
- B. Vs 2, "Hereby" points forward to those words that follow the colon.
 - 1. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God."
 - 2. "Know" is "to apprehend," "to recognize," "to perceive."
 - 3. "Every spirit [prophet, preacher] that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." A careful look at these inspired words reveal two great truths, the preexistence of Christ and the incarnation of Christ
 - a) Jesus existed in eternity past (Jn 1:1-3).
 - b) "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" – the incarnation, the virgin birth.
 - c) Jesus had flesh and blood when He lived on earth (Jn 1:14).
 - d) He lives a perfect impeccable life (I Pet 2:22).
 - e) He died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for our sins.
 - f) He was buried.
 - g) On the third day, Christ arose.
 - h) Jesus Christ, the God man, sits in heaven at the Father's right hand making intercession for us.
 - i) Jesus Christ is coming again: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven....."
 - 4. Many preachers want a new message, a message foreign to the Bible, a message the world will accept (Vs 5). True preachers want to continue to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.
- C. Vs 3, The denial of the true Christ Jesus is the distinguishing characteristic of the anti-Christ.
 - 1. False teachers say a lot of good things, but it is the false doctrine that will kill you spiritually. Remember that D-Con is 90% corn and 10% poison.
 - 2. The Corinthians taught that Jesus was the physical son of Mary and Joseph. They taught that at His baptism He became Christ and that on the cross Christ abandoned Jesus and He died a mere man. This is a blatant denial of the deity of Christ. Jesus was and is the Son of God; He forever has been and will forever continue to be thus.
 - 3. Things to watch for:
 - a) Any religion that teaches Jesus was a mere man is false.
 - b) Denial of the virgin birth.
 - c) Denial of the blood atonement.
 - d) Denial of the bodily second coming of Christ.

III. VSS 4-6, DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN PREACHERS OF TRUTH AND PREACHERS OF ERROR

- A. Note that verses 4,5, and 6 all begin with emphatic personal pronouns.
 - 1. Vs 4, "Ye"– true Christians.
 - 2. Vs 5, "They"– false prophets.
 - 3. Vs 6, "We"– John and the Apostles, also implied are the true preachers since the Apostles.

- B. Vs 4, “Ye are of God...” John’s point here is to encourage the children of God so that as Calvin says: “They might courageously and boldly resist imposters” (234).
1. “Of God”– the divine origin of the children of God is brought out here (Jn 1:13).
 2. “Ye... have overcome them.” This refers to personal victory and church victory. The valiant for truth are overcomers.
 - a) We have spiritual victory because of what Jesus did for us on the cross (Gal 2:20).
 - b) In the truest sense, the victory is God’s for we have no victory without Him who dwells within by way of the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) Rom 8:37 “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loves us.”
 - (2) I Cor 15:57, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - c) We are overcomers because our weapons are spiritual (II Cor 10:4-5).
 - d) We are overcomers because of our spiritual armor (Eph 6:14-18).
 - e) We are overcomers because we have a forgiving God who is greater than all our trials (I Jn 3:10).
- C. Vs 5, “They are of the world...” “They” in contrast to “ye.”
1. False prophets are of the world. The citizenship of the child of God is in heaven– the false prophets have no such citizenship.
 2. The word “world” here is the realm of evil (I Jn 5:19).
 3. The world listens to those who speak its language (Jn 15:19). Worldly preachers appeal to the fleshly appetites of worldly people who accept their message.
 4. Old fashioned Gospel preaching is not popular.
- D. Vs 6, Preachers of the truth are accepted by those who love God and love the Bible.
1. The preaching of God’s Word gets a positive response from the people of God because the Bible is God speaking, and the sheep love and hear His voice (Jn 10:4-5,8,16, 27).
 2. He who is of God hears the Words of God (Jn 8:47).
 3. We know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error by the response to the truth of God.

CONCLUSION: Do you love the Word of God? Do you love the Gospel message of Jesus and His love?