

The Real Life: Test The Spirits -1 John 4:1-6 – 14 Dec 2014

So if you have your Bibles, (turn) with me this morning, please turn to 1 John and chapter 4. And I know this is er...really a passage that may not be so appropriate for Christmas in a sense, because Christmas is all bright and cheery. 1 John chapter 4 is about serious stuff and er...so I ask you to be patient; I ask you to be ready for what God has for us this morning.

But let me start in a light-hearted way, if I may. There's this young man who was about to be posted overseas for work and er...his girlfriend is sad that he has to leave. But he assured her that he will stay faithful, will love her and be back in 2 year's time to marry her. A few weeks into his departure, the girlfriend started to question whether he is still faithful or maybe being lonely and seeing beautiful girls out there, he may be tempted to stray away. So, the man again passionately pleads his case and says, "No, I'm faithful to you. I will not go after any other girls..." and so on and so forth. Well, the next week, she sent him a parcel in which is a harmonica and a note that says: "Every time you're tempted to stray, practise the harmonica and it will make you or help you remember me." And the young man wrote back and says, "Dear, this is exactly what I do. I've been practicing the harmonica every night and remembering you." 2 years later, he is back and at the airport he was so excited to see his girlfriend. He ran towards her, wanted to give her a hug and kiss her and the girlfriend says, "Wait a minute, let me first hear you play the harmonica." (Laughter in the congregation) 0:01:42.4

You know, whether someone is genuine or whether someone is false, sometimes you just got to put them to a test. And when it comes to the teaching of God's Word, the teacher himself, we also got to put him to a test. Because not every preacher or so-called preacher is genuine, some may be false and that is exactly what John is saying in 1 John chapter 4.

He says, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this, you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore, they

speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” (1 John 4:1-6, ESV)

This is a passage I think very relevant in the days of John. He was surrounded by false teachers who teach that Jesus is not come in the flesh. These are the Gnostics. But the words that were applicable to John is equally, if not more applicable to us today. We live in a world where there is the presence of much false teachings. There are many false teachers as he told us or God tells us in the Scripture.

Now in the past, in Gospel Light Christian Church, I'm saying... at least I've been in this church for close to twenty years. I think in the past, the guardianship or the protection of the teaching of God's Word is pretty much er...in and around the pulpit. Whatever pastor would preach, Pastor Paul who was our senior pastor preaches, that's what we learned and he would also in a sense, regulate what we read and so on and so forth. What are the good stuff to read; what are not the good stuff that we should not read and where are the false teachings and so on. But when we come to this time, I think things have changed a lot. It's not that we don't tell you what is false or what is true, but you don't just attend services here to hear God's Word already. There are so many ways that you are hearing and reading God's Word today. Just go to Google and you can find a thousand preachers. Just go to social media and every day if you're linked with friends who are Christians, they give you information, articles, snippets of so-called Christian truths. The reality is that this pulpit alone is not what you're listening to. You're listening to many sources as well. And I think this passage therefore becomes more important to us than ever before, because you're hearing many spirits, you're hearing many teachers. This is very vital to the health of your life and to the health of this church. 0:05:18.4

I'd like us to note a few things from this text. Very, very simply, first of all, this text on testing the spirits involves:

Number One - A Word of Caution.

He says here, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit...” Don't just believe everyone who calls himself a pastor. Don't just believe everyone who is a preacher. You say why? Because there are many prophets - false prophets who have gone out into the world. Now, if God says there are no false prophets in this world and everyone who comes in the name of Jesus is a true prophet, then I don't have to be aware; I don't have to be worried or concerned; I...I don't have to have my spiritual guards up. But if he tells

me that there are many, not just that there're false prophets but many, then I need to be very much alerted and not gullibly believe every spirit. 0:06:17.4

We are all very familiar that not everything in this world is what it seems. There is a lot of cheating, scams, scandals, cons, cheaters out there in this world. We are all familiar with that. I mean, just over the past few weeks and months you will be familiar with this place, right? Sim Lim Square. I suppose very few of you have visited this building for the past one month. You say why? Because you are alerted, you are aware that things that are being sold there or the businesses that are operating there may not be what it is to be. Now, probably it's just a few black sheep, but that is enough for you to be alert that you can be someone like this (picture shown). He's...this is a poor Vietnamese man who was er...cheated of a lot of money, when he was told this iPhone is of a particular price, but at the end of the day he has to fork out so much more. He was conned. He was cheated. He was scammed and he made front-page news for many days. It caught the attention of Singaporeans because we are all alert to the reality that there are scams and we don't want to be part of any scam. Not only this case in Sim Lim but you will read by and by that there are love scams, where cruel, unscrupulous men, they disguised themselves as Romeos, as Casanova, and internet love scam - cheating people, women of money. When the women interact with them, they thought this is a good guy, but he really is a wolf in sheep's clothing. It's a scam! It's a cheat! It's a scandal.

Every day you receive emails right? And a lot of emails are automatically channelled to your junk mail. How many of you open all your junk mails? Very few of you because you know that maybe in this mail, if I were to open it and reply it, it may lure me into a certain trap. For example, dear sir, you have... we want to congratulate that you have just won a lottery in UK or whatever, please reply to us, and you'll receive all the money. Nobody... I hope you don't reply er...because...because that's... that's just so blatantly a scam. But there are still people who fall for it, otherwise they wouldn't send these emails.

There's something called phishing. Interesting word - phishing not F-I-S-H but P-H-I-S-H and what is phishing? Phishing is actually unscrupulous people, setting up websites that masquerade as the real one. They're false websites; they are not the actual one, but they looked like one. So that when you go into it, you key your personal data inside, they retrieved all your sensitive information. It's a scam! It's a cheat! It's a scandal.

And then I read in er... China. Wah...this is high-class stuff where there are professional beggars. (Picture shown.) They are not poor because every day they get a good intake or good takings. You can see them 10 P.M. at a particular restaurant, counting their money. I read recently - someone who has an iPhone. You know they have this board that says, “我很可怜, 请 给我一点钱.”(wo hen ke lian, qing gei wo yi dian qian) – “I very poor thing, please give me money.” But at the back, they are playing iPhone. And er... and for this case, where the reporters trail them, er... this man actually goes to ‘Cartier’ and ‘Louis Vuitton’ and eh... wah...good stuff...I mean this is good earnings that they could go to such places. It makes us uneasy. This is really bad, you says, wah... scam and we need to be alert. And I think we are very alert, because money is a very sensitive thing to us. It’s very close to our heart. You want to cheat me of money? Waahh... it’s very, very er...touchy. And we’re very alert to this also because people alert one another. In the media, in newspapers, social media, er...or even whatsapp group, you know? Dear friends, please be aware, don't open this email! And we warn one another.

But when it comes to church, when it comes to the Bible, when it comes to teaching of God's Word, somehow this sign is taken away, in our mind. We assumed that because this is called such and such church, and because the man who is standing is called such and such pastor, we don't have to be so alert. I mean, this is a church of God. He is a man of God, and he holds a big fat Bible, so we can trust him. Is that really what the Bible teaches? Just because he has a big church; just because he holds a big fat Bible; just because he can spew Christian vocab., makes him a true teacher of God's Word? I'm not asking you to be sceptical. I'm asking you to be discerning. I'm asking you to be alert to the reality that there can be scams. Now, I'm not saying from now on don't ever give to beggars. I'm not saying from now on, never open your emails. I'm not saying from now on never go to Sim Lim Square. That's not the point!

The point is, are you even discerning? Are you alert? And when it comes to the things you are reading, the things you're listening, the things you're watching, can there be a possibility that there may be wolves in sheep's clothing? Are you warned? Because this is a word of caution. John says do not believe every spirit because this is the reality. There are many false prophets and the scary thing when we read in 1 John chapter 2 is that these false prophets can actually come from church! They come from among God's people. The gathering here - one or two, three or four, I do not know. They...they actually come from churches and so you may be lured to think, oh he came from that church, he must be all right. No! They can come from a genuine church but they are false. Do not believe every spirit. And he says, this spirit is a spirit of antichrist.

The value of going through the Bible as a church is that we looked at antichrist in great detail in the series on Daniel. He is the ultimate super villain and powered by the devil himself who will come at the end times to deceive the whole world. He will be very successful because he's empowered by the devil. But this spirit of antichrist is already at work, that's what the Bible is saying. And this spirit of antichrist from the devil itself is working amongst false teachers, using them to deceive people. They look so good, they masquerade as angels of light. They are wolves who are clothed in sheep's clothing. They look cute, they look adorable. You may want to get near that pastor, but he 'grrowwwl' turns around he will bite you, when you're not careful. But that's what the Bible says, this is the spirit of antichrist. 0:13:56.4

You know, like in a gang? There is a 'Tua Tao' (Hokkien dialect words meaning gang leader). There is a ring master, there is a head. There's a head in false teachers, they may... they may be in Africa, America, Singapore, all over the world in different denominations, but they are all controlled by one - the devil. These false teachers are energised not by the Holy Spirit; they are not energised by the human spirit; they are energised by the demonic spirit. And that's why it is so important, at least in this first point you must be aware. Do not believe every spirit. This is a call for discernment.

So review for yourself, in the past week who have you been listening to? What have you been reading? Did you buy a book simply because the titles sounded right? And the author looked handsome? Wah...cool! Did you just listen to something because people shared that and you... you said, oh because this person shared and it must be good? Just because he is called a reverend or apostle or pastor? Well, do not believe every spirit.

But secondly in this text, I want you to note: A Word of Command.

There is a command given to us because he says, "...do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits..." The word 'test' is to prove, to scrutinise, to examine. It's a word used to test metals. It's a metallurgical word - to test the purity of certain kinds of metal. For example, gold. Now, I'm not sure how many of you remember this, but when I was growing up, I watch movies and television shows, and it will be about the people in a past, how they would go to San Francisco, U.S. and they...and they looked for gold. And er...they...they find and discovered lots of gold ore and they processed it into gold bars and once they have the gold bars and when you want to sell it, they will take that gold bar, flip it into the air... I do not know why they do that, but after they flip it, they will...they will what? They will bite it! You say why do they bite gold? I mean, I never figured it out. I thought...for fun. Maybe it's tasty. I mean you use gold

for food right? Some gold leaf, I don't know what. But why do you bite the gold? But the reason is very simple.

In those days, when you dig for gold ores. Sometimes they are yellowish, glitterish, shiny but they are not really gold. There is this compound called iron pyrite which is yellowish, looks like gold, but it is different from gold in that it is very, very hard. Imagine chewing on your water pipe, all your teeth will break! So if they bite on it and it's very hard, it's not gold because gold is very soft. That's how they test it. And ever since then, that's how people test for gold, even in the Olympics (picture shown). (Laughter in the congregation.) It's true! It's true! You don't believe me, you go Google: bite gold. Wah, the first thing that comes out, all the Olympic medallists. And you noticed in this picture, Serena Williams is the only one to bite. Why? Because she got... gold! The rest don't bite lah, the teeth drop out ah! And er...I read in this article that the Olympic gold medallists will all take photos with their gold medals and biting on them. Why do they do that? Because all the photographers and journalists asked them to do that. They don't know why one. It's or... okay...bite, bite lah! They've seen it so many times they just do it. Now you know why they bite gold. It's a symbol now to say this is pure gold. Now that's the word to prove, to test, to examine, to see if it is the real stuff. 0:18:06.9

So John here says, don't just look at it! Don't just see things the preacher, the church on a superficial level because it may turn out to be iron pyrite. As Shakespeare would say, "All that glitters is not gold." So how do you tell an iron pyrite from gold apart? How do you tell a false teacher from a true teacher of God's Word? Looking at his titles, looking at his church size, looking at the Bible he carries, looking at his Christian vocabulary alone is not enough, you got to bite deeper. You got to see more, test more and so, how do you do it?

Well, Jesus first of all gives us a very simple test, but this test does take more time, alright? And what is the test? But this is a very reliable test: you will recognize them by their fruits - Matthew chapter 7. Here He's talking about wolves in sheep's clothing and He says how do you tell them apart? Because superficially they are like true teachers, they looked like one, but you really will recognize them by their fruit and fruit takes time. For any tree to bear fruit, it does take time. So if you want to look at a false teacher, you look at his life. Look at how he lives; what he lives for; what are his appetites. The apostle Paul tells us that their end is destruction. Now if you're very concern about false teachers today...you should be because they deceive many people and it is tragic but on the other hand, we know that God is always going to be the winner. He is always going to judge perfectly and there...and these false

teachers satanically empowered, personally invested, their end is destruction. But they do these things because they have a purpose: they want to feed their belly. So false teachers are fat... no! That's not true, that's just a joke alright? Don't take me seriously. False teachers have a fleshly appetite. Their God is their belly and they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things. (Philippians 3:19, ESV)

They are not going to tell you about the glory that is to come; they are not going to tell you about the glories in Jesus. They are going to tell you about the here and now; they're going to tell you how you enrich yourself. This is one of the marks. This is what he aims for; this is what he longs for; his mind is set on these things. They promise them freedom. They...they preach great things that sounds so good, sounds so right, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. They may say Jesus sets you free from sin, but they themselves are living in sin. Jesus is going to help you through this time of difficulty, but they themselves are compromising in their life. And before long, scandals come forth, financial discrepancies, sexual immorality, and that is the common threat of false teachers in history till now.

So Jesus says, you can tell them by their lives. By the way, there are some preachers who do not want or some pastors who do not want anyone to know anything about their life. I think that's a scary thing. Now, I'm not saying a pastor should open his life as if everybody can walk into his house, go toilet, walk out again and...no, no, I'm not saying that that is necessarily the case, but is there a transparency in his life? Can... is he hiding things deliberately? I think that's a mark that someone is not walking right. And so this is one of the marks - you look at the life. 0:21:49.0

Jesus taught us that; Scriptures revealed that but another way that John is going to talk about here, in his short letter to the er...to his people. He did not talk so much about life here, but he talks...he's going to talk about his lips. What is this false teacher or what is this teacher teaching or saying? You tell if he is a false teacher or not, by his doctrine, by his teachings. Not just his vocab., not just his Bible but exactly what does he teach. Because he says, "By this you know..." How do you tell? How do you bite? "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." (1 John 4:2-3, ESV) It's a doctrinal test and the central doctrine here is the doctrine on Jesus Christ – Christology. Christ - the study, the understanding of who Christ is. It's a doctrinal test.

As I've mentioned, in John's time, the specific context is that the Gnostics deny Jesus has come in the flesh. The Gnostics deny Jesus come in the flesh because the

Gnostics believed that any flesh or material things is...er... is filthy and sinful and therefore if He is truly God, He would not come in the flesh. So the Gnostics denied Jesus has come in the flesh, and John says in John chapter 1: "The Word became flesh." So John as the apostle says when they teach that, they are not from God. They do not confess Jesus; they do not teach the Jesus that God has told us about. They're not biblical; they're not authentic; they are fakes; they are crooks; they are con artists.

Ray Stedman gives a very significant...I thought a very insightful statement here. He says, "It is significant that this warning...this warning about false teachers and how you tell false teachers using doctrine. It's significant that this warning comes in the midst of John's discourse about love, because false spirits tend to make a great deal of the subject of love. Every cult, every deviant group, every false movement makes its appeal in the name of love." Wah...this is an insightful thing because it is true, before 1 John chapter 4 is a...is a teaching on love and in verse 7 of chapter 4, he continues with love. So right in the middle of love, there's this warning – discern, alright? Discern - you discern it by knowing if they are preaching truth.

Interesting...cults, deviant Christian groups, they appeal to people using love. This is a 'loving' love, love, love. Now...love is beautiful. It's...it's great. God is love. It should be beautiful, it is beautiful, but love rejoices in truth. Love and truth are always married beautifully together. So if they claim to serve and to reach in love, but there is no doctrinal accuracy, John says that is not of God. Love rejoices in truth. So every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. If you do not confess the Jesus of the Bible that is, it is not from God. It is not empowered by the spirit, it's empowered by a demonic spirit, who is the liar, but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ.

So, very, very clearly this doctrine on Christology is central to discerning true and false prophets. 2 Corinthians 11 says, for if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus, or they preach to you a different gospel, so there're preachers today who come in the name of Jesus and tell you they are giving the gospel, but it's not the Jesus of the Bible, neither is it the gospel of the Bible. It's another kind. In Chinese, 换汤不换药 (huan tang bu huan yao), change soup but never change the medicine. It's still the same thing, they're teaching lies except they use the name of Christ as a cover. They use the word - gospel as a cover. They make you think that they're teaching God's Word but actually it's not. It's another Jesus, it's another gospel. So the Bible tells us, they disguise themselves; they masquerade. They do not want you to know they're not the real thing. They want you to believe that they are from God, so they use the name of Christ. They use the word 'Gospel'; they use Christian terminologies; they

come dressed like Christian people; they behave like Christian people; they...they show you love like Christian people, but they're disguises. And you tell them...you tell them out, you mark them out because of their teachings, their doctrines, their gospel is contrary to the one we preached to you. 0:27:15.5

And the final verse – they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. So they don't really tell you the cross of Jesus. They don't really tell you that you need to deny yourself, take up the cross. They don't really tell you that coming to God require repentance and turning from sin and sorrow for sin...for your sin and conviction in your sin. No, they just tell you come, believe, it's easy and this is one thing you can tell. So they do not preach the real Christ, but instead, they give you this. This is what they offered you: not the biblical Jesus, biblical repentance, biblical believing of the gospel but they teach you, they give you smooth talk and flattery. They 'buak Kaya', 'buak Guyiu' (Hokkien dialect literally means spread Kaya and butter on toast but it's also used as an expression for buttering someone up). We call it in Hokkien right? You 'buak Guyiu', butter you up and then they slice you up and eat you up. They have smooth talk and flattery. They deceive, they tell you nice things, things that you love to hear. They won't tell you things that are unpleasant.

Let me tell you, the Bible has lots of things that are unpleasant to the flesh. Lots of things. Centrally, the Bible says, don't live for yourself, live for God! Wah, that is actually very unpleasant to the flesh, but true preaching involves that. False teachings don't need to tell you that. False teachings hear what you like to hear, they want to scratch your itchy ears. They speak loud bouts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh, so it will be very appealing. It may be things like saying: God is going to give you the wealth you want or the health you need; God is so good, He indulges in us and there is really no need for you to live in godliness or repentance and they entice successfully. And the reason is because they speak from the world and the world listens to them. Their teachings are not from God, their teachings are from the world.

Yes, they use Christian terms but they're actually the same philosophy as world philosophy. You know, recently, I was given a book on positive thinking - The Origins of Positive Thinking and it is sad when I read that book. This is how positive thinking is all about, how you confess it and there's...and things will fall in place. It will work out exactly the way you want and when I read it, I was churning in my blood. I was really very, very disturbed and uncomfortable because it is such an anti-God thinking, philosophy. But the reason why I read it is because churches today have embraced positive thinking. No more biblical thinking but they give you positive

thinking. Think this, confess this and God will make this happen to you. Actually it's the same philosophy, just that they use the name of God now, in church. It is from the world. A sad thing is when the world listens to them and the church listens to them and feel absolutely at ease with them. These teachers are not from God. They are from the world. 0:30:51.6

I read recently this quote and I share this with you: "The right church might just be the one where you are least comfortable." This is a very interesting statement. The right church might just be the one where you are least comfortable. Now what does it mean? Does it mean that we purposely, give spikes on the chairs and put the temperature to be 30° and you're sweating and wah, this church very good ah, make me uncomfortable. No, no, no, that's not the point. What it means to be uncomfortable is that the preaching of God's Word brings conviction; godly sorrow that works to repentance. That's what it means. If every week I come and I feel so 'shioik' (Hokkien dialect word meaning very satisfying) about myself. I don't think you have heard from God, you've heard from the devil. Wah...yah...okay, God will give you this, God will do that for you and when you... when you pass on from life to death, you'll realise you've been deceived. You'll cry even more than the man who was conned at Sim Lim Square. You will. But I tell you something, you're not a victim because you also enjoyed it. You wanted it. There is opportunity for you to hear truth but you say, I...I...I think those things are too hard to hear; I want to hear the nice things, the exciting things, things that cheer me up. Those promises that these teachers give, they're so uplifting and when you hear them, you love it in your heart. You are swayed in your soul towards it.

So where is that godly conviction that comes? Whoever knows God listens to us, whoever is not from God does not listen to us. You know, every Sunday I preach and every outreach we have, even though we're in a dark room and whatever, in a...in a presentation on stage; when it is preaching time, I always request for the lights to be on. You know why? Very simple, it's not for you, it's for me. I asked the lights to be on because I want to look at your face. Why...why do I want to look at your face? I want to see who are those who listen, and who are those who don't listen. (Laughter in the congregation) I'm serious! I've...I've...it's true! And it is so interesting every...now I know all of you looking at me lah! (Laughter in congregation)

Just now (Pastor pretends to nod and sway his body) like Mr. Bean, you know? Trying to stay awake. But I look at you and I see how you react to the teaching of God's Word and it is amazing! Same preacher, same sermon, same slides and there are those who are like this (Pastor imitates copying): copying, typing and there are

those who are... (Pastor imitates dozing away) Now, I understand once in a while you do this because you had a hard week and you're sleepy. You didn't sleep well last night, you were over... you had a late night shift. I understand that, but if every week you... (Pastor imitates dozing off) (Laughter in congregation) I actually know who are every week like that one lah. (Laughter in congregation) I know them, alright? But don't feel bad about yourself. I have been in that position before in my...when I was sitting there, I can understand that. But not every week! Alright? (Laughter in the congregation)

And then sometimes after you nod a bit more, you decide to go further and further back. I know why you all like to sit at the back. I can't see you, but I can see you, I guarantee you, alright? And then after you're at the back, you go out of the room already. I got camera outside also, you don't know. (Laughter in the congregation) And ultimately one is when you are outside, you go to that corner where the food is. So when preaching is going on, you don't desire to hear God's Word, you desire to feed yourself or chit chat and...and...and it concerns me.

Now I'm not trying to judge anyone. I'm just saying that when a true believer knows God, he has an appetite for God's pure Word. He has no taste for iron pyrite; he has no taste for the things that entice sensual passions. Now he...he might be lured, somewhat, but he knows in his heart that's not God's Word and he will not continue that. That's a true believer. But someone who is not from God, absolutely not interested in the Bible. I can tell you that is true. Some of our children grow up in church, they grow up in church having to go to Sunday School. Why? Because parents come to church, they have to go. But when they are of a certain age where they are going to make decisions for themselves, they leave the church. Why? Because all along they never had the appetite for God's Word. They...they dragged themselves to church. They... they have never been touched in their heart. 0:35:41.0

Now parents, I'm saying this because I don't want you to be assuming your kid's salvation just because they come to church. You didn't see them in the class, you didn't see how they listen, you didn't see how they were zoning away. Would you pray for your kid if you're not sure, rather than assume it? I mean that's the last thing I think a parent should do - assume or presume for that matter. But this is how you know a false teacher from a true one. And how you know if you're someone who response to false teachings or not.

So, John gives us a word of command: test them, assess them, examine them. This is how you know every spirit that confesses through Christology is from God and if he

doesn't, he is not from God. And false teachers speak from the world, they speak of things that are like the world, just different terminologies. They may have big followings because the world listens to them but true followers listen to God, listen to the apostles, the apostolic teachings, the truths that are unchanged from times of old that will echo down the tunnel of eternity and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this, by this doctrinal test you can know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of by error. By this you know. It doesn't matter if he wears a suit, carries the Bible, has a nice name, big church. Doctrine - does he teach the biblical Christ?
0:37:22.9

But finally, let me end with: A Word of Confidence.

In this passage he says, little children, you're from God and have overcome them. Now, it's so scary when we realised we're swimming in a pool of false teachers. There are many out there. But this is the confidence: "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them!" This is a tremendous assurance that though we may be tempted, and though we may be surrounded, we will not over...ultimately be deceived, if you're truly of God. You will overcome them. You have overcome them. You need to be aware of false teachers, but you need not be afraid of false teachers. Why? Because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. Now this is a very popular verse, because this is a very frequently asked question: "Pastor, can a Christian be possessed by demons?" and generally preachers, teachers, Christians will refer to 1 John 4. No, you can't, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. So we used this verse as a comfort against demon possession. This is a verse that you may even use in exorcism but I say, when you look at the context, when you look at 1 John chapter 4, it really is not about possession, it is about deception.

John is saying, the Spirit who is in you, God who is in you, is able to preserve you in the midst of a multitude of false teachings. That's the primary meaning. So I need to be honest to what the Scripture has, and I trust that you appreciate this is really not about... wah...the devil coming in to me... no, no, it's about false teachings. It's about deception and this is about God helping us stay true to His truth in the midst of deception. Now, it doesn't mean then that the Christian can be possessed, of course. I'm just saying this verse is relating directly to deception.

Now, this is not weird or new because, in chapter 2, it has already says, you have been anointed by the Holy one. Now, there are those who went out from us because they were not...they went out from us because they were not of us. Because if they

were of us, they will no doubt have continued with us. That's what John had said and he says the reason why you will continue with us is because you're anointed by the Holy one, and in this anointing, this abides in you. "I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. The anointing that you received from Him, from God abides in you, you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie - just as it has taught you, abide in him. (1 John 4:5-6, ESV) He's saying that there is this supernatural reality that God is in you, protecting you, teaching you, guiding you, even when there are so many false teachers around you. 0:40:40.5

And that's why he can say we are from God and whoever knows God listens to us. Why? Because there's the anointing; there's God - the reality of the Spirit teaching us in our lives. Now does this mean we have to do nothing? Ahh...I can be presumptuous and do nothing and I'll be kept free from false teachings. No, of course not! God says He's the one who gives new birth. Does that mean I do nothing and I will become a Christian? No, of course not! Yes, God is the one in John chapter 3, His Spirit is the one who sovereignly brings about new births but at the very same time Jesus says, whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. So I need to be kept in purity of truth, I need to be kept in God's Word. How do I do that? Well, the Spirit helps me, but at the very same time, be sure that the Word of God abides in you. Be very sure you're hearing and learning and teach... and studying the pure Word of God. It takes both. It's not either or, it's both. God's spirit and your studying and learning of the Scripture.

So, it means, as we come to the end, it is highly important where your ears are today. Where your eyes are, where your ears are. Jesus said, my sheep will hear my voice. My sheep would tell the shepherd's voice. My sheep has the anointing to know and recognise that, that is not from my master, that's from the world. And my sheep will be willing to say, "I'm not going to follow the world, I'm going to follow my master." Beloved, do not believe every spirit. There is a real warning here, because if you don't, the spirit clearly says that in the later times, some... some who look like Christians, some who look like genuine worshippers of God, they will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons. Where you hear determines where you will go, because if you allow yourselves to listen and devote yourselves to such deceitful teachings, demonic teachings, you will depart from the faith. It just goes to show you were never saved in the first place.

This is a matter about life and death. Spiritual life and death. This is not child's play. Whoever knows God listens to us. Whoever is of God hears the Word of God...the

words of God. My sheep will hear my voice. And I end with this example in the Bible of the Berean church - how they examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. They studied for themselves. Who was preaching there do you know? Apostle Paul. They had to go back to the Scriptures and check it out. Who is this fellow here? A nobody, this fellow can be a crook for all you know. The only sure guide as we always say, is the Scriptures. Examine it daily, test the Spirits. Now I hope every Sunday you don't come and um... 'tekan' (Malay word meaning disturb) me lah! That's not the aim of the sermon. The aim of the sermon is not for you to be sceptical like I said, but to be discerning. In everything, check it with the Bible.

There is a story of this young man who wants to learn about jade, the Chinese green jade. And so he went to look for a 'Shifu', a master who is a master at jade. And ask him to teach him how to appreciate jade. The 'Shifu' listens to him and says, "Okay, I will teach you." The very next day, the young man came and the 'Shifu' place a precious stone into his hand, asked him to grip it for the whole day and they started to talk about everything under the sun. They talked about geography, history, science, mathematics, they talked about everything and the boy then went back home the very same day. The next day he would come back, and the same cycle repeats and this went on for weeks. Imagine, I came to learn about jade and everyday he'll talk to me about everything else but jade. And finally at the end of the weeks, this 'Shifu' puts a precious stone once again into his hand and when the young boy grabbed it, held on to it, he immediately exclaimed, "But master, this is not jade!" What has happened is that after weeks of holding the true thing, he could recognize what is the false thing. 0:45:44.5

We live in a day and age where people are not hearing, studying the Bible for themselves. You can't discern. You're not holding on to the true jade and therefore, when the fake things come along. You grab it with both hands. My friends, we trust in God's spirit guarding our hearts, but it is also equally important that you will study to show yourself approved. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits. In all that you listen, I'm glad you want to learn more about God's Word. I'm glad you're availing yourself to all kinds of resources out there, but do test the spirits. Do watch your heart because it matters. It is a matter of spiritual life and spiritual death for all eternity. Let's bow for a word of prayer together.

The Word of God is pure, but the devil wants to contaminate it. He puts all around that precious gold, iron pyrites. They look like the real stuff, they glitter but they are not real. One bite and you will know. But so many people today have not even attempted to bite it. We have just been lock, stock and barrel sold this fake, these

counterfeits, these scams, these scandals. This morning I like you to take an inventory of the treasures in your life. Look back, look back at the week - what you have been reading, what you have been studying, what you have been longing to hear and ask yourself, have you tested? Did you listen to them, did you read them because it made you feel good? Or because they are biblical? Oh, this is a day of amazing deception, amazing...Pastor, this church preaches this glorious things, makes us feel so hyped up, excited. It's good to be excited but are you excited about truth? Or is that humanistic philosophy? I'm not giving you specific examples here. I just want you to reflect for yourself: what you have been reading? What you have been studying? What you are longing for?

Do we have itchy ears? Wanting to hear things that will please our flesh? Or are we like the Bereans, with all eagerness, searching the Scriptures? God's Word is wholesome. God's Word is sound. God's Word brings health and life. Maybe today, you are here and you wonder what is Christianity all about? Christianity is about truth - truth in God's word, that God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for your sins. The world today wants to tell you that there is a God who can give you health; God who can give you success in this world; God who can give you money. But I tell you, the God of the Bible is not primarily about these things. He's primarily to save you from your sins. Let me tell you the God of the Bible, sometimes when you believe in the God of the Bible, He sends you through hardships, persecutions and pains and sufferings but that is the God of the Bible because He wants you to see that the real joy of the Christian life, the real joy of life is not in the things of this world, but in Him alone! That's what the Bible says. And the Bible tells you that if you really want to know him, deny yourself, take up the cross. A true sheep this morning would say, "Jesus, I hear Your voice and I will follow You. I will turn from my sin. I will follow You as my Saviour and my Lord. I will give You my life because You gave Your life for me. You have warmed me with your love. My heart is captured by You." So this morning, would you today follow Jesus? Would you hear His voice alone? May God help us.

Father we thank you today for Your Word and I pray that You will continue to keep this church pure. Not just the preaching but each one of us, because I know that's your desire. We thank You for the indwelling spirit, without whom we are doomed to deception, but because of Him who dwells in us, we have overcome the world. Lord help us to apply ourselves diligently then, to the reading, studying, obeying of the Scriptures. Keep us from deceitful spirits and demonic teachings. Keep us on the straight and narrow. Speak, dear God into our lives. We just want Your will, Your

Word, Your truth alone in Gospel Light, for Your own namesake. We pray all this now in Jesus's name. Amen.