

Living Word Fellowship Church

Pastor Paul Cannings
Walk Through the Bible
1 John 4:1-6

I. A Biblical Exposition

A. Guard Your Mind (vs. 1):

1. Why does he say spirit rather than antichrist (2:18), false prophets (2:21-24)?
 - a) Demons – 1 Tim. 4:1-4; 1 Cor. 11:11-13 (they came to kill, steal and destroy – John 10:10):
 - b) Traveling preachers, teachers, pastors, and evangelists (2 John 1:7-11).
 - c) Spirits believe in God, but don't plan to do anything He says (James 2:19).
 - d) Satan knew scripture well enough to quote it, leaving out two words (Luke 4:10-11 – Ps. 91:11-12).
2. Many false prophets will go out in the last days, which is after Christ's death and resurrection (1 John 2:18-19).
3. Each believer has the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is their teacher (1 John 1:21, 26-27); just like Christ taught the disciples (John 14:16-17; 16:13).
 - a) We must not allow ourselves to become mentally persuaded to commit to anyone's teachings confidently.
 - b) We must test (approve; the person meets the right specifications) every spirit – 1 Thess. 5:21 – when you know what a true diamond is – good knowledge (Acts 17:10-15; 2 Tim. 2:15).
4. False teachers:
 - a) Deny Christ (1 John 2:22) is the Christ (1 John 4:2), also son of God, meaning He was also fully human and therefore called Jesus.
 - b) They exploit for selfish gain (2 Peter 2:1-3).
 - c) They are influenced by demons (1 Timothy 4:1-4).
 - d) They do not live what they teach (Pharisees, Sadducees, etc.)
5. Each believer must look for proof as the Berean believers did. It is the scriptures, illuminated by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-15), because we are committed to practice the Word that guides us providing discernment (Hebrews 5:14; Philippians 1:9-11) of who is of the truth (John 16:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).

B. Beware (vs. 2-3):

1. By this, you know – We will continually have an approved comprehensive understanding of whether someone is saved based on what John is saying in this passage.
 - a) He must openly acknowledge (the meaning of confess) the person of the incarnate Savior. This involves the mode of his coming (in the flesh) and permanence of the incarnation (perfect tense of

come). If he had not taken upon himself a human body, he could never have died and been the Savior.

2. The Spirit of God – What John is teaching in this passage would tell us whether or not we have the Spirit of God or not (I John 2:19-24).

- a) There are two spirits in the world today: God’s Spirit of Truth, who speaks through the inspired Word, and Satan’s spirit of error that teaches lies (1 Tim. 4:1ff). Teachers sent by God will speak from God, and God’s children will recognize them. Satan’s workers will speak from and depend on worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 1:7–2:16; James 3:13-18). True sheep recognize the voice of the Shepherd (John 10:1-5, 27-28). True sheep also recognize and love one another. Satan is a divider and destroyer; Christ unites people in love.¹
3. Every spirit – The subject of the passage is that everyone, with no exceptions, would have a complete understanding of whether or not a person has the presence, character and the ability to exercise their faith based on this confession (1 John 3:3-10).
4. Confess – Everyone who continuously makes a public emphatic declaration of their inner conviction that Jesus is the Christ must be saved. We still need to look for fruit (Matthew 7:15-23). There will be many who say this in the last days, but it is only said to deceive unsuspecting hearts.
 - a) Even evil or unclean spirits recognized the deity of Jesus during his ministry (Mk. 1:24; 3:11; 5:7-8; Acts 19:15). Though they knew him, they did not acknowledge him. On the other hand, the Spirit of God, always honors the Son of God. Jesus taught that it is the Holy Spirit's particular ministry both to testify to, and to glorify Him (John 15:26; 16:13-15; 1 Corinthians 12:3).²
 - b) The Pharisees knew who Christ was, but did not believe in Him (John 5:39-40).
5. Jesus Christ – "Christ" is from *christos*, "the Anointed One." The words "is come" are in the perfect tense in the Greek text.
6. Has come in the flesh – Christ was completely set from the past to the present to change from only being a Spirit being to be completely human (John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-8).
 - a) Thus, John excludes the Gnostics, especially the Cerinthians, who taught that the divine Christ came upon the human Jesus at his baptism and then left him at the cross, so that it was only the man Jesus who died (NASB, Bible Study Notes).
 - b) This test seems to be aimed at Docetists. They taught that Christ did not have a physical body. The test may also be aimed at the followers of Cerinthus, who claimed that Jesus and “the Christ” were two separate beings, one physical and the other spiritual. In this letter, John is careful to use the name and title of Jesus Christ together to clearly express the complete union of the two titles in one person.³

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (p. 774). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Wuest, Kenneth S.: *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader*. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans, 1997, c1984, S. 1 Jn 4:2

³ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (pp. 1713–1714). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

7. Has come in the flesh – A believer accepts the virgin birth as true and Christ as Christos, deity – when He rose from the dead had a glorified body.
8. Is from God – The person who continually believes that Jesus was fully human but yet full deity is only able to believe it, just like it was for Peter (Matthew 16:17; Luke 6:44); the conviction was inspired by God, which is evidence that God influences their lives. (John 2:22-25; 1 Corinthians 12:3).
 - a) Reliance on God is the secret of all victory, whether over heresy or any other snare. The indwelling One—the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer (3:24; 4:13; Rom. 8:9) and is thus “the One who is in you”—is mightier than the one who is in the world, namely, Satan (cf. 1 John 5:19). He is called “the prince of this world” (John 12:31); “the god of this Age” (2 Cor. 4:4); and “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” (Eph. 2:2).⁴
9. Does not confess – Everyone who makes it a habit to continuously not make a public emphatic declaration of their inner conviction that Jesus is the Christ is not of God.
 - a) John was speaking of people who claimed to be Christians but who spoke as deadly opponents of Christianity. He also referred to church services as much more informal than ours. In these early services, visitors could stand and claim to speak by the Spirit of God. John wanted to provide direction to distinguish between the true and the false.⁵
10. This is the spirit Antichrist – The person who makes it a habit not to confess Jesus as the Christ is the person ‘antichristos’ (1 Jn. 2:18,22; 4:3; 2Jn.7).
 - a) The church is the pillar of truth (1 Timothy 3:15), Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) and those who teach false doctrine are influenced by demons (1 Tim. 4:1-4).
11. This is the spirit Antichrist – The person who does not believe that Jesus is the Christ has the spirit of the antichrist who is the son of perdition, the wicked one who opposes the saints (2 Thess. 2:3,8; 2:4).
 - a) The Antichrists referred to in John's letter were the early Gnostics. The "anti" in Antichrist means "against" (2 Th. 2:4; Rev. 13:6-7) (NASB, Bible Study Notes).
12. You have heard is coming – We have a complete comprehensive understanding and, therefore, must recognize that it continuously comes into our space and has definitely made us where we are.
13. Already in the world – Satan is continuously a part of those who live sinfully and are in an organized rebellion against God (1 John 5:19).
14. Is coming and already is – Believers who do not accept Jesus as the Christ is influenced by Satan (1 Corinthians 4:4).

C. Depends on His Strength (vs. 4; Revelation 3:21):

1. You are from God – Compared to those who live in a fallen state in the world, we are in possession of the One who has comprehensive power and might and completely reigns over all things.

⁴ Walvoord, J. F., & Zuck, R. B., Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 898). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁵ Lea, T. D. (1998). *The General Letters*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 649). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

- a) It indicates that the source of the original reader's attitude and actions was God (2:19). We must identify with either God or the devil. We can overcome this by recognizing false teachers and refusing to follow them. HE who is in you is the Holy Spirit. He who is in the world is the Devil (5:19).⁶
2. Have overcomes them – They have an appetite for the truth which frees them from the traps of Satan and provides them life through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 8:32-33; 14:6). It is to also be in the light (1 John 1:5-7), and there is no slumbering – is to avoid traps (2 Peter 1:9-11).
 3. Greater is He – The major focus here is that God, who actively resides in us, has the greatest power and the best intentions for us.
 4. He who is in you – God powerfully, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:4-8), lives in us. This is the main reason we are conquers through Christ (Romans 8:37-39).
 - a) “**you ... they ... we**” All of these PRONOUNS are emphasized. Three groups being addressed: true believers (John and his readers) false believers (gnostic teachers and their followers) and John's missionary team. This same type of triad is seen in Hebrews 6 and 10.⁷
 3. Greater is He who is in you – A life empowered by the Spirit is a life that abides in God's power (John 15:8-10).
 4. Than he who is in the world - Satan is actively in possession of the world so that he controls it to be organized in opposition to God as a rebellious force against Him (1 John 5:19).
 5. Than he who is in the world – When we walk in the light, we do not desire darkness (John 3:20-21).
 6. Than he who is in the world – When we work out our salvation, the Spirit of God dominates our lives so that Satan cannot defeat us; we no longer live, it is Christ that lives in us (Romans 8:26-39; Gal. 2:20; Colossians 3:1-4; Ephesians 5:15-18).
 7. Than he who is in the world - When we are led by the Spirit he strengthens us to withstand Satan (1 John 4:4).
 8. Than he who is in the world – The fruit of the Spirit keeps us from being overwhelmed by Satan's schemes (Galatians 5:22-25).

D. Overcomers are constantly Growing in God (vs. 5-6):

1. Everything you see the world believes in is developed and instituted by demons (Ps. 1:1-5).
2. From God – Repeats being reborn by God– we no longer have the right to function independently of God.
3. Knows God – Experiences God intimately–born of Him – regenerated – coming to a complete understanding of His Word.
4. Listens – The habit of believers who are experiencing God is to listen with a mind to understand and do what God says.
5. We know – The Process leads to a continuously growing knowledge and complete understanding of who is from God–eyes open.

⁶ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (p. 1714). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

⁷ Uteley, R. J. (1999). *The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters: The Gospel of John, I, II, and III John* (Vol. Volume 4, p. 230). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.

6. Truth – The actual reality of the faith of the apostles taught – understanding this reveals who the H.S. is in.