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This is the Spirit of Antichrist

1 John 4:1-6

Prayer: *Father, I just again, I thank you for your grace, I thank you for your goodness, I thank you for the means that you've given to us to gather corporately to offer up worship to you who alone deserves it. Again, we just pray at this part of the service, Lord, where we open up your book, we continue to pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit who guides us and directs us. Lord, open up our eyes and our ears, give us the ability to read and hear your word and to make it of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well as you probably know we're in 1 John, we've been in 1 John for a while, we're up to chapter four; and chapter four marks a change in emphasis for John. John has been speaking previously about the importance of demonstrating love for the brethren as the mark of a true Christian. John says let us love like the good Samaritan loved, let us pray like we had the heart, the mind and the will of Jesus, and let us obey as the measure of the reality of our faith. And now he turns his attention to doctrine, to the pursuit of truth

itself. This is 1 John 4:1. 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.*

I had a conversation just this past week with a representative of one of these false prophets. I got a random phone call on my landline which I never pick up these days because it's always sales pitches and robo calls. I usually just pick it up and I'm silent, if I don't hear anything on the other end, I just hang it up. The phone rang and I picked it up and I heard somebody speaking, saying something in the background. And I said, "Hello" and the person said, "Hi," said "I'm conducting a survey. Do you mind if I ask you a few questions about God and the way it is perceived today?" And I said, "Sure. Fire away." And he said, "Do you think it's right that God is blamed for all the evil in this world today?" And my answer was very short and very succinct, I said, "Are you a Jehovah's Witness?" I went on to say, I said, "I heard that you fellows don't go door to door any more and that you visit now via telephone because of COVID and all those other things, is that true?" And he said yes, we're chatting with people about their need for God in these times. And I said, "I just want you to know I think you guys are false teachers and that what you spread is not the truth." And he said, "How so?" And I said -- I was able to get right to the heart of the matter, I said, "Because you teach

that Jesus Christ is a created being and not God himself." And he acknowledged that he did believe that, and then we had a nice 45-minute conversation about whether or not that was a true fact. And he shared his scriptures and I shared my responses to his scriptures, some scriptures of my own and we had a genuinely pleasant conversation with the exception of him asking me why I was being so mean spirited as to say that he preached heresy, because after all we both agreed that this world is a moral cesspool, that it's falling apart, we both agreed that there's a desperate need for God. He said, "We honor Jesus as the firstborn of all creation and you and I both know that Jesus didn't treat people that way." I said to him, "What do you think calling someone a brood of vipers is?" Well he called me on that saying that wasn't Jesus, that was John the Baptist. And I responded, well, he called the Pharisees whitewashed tombs and hypocrites, and only later did I realize that Jesus also said in *Matthew 24*: "*You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*" And I went on to tell him that Paul had some very pointed things to say about false teachers as well. I said, "Look, you sound like a very nice fellow and I don't doubt that you are but what you are giving people is spiritual poison, and God will hold you responsible." So we went around and around like that for about 45 minutes. I finally told him, I said, "Look, this is not really going anywhere. You've already made up your

mind, I've already made up mine, there's no point really in just continuing this conversation."

But I understand that there were some legitimate questions about that conversation raised, and the first question is: Was I indeed being mean-spirited? I mean after all, we do know that this world is becoming a moral cesspool and there are few people who agree with us as much as this fellow agrees. So why make a fuss about our differences? Now, the question is do you know why we make such a fuss? Well, it's the very same reason that we make such a fuss with Mormons who are also very moral people who probably see the world ninety percent the way we believers see the world, but like Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons are not considered Christians even though they speak about Jesus Christ constantly. And the reason why they're not considered Christians is because Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons deny that Jesus Christ was very God. The details vary but the essence remains the same: Jesus according to Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons was a created being and not God himself. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was God's first created being, worthy of honor but certainly not God himself. And Mormons believe that Jesus originally was the brother of Satan, who was born a man just like you and me, was able to attain God-like status by the way he lived his life, and that in a nutshell describes the difference between all other Christian denominations

and these two non-Christian denominations which purport to be Christian. Now that's not to say that we have all kinds of issues with Roman Catholics and we differ in some respects with Baptists and Pentecostals, Anglican and Reformed, but all these groups agree on one essential fact and that is that Jesus Christ was and is very God.

Our issue today in dealing with Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and Muslims for a fact is that they all essentially deny that Jesus was God. Now back in John's day it was exactly the opposite. You see, false teachers back then, they didn't have a problem accepting the idea that Jesus could be God; they had a far bigger problem accepting the notion that God could become a man. The Gnostics of John's day all believed it was impossible because the flesh was considered lowly, it was evil. They taught that it was impossible to imagine that God would accept the disgrace of taking on a material body. The docetists were one particular cult that believed that Jesus never really existed as a man and that the Christ that everyone saw at that time was either a phantom or a ghost but no way real flesh and blood, and that's essentially what Muslims believe today. They believe that the person who died on the cross was not Jesus but either a phantom or some kind of substitute. So John's purpose in his text attacks the very same issue, that is the deity of Christ, from the opposite end that

Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons do. This is what John said in verse two to three, he said: *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.* And what John is saying is that every spirit that doesn't confess that Jesus was very God in spirit and in flesh is not from God and is rather from the antichrist, the spirit that is now at work in the world.

So again that raises the question, okay, so who is the antichrist? And John has spoken before about just such a thing. In chapter 2, this is what John said. He said: *Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.*

Now according to John there's two different types of antichrists, there's the plural "antichrists" which is a category of people, and there is the "antichrist," who's the premiere representative of Satan who appears in the final days. Daniel Akin does a great job of explaining what antichrists are in his study on 1 John entitled "*Exalting Christ in 1 John.*" This is what Daniel Akin has to say about antichrists plural. He says: "They are liars who deny 'that Jesus is the Messiah.' And their strategy is deceptive and seductive. They do not directly oppose Jesus Christ. They redefine Him. They re-imagine Him. 'He is good,' they say, 'but He is not God.' 'He may be a son of God like we can be sons and daughters of God,' they teach, 'but He is not the Son of God.' 'He may have died on the cross as a martyr,' they affirm, 'but He did not die as a Savior.' The spirit of antichrist always diminishes the person and work of Christ. It chips away at His deity and rejects His work of atonement. The antichrist spirit thinks and then teaches incorrectly concerning who Jesus Christ is and what Jesus Christ has done. The 'hub' of Christianity is the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal and divine Son of God. If you get it wrong here, you will get it wrong almost everywhere else. This is the spirit of the antichrists, and it will attempt to lead you down the road of spiritual error that is a theological dead end." Akin, Dr. Daniel L. *Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John* (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary). B&H Publishing Group.

Kindle Edition.

The fact is we would all be sitting ducks for the spirit of antichrist if it wasn't for the fact that we have the Spirit of Christ himself within us. This is what John says in verse 4. He says: *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.*

"Them" here is the antichrists. These are the false teachers who propagate the idea that Jesus isn't fully man and fully God. And isn't it interesting that all of these cults and all of these false religions, they all differ greatly in their particulars but they all have this one exception in kind: They all focus specifically on the fact that they deny that God himself has taken on flesh. They deny either that it was God on the one hand who became flesh or on the other hand that it was actual flesh that God has taken on. That is the pivotal lie around which the enemy focuses. John says because you are of God, you've overcome them. And the reason why you've overcome them is because God himself in the person of the Holy Spirit now lives inside each of you. I mean the one thing that cuts across every single denominational line, whether it's Catholic, Baptist, Pentecostal, whatever it is, is that each and every true believer in Christ has the Spirit of God living inside him. And when God opens your eyes and ears to the gospel and you repent of your sins and make him the Lord of your life, God himself

in the person of the Holy Spirit enters into you and he seals you eternally as one of God's own.

Here's how Paul puts it in *Ephesians 1:13*. He says: *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.* It's that seal that makes you a believer. Without the Spirit of God living within you, you are not a born again believer in Christ. And Paul makes that obvious and self-evident when he says in *Romans 8*: *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* So it's the Spirit of Christ living within us that is our ultimate protection against the enemy.

And if you remember it says in the Old Testament that God, he used to dwell in a tabernacle which was literally built back then by human beings. Goes on to say in the New Testament God no longer dwells inside of a manmade building, now he dwells inside human beings, redeemed human beings. He says: *You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.* Peter tells us when you become a believer in Christ, the

Spirit takes up residence inside you and then you become this living stone that's part of this gigantic spiritual house that God is building. Peter says: *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* So what he's saying is every single born again believer has the Holy Spirit living within them and each of us acts as a living stone in this worldwide temple that God now lives in. And because we have a living Spirit of Christ within us, we are protected internally from the enemy.

So the question that's often raised in the minds of Christians is does the indwelling Spirit of Christ protect us from ever becoming demon-possessed? And I believe I can give an unqualified answer to that and it's yes, it does. I believe what John says in verse 4, what he says there says it all. It says it is demons who are in this world and John says, addressing believers: *He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* Sad to say, I think the reason why there's so much confusion over this is not because demons can't occupy the body of genuine believers, they can't. It's because there are so many who think they are genuine believers who in fact are not. I mean you can search the Bible from beginning to end, you will not find a single instance of a genuine

born again believer in Christ being possessed by a demon. You'll find numerous occasions where people are demon-possessed but in every case you will see they were not believers. And the reason is obvious. I mean a demon cannot occupy something that's already occupied and occupied by something stronger than he is.

Listen to how Jesus explained this in his words in *Matthew 12*. This is Jesus. He says: *"When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."*

What Jesus is describing, he's describing demon possession literally as spiritual squatters, and they're taking over an unoccupied house. You know, I've read numerous occasions of this actually happening physically. I mean today in certain places where there is existing legislation, squatters, they can come in and physically occupy a property in what is called an "adverse possession." Laws that were originally designed to protect people from wealthy landlords buying up whole areas and leaving it

abandoned, they're now being used by people to literally come in and occupy unoccupied structures. And I understand the context of where Jesus made his observation, where he's talking about demons occupying unoccupied souls. He was at the point at this point of castigating the crowds that were following him for seeing all of the miracles that he had done and yet refusing to respond with faith. In fact these folks were just looking for bigger and better miracles, they were looking to get fed, they were proving over and over again that they were in fact unbelievers. And Jesus describes people whose souls are similarly unoccupied as souls that are ripe for the taking. Any demon attempting to enter the spirit of a genuinely born again believer would encounter the presence of God himself in the form of his Holy Spirit already there. And trust me, that's the last thing that he wants. I mean, how unpleasant must it be for a demon to encounter a soul occupied by one who is infinitely greater than he. Again, as John says: *For he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* So the most basic of questions concerning demon possession is can a demon possess a born again believer in Christ, and the answer is no, he cannot. There are no squatters rights that exist particularly for a home that's already occupied by the Spirit of God himself. And again, the caveat is there are many who claim to be born again believers in Christ who are in fact no such thing.

Well, the second question is: Is the devil capable of being omnipresent and omniscient? And the Bible's quite clear that only God is omniscient, only God has the ability to read our thoughts, which he does. And only God is omnipresent. The devil can't be in two places at once. Demons are certainly powerful but they have nowhere near the power that God has. Well, can a demon harass a born again believer? The answer is absolutely. But a lot of that harassment depends upon the spiritual health of the believer. I mean you have the Spirit of Christ within you but you also have these warnings from God. In *1 Thessalonians 5:19* he says: *Do not quench the Spirit.* In *Ephesians 4* he says: *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* How do you do that? You quench and you grieve the Spirit of Christ by engaging in sin. You see, the power of the Holy Spirit within you is at its greatest when you're living the life that Christ intended for you and it's at its lowest ebb when you ignore the Spirit's conviction by sinning.

Probably the best analogy I've heard about the relationship of demons to believers as opposed to unbelievers is that of fleas on a dog. For a born again believer a demon is no more than a flea forced to harass from the outside rather than the inside. Make no mistake about it, a dog can certainly be weakened and harassed and made absolutely miserable by fleas, but they're always on the

outside as opposed to some kind of disease which operates on the inside. A born again believer in Christ is protected internally by the presence of God's Holy Spirit; an un-believer is not. A demon can legitimately take up residence within an unbeliever as his spiritual throne room is unoccupied. A born again believer in Christ has the Spirit of Christ living in him, so that just can't happen.

Well how about this one, can a demon read my mind? Well, no, he cannot. He can make assumptions based on human behavior, and believe me, these creatures have observed human behavior 24-7, 365 for literally thousands of years. They can make pretty accurate assessments and predictions as to what you expect they can and will do and they love to have you think they're reading your mind but they can't. I've said this over and over again, but you have to understand, we are at war with these creatures. I mean the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness have been engaged in this war ever since the Garden of Eden, and we will be continually engaged until Christ finally returns. We have this incredible advantage of knowing Christ. The Spirit of Christ within us not only protects us but it also gives us the ability to recognize the attempts of the antichrist to diminish who Christ is. Again, John says: *You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

So John next answers what used to perplex me for years. I couldn't understand why people responded to the gospel like they do. But here's why. This is according to John. This is verse 5. He says: *They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.*

One of the greatest difficulties for me was to realize that -- and I had this -- I used to carry this burden all the time. I felt like we have the secret of eternal life, we have the very thing that philosophers and seekers pursue sometimes going to the ends of the earth in order to get and nobody seems interested. Start to talk about it, they put their hands up, say, no, no, no, no thanks, not interested. I mean I always thought that we were operating from a neutral playing field, that if you presented your argument in a compelling way, people would see the reason and the logic behind it and maybe be attracted to that if not to the final end product. I mean the idea that God became a man, that he lived out a perfect life, that he went to the cross offering up that perfect life to redeem his sheep because there was no other way for God to be perfectly just and perfectly merciful than for him to judge us guilty and then pay the ultimate price for that guilt. I mean, I

at least expected that people would be attracted to the reasonableness of Christianity's answer to the way the world is the way it is, but that was a big mistake. And again John explains exactly why. He says: *They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us.*

And what John is saying here is that the world has its own tuned in frequency and that those who are in the world are predisposed to hear it. Paul in his letter to Timothy warned him that people would be far more attracted to people who tickled their ears than they would be to people who preached God's word and speaking -- quote -- "from the viewpoint of the world" is what tickles our ears. And it's all part of the fallenness of this world and its general rebellion against God. We're in 1 John, remember in 1 John, remember what he said just a chapter ago, he said: *Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.* And Jesus himself said in *John 15: If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

The bottom line is the world hears what it wants to hear. It's been that way since the fall of Adam. There's really nothing new

under the sun. The false teachers who plagued the church in John's day have not changed an iota from the false gospel they were preaching then to the false gospel they're preaching now. They simply surround it with brand new jargons and brand new applications. And case in point is one Richard Rohr. This is someone I've mentioned before, he's written a whole bunch of best selling so-called Christian books on Christian theology. And it so happens this these books contain the exact same false teaching that John warned about two thousand years ago. I'm picking on him because he's become the front runner. If you look at all the websites about false teachers and that, his name pops up number one. He's the front runner in the race of who most closely resembles the spirit of antichrist today.

There was an article in *The New Yorker* entitled "Richard Rohr Reorders the Universe" by Eliza Griswold. It basically tells in capsule view the story of Richard. It says this: "Rohr is slight, with a white beard and the starry eyes of a person who spends long periods in silence. Over the past four decades, he has gained a devoted following for his provocative vision of Christianity. Rohr wakes around 5:45 a.m. each day and spends an hour praying wordlessly. After that, he heads to the center and leads a morning session that includes a twenty-minute contemplation, a daily gospel reading, and the ringing of a Buddhist singing bowl. The center's

classes also include Hindu and yogic methods of integrating the body into prayer, along with teachings drawn from indigenous spiritual traditions that focus on the sacredness of the earth. More conservative Christians tend to orient their theology around Jesus—his death and resurrection, which made salvation possible for those who believe. Rohr thinks that this focus is misplaced. The universe has existed for thirteen billion years; it couldn't be, he argues, that God's loving, salvific relationship with creation began only two thousand years ago, when the historical baby Jesus was placed in the musty hay of a manger, and that it only became widely knowable to humanity around six hundred years ago, when the printing press was invented and Bibles began being mass-produced. Instead, in his most recent book, 'The Universal Christ,' which came out last year, Rohr argues that the spirit of Christ is not the same as the person of Jesus. Christ—essentially, God's love for the world—has existed since the beginning of time, suffuses everything in creation, and has been present in all cultures and civilizations. Jesus is an incarnation of that spirit, and following him is our 'best shortcut' to accessing it. But this spirit can also be found through the practices of other religions, like Buddhist meditation, or through communing with nature. Rohr has arrived at this conclusion through what he sees as an orthodox Franciscan reading of scripture. 'This is not heresy, universalism, or a cheap version of Unitarianism,' he writes.

'This is the Cosmic Christ, who always was, who became incarnate in time, and who is still being revealed.'

Well unfortunately Mr. Rohr's work is indeed heresy and it does preach universalism whether or not it's a cheap or expensive version of universalism is immaterial. The point is, the reason why Rohr is comfortable with Buddhism, Hinduism and yogic understanding of his work because he doesn't see Jesus as God in the flesh who came to die on a cross for our sins. In fact he sees that as primitive and barbaric.

Rohr is quoted as saying of the cross: "I believe that Jesus' death on the cross is a revelation of the infinite and participatory love of God, not some bloody payment required by God's offended justice to rectify the problem of sin. Such a story line is way too small and problem-oriented." And as far as the Bible and evangelical understanding of it, Rohr says: "The Jewish Scriptures, which are full of anecdotes of destiny, failure, sin and grace, offer almost no self-evident philosophical or theological conclusions that are always true. We even have four, often conflicting versions of the life of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is no one clear theology of God, Jesus, or history presented, despite our attempt to pretend there is."

I was reading a review by Os Guinness of his book. He summed up Rohr's theology by quoting Reinhold Niebuhr's description so much of what you see in contemporary theology today, he says it's "a God without wrath bringing men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of Christ without a Cross." I mean to capsulize it, the bottom line according to Rohr, the Christ Spirit is in all the universe in every single part of it. Jesus is simply an incarnation of the universal Christ Spirit which consists of everything in all creation. And according to the Rohr, he is Christ, I am Christ, you are Christ, his dog is Christ, the trees are Christ, everything in all creation is Christ. Well, Jesus describes in detail the lie that that teaching is. This is Jesus' own words in *Matthew 24*. He says: *Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*

Alisa Childers says of Rohr: "He implicitly denies the deity of Jesus. He writes: 'We spent a great deal of time worshiping the messenger and trying to get other people to do the same. [Jesus] did ask us several times to follow him, and never once to worship him.'"

This is the kind of games that are played here. See, what Rohr doesn't tell you is that Jesus was worshiped repeatedly and that he never refused it. You know in Matthew 2:11, we have Jesus worshiped as a baby. It says: *And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.* In Matthew 14 we have Jesus worshiped for calming the storm by his disciples. It says: *And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."* In Matthew 28 we have Jesus risen from the dead. It says: *So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.*

What Rohr and a host of other antichrists count on is folks not going back to the word of God and checking up on what it is they claim. They rely largely on our ignorance to get their teachings across. The apostle John dealt with people unwilling to imagine that God would actually become flesh, and today we deal with false teachers unwilling to believe that the one who became flesh was actually God. And it turns out that Richard Rohr is just like the Jehovah's Witnesses, just like the Mormons, and just like the Muslims in that they all are speaking the very same thing and it's just what the spirit of antichrist pursues. Again to repeat Daniel

Akin, he says, "The spirit of antichrist always diminishes the person and work of Christ. It chips away at His deity and rejects His work of atonement. The antichrist spirit thinks and then teaches incorrectly concerning who Jesus Christ is and what Jesus Christ has done. The 'hub' of Christianity is the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal and divine Son of God."

Well, what surfaces in all of this confusion is the very same response to Jesus that John was warning us about 2,000 years ago. He said: *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.*

We've been told over and over again of late that evangelicals and conservative Christians are in a state of crisis, that folks are leaving the church in droves because the church is so restrictive, so unloving, so unkind, that people are seeking out other venues of spirituality; they're deconstructing, we're told. That means that more and more people are examining what it is they believe and why they believe it and deciding that belief in the Bible as the revealed inerrant word of God and Jesus as our substitutionary sin bearer is just too much to believe. Christian novelist Flannery

O'Connor stated the point very succinctly, very bluntly. She said, "The truth does change according to our ability to stomach it." We can't stomach the Jesus of the Bible so we simply change it to suit what we can stomach. And if you put that in the context of what John was facing in his day and how he responded, it sounds astoundingly prescient in the way he portrays how progressive Christianity is attempting to reshape what the Bible and Christianity has historically claimed.

Tim Challies, Tim Challies is a blogger, he sums it up very well. Let me just read to you his words. He says: "It's a good time to be a false teacher and to espouse deadly doctrine. It seems that today's most brazen heretic will be granted a hearing and, in all likelihood, a book deal. Novelty is appealing, orthodoxy boring. It's the ones who sound the warning and issue the challenge that bear the risk—the risk of being labelled 'haters.' There's more patience for those who smilingly subvert the truth than for those who boldly defend it. Conviction is a sign of arrogance, while humility is expressed in uncertainty. Love, it seems, requires us to bear patiently with any amount of error. And this kind of love, we are told, is modeled after Jesus. Jesus did not judge, Jesus welcomed all opinions, Jesus would have accepted different kinds of teachings—so long as those teachings contained love and hints of truth. A quick scan of the gospels, however, shows that this

impression is a far cry from the Jesus of the Bible. It shows that society has reimagined Jesus through the relativism of our day. When Jesus interacted with people who were seeking, wandering, or misguided, he was invariably compassionate. He answered them with patience and gentleness. But when Jesus engaged with religious hypocrites and false teachers, he responded with righteous fury and bold conviction."

See, our task today, it is virtually the same as it was in Jesus and John's day. Those who are seeking and wandering and misguided, to those we must respond with patience and gentleness; but to those religious hypocrites and false teachers, with righteous fury and bold conviction. *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.* Let's pray.

Father, I just, I know this is a hard lesson, this is a hard truth and people are offended at the idea of boldly standing down those who are teaching falsely. I think you can do both. I was very polite and very kind to this man who I spoke with on the phone. I told him that what you're selling is poison. But I said to him politely, again, I just, we are surrounded by so many people who

are either completely ignorant or without any understanding of what the scripture has or easily and gullibly drawn into these things because they don't check, they don't act like Bereans, they don't see is what this guy saying scriptural. I just pray, Lord, for again the Spirit of Christ within us, I believe every one of us who knows Jesus has that spirit. I pray you would give us the ability to understand that when something doesn't ring right, when something doesn't ring as truth, that we would pursue and understand it, and I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.