

Beloved, try the spirits...

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Dear heavenly Father, most gracious and holy Lord, how excellent is thy name. Lord, how we stand in need of thee every hour, every moment, every minute of our day. Lord, I pray that at this hour thou would undertake for me, that thy Spirit would be upon me to bring forth thy word. O Lord, may you have mercy on our souls. May you open up our hearts and our minds that we may commune with thee, Lord, that we be thy people. O Lord, search our hearts. May thy Spirit reveal that which is true this day. Lord, may you lead us unto thee and you give us a humble mind and you sit us at thy feet and may you instruct us in thy righteousness. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Our text this morning will come from 1 John 4:1, not the entire verse but just the first part of it. We will be looking at quite a few passages this morning but our text, as I said, will come, the whole concept, the whole message will come from 4:1a which reads this way,

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.

That's our text today. As I read that and as the Holy Spirit searches my heart at the beginning in the depth of what John is saying, the first thing I see and it is love: the love of Christ and the love for the people of God. John when he wrote this epistle, when he wrote these words, you could almost hear or read in this a begging, a begging of John at the throne of grace, asking the Lord for this special mercy, this special grace, this grace that indeed we can try the spirits. We are told right here not to believe every spirit. That's a very deep thing to say. We don't look at things sometimes as being different plurality of spirits in this world. Maybe it's easier to see them in the world than it is in ourselves because we do have a plurality of spirits that we listen to. You have heard me many times from this pulpit say those words that we are in dire need to hear the voice of the Shepherd. Every day of our life to be led into truth. Sometimes I stand back at the things and the events that take place in my life, the thoughts that are in my mind and I stand with Pilate sometimes and I say, "Lord, what is truth? Oh Lord, reveal what truth is. Reveal what truth is in my soul." And as these words were penned, "Believe not every spirit," I believe that's the injunction that the Lord would lay on my heart today and I pray that with the same love, the same love of Christ that John wrote to the people of God, would be the same love that constrains me this day to speak to you out of a dire need, a dire need to believe not every spirit but to try the spirits whether they are of God.

It seems that in this life, we and when I say "we" I mean the people of God, they are plagued by superstition. Our whole lives, we have learned things and we have been taught things and superstition tells you to believe everything that you hear. We go to doctors, they are in a place of authority and we believe what they say. We believe those that are in the place of authority, usually we do. And it's that spirit of superstition that we have to be very careful of, be very wary of, because that's what the fallen nature is prone to. On one side, it's ready to believe everything that it's told but on the other side is the idolatry; the other side is not to believe anything because you are judge and jury in your life. You believe that you've been born-again and there's nothing else to teach you, that you're above being taught, that God has set up residence in your life and that's all that took place and that was enough. You go on life and you live according to your creed, according to your knowledge, according to your will. These are the things that we're enjoying today to believe not every spirit.

There are many spirits that go out in this world. The Bible is very descriptive on those spirits. We have a couple amongst us today that are going through something very trying in their life this week and there are going to be many spirits that come to you: there will be the spirit of fear; there is going to be the spirit of antichrist; there is going to be the spirit of error. But you're not alone in that because all of us will have that spirit come to us this week, this day, maybe this hour. It's a dire, dire need to believe not every spirit but to try the spirits whether they are of God. Now listen: I can't stand before you today and lie to you. I cannot stand before you today and tell you that you have the power to try those spirits. I can't tell you that it's something that you have and all you have to do is pick up the word and try them by the word because that's not true. When a child of God is quickened into new life, the Holy Spirit indwells them. The Holy Spirit leads the child of God into truth. We cannot follow truth. We cannot desire truth. We cannot seek truth without the Holy Spirit leading us there. It is his office. It is his place to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in the life of the believer, in the life of the true child of God.

That's what I want to talk about today but I also want you to understand that as the Spirit is leading the child of God to Christ to reveal what the true spirits are in this life, there is another spirit. There is another spirit of Satan; there is another spirit of this world. There is another spirit in your flesh that simultaneously is working on the carnal side of you to lead you into that truth. Only the Holy Ghost today can judge between you and I, can judge between these holy Scriptures to reveal to you what is it that Christ says to the soul. What is it that the Holy Spirit leads the child of God to see. What is it and what are these spirits that are of God.

That's what I want to look at today. As I said, I hope you have your Bibles handy because we're going to through them quite a bit. The first place that I'd like to go is over in Isaiah 11. The first spirit of God that we have in front of us this morning is the spirit of understanding and the spirit of wisdom. We must know who's that is and Isaiah 11 tells us that in the first two verses, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Of course we know that this is Messianic. It's speaking of Christ to come. "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him," the

fullness of the spirit. It is the fullness of the spirit that was upon Christ. It was without measure. In you and I, it is in measure. If we be in Christ Jesus, the child of God is given the spirit of Christ to reside in him and it dwells in us and it reveals the truth of who Christ is, what spirit there is. I want you to understand that when John wrote that, he said "try the spirits." He didn't say "try the words." We hear a lot of words in this life; we hear a lot of voices in this life. And it can be from anyone or anything. It's not the words, it's the spirit of the one that you're trying. What spirit is in that person? What spirit is in them? But first judgment must begin at the house of God. It must begin in the child of God. Sound discernment, the leading to this wisdom right here, "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding." This is why I brought you here. I want you to see that in Christ is where wisdom is. In Christ is where understanding is. You and I when we failed in Adam, we lost wisdom. We lost understanding. We are in dire need and dependence upon the Holy Ghost to reveal what that wisdom is and to reveal what that understanding is.

Understand that and only by him will you understand that. Sometimes I think we get so much head knowledge or so much of what we think Christ is, we then walk and we act upon that. You're going to see the rest of these spirits that are revealed in the word, what spirit is of God and how they all work together in the child of God. Then we're going to look at a few spirits that work in the world and how they work against the child of God. That's what I pray the Holy Ghost reveals today because we need to know every day that there are spirits. Satan is a spirit. He is the prince of the power of the air. Our flesh and our evil nature has a wicked spirit about it. It will never choose Christ. It will never choose anything good and when I define "good," I define it as Christ who is goodness, who is the only righteous one.

"And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." So the first thing we see this morning as the Lord in his word and what he's given to John is to try the spirits. "Believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they be of God," and the first one is the wisdom and all wisdom and understanding must come from him. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon wrote of wisdom, the wisdom of Christ. He defined it as Christ all the way through. He kept comparing it to his wisdom: how his wisdom was lacking. And this is the one who asked for wisdom and was given wisdom but he compared that wisdom that came from above to the wisdom that he had and it was lacking, the wisdom that he had. His desire was always to exalt the wisdom of Christ as being the one who has all knowledge, as being the one who has all understanding that we see here. Without measure it was given to him. He has all knowledge, all wisdom, and as he stands and opens the storehouses for his children, this is the wisdom that he gives, the wisdom of him. That's why Paul said, "We have the mind of Christ." It's the wisdom of Christ and that's as you're trying the spirits in yourself first as judgment begins here. We ask the Lord, "Lord, is this your wisdom leading me here? Is it the understanding of you that's in these Scriptures?" That's how the Lord leads us to try the spirits because we hear his voice. His voice must be in it. His voice must be leading.

As I told you at the beginning, there is always that false voice. That's why we're enjoined not to believe every spirit but the spirit of Christ is the wisdom of Christ and as you walk in this life and as situations as the Lord's providence brings them into your life and you start to compare them, "Is this of the Lord? Did the Lord do this?" The Holy Spirit leads you to Christ's wisdom. We reason things out all the time in our minds, "If A plus B equals C, then C plus B must equal A." That's what we do all the time. We reason as we say, "Well, this door is open," or "God wouldn't have brought this if he didn't mean me to do this." Is that the wisdom of Christ? Have you ever been brought something in your life to try you as Abraham was? As Abraham put his son on the altar? What was he led to see? What was he tried in? The faith of the Son of God. We'll get to that.

But the first one is the understanding, the knowledge and the wisdom of Christ and it starts with Christ and it ends with Christ. That's the first spirit that's of God. The second one is found right in the same verse at the end, "and of the fear of the LORD." The spirit of the word of God in the fear of the Lord. You see, we see that word "fear" and we stumble at it because we know there's a bad fear but this fear is a godly, reverent fear. It's a phileo fear. Do you know what that means? A fatherly love fear. We all have had fathers of our flesh that we have feared. We all have feared them in a way of reverence. We didn't want to disappoint them. We wanted to obey them. That's what godly fear does. That's what the fear of God does.

In our text this morning which tells us to try the spirits, the spirit that is of God is a fear of God. Now, I want you to turn with me over to Proverbs 14 real quick. This is the fear of God that we don't necessarily think about a lot and that's found in Proverbs 14:27, "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." Do you understand that the child of God when the Lord puts his fear in their heart, in their soul, that it gives them...it is a true fear. It's a conscience in the fear. It's a fear in the conscience. It's a fear in the conscience to not partake in things, to not do things, that everything isn't expedient for me. It's that word that's saying to you, "No, this isn't good for me. It doesn't matter how many people have walked that way or how good it looks to me." There's something there that's keeping you from it.

That's what this says, "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life" to the child of God. You say, "Oh, what does it do?" Well, it causes him to depart from the snares of death. What do you think the snares of death are? Do we sit in our seats today and we think that the fears of death are all these concrete things like people breaking into our house, that's a threat of death, and if we get in a car wreck, that's a fear of death. Those are all physical things. What causes your spiritual death? Sin. What causes your spiritual death? Loving the world. What causes your spiritual death? Following after your flesh.

I tell you, two of the words that are the most powerful words in the Scriptures when the Lord brings them to your soul is in that parable where that one pulled down his barns and he built them back up and he thought everything was good. I want you to understand: he's living in his knowledge; he's living in the knowledge that he had and what he believed was right in his own eyes. As he went along in that sin, though his life was over, the Lord said, "Tonight I require your soul. Thou fool." Thou fool. We get so immune to the things

that we do. Our flesh tells us even if we're arguing with our flesh, even if our conscience has already reasoned, we say, "Well, this won't hurt anything. It won't be that bad. It will be over with in a little bit of time," or whatever it is that we reason these things with. For that one, it never happened. "Thou fool." It was over. His life was over. There was no repentance. That was it. The Lord called him a fool. We would look at this, if we looked at it from the outside and looked at it and go, "Oh, well, that person's been very blessed. Look at him. They've got more. Well, logically speaking, look how much God has given you. Let's build up barns. We've got to get bigger barns." That only makes logical sense, doesn't it? Thou fool. Your heart was so enamored with that. It's death. It's the snare of death.

"The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." So yes, the spirit of fear is a good spirit. It's a spirit that is of God. It's a tender conscience that's made to walk circumspectly, to desire to know Christ in every situation. His wisdom but it's also a spirit of prayer. Turn with me over to Zechariah 12. You know, a child of God is always a praying child of God. There may be ebbs and flows of that prayer life, there may be times it seems like it's nonexistent but it is. Romans 8:26 tells us that "the Holy Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot even be uttered," that we don't even know what he's approaching the Lord on our behalf for. But right here in Zechariah 12:10, we see where this spirit of prayer comes from, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." I will pour out upon my house, my people, I will pour upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications. They will be praying people. They will be brought to the throne of grace not as a duty, not presumptuously, but in a trial in their soul and a need in their soul and a desire in their soul to commune with the Lord. They will be brought in this spirit of grace and of supplication.

But I want you to look at the rest of this verse, what it produces, "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced," sin, your sin. The spirit of prayer always is in a humble estate for the child of God. How can we come boldly in humility? That's in Christ, knowing the assurance of Christ that he has brought us there. Not boldly in presumption but boldly in Christ. That's what we have for us here but look how it begins, "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." So the child of God is poured out upon the spirit of prayer and the prayer life of the child of God is ever seeing that he is a sinner, that he is in dire need of the blood of Christ to be applied to him every day, every hour, every moment because it is sin that separates our thoughts in our minds from Christ. It is sin that gets in between us and him. Then when the Lord reveals that, there is a great mourning of the soul. There's a great mourning and a desire to be nurtured in the soul, a desire of the soul to be healed and that healing is in the blood of the Lamb. It is in the blood of the Lamb only.

So, so far the spirits that be of God we've seen: the spirit of understanding and wisdom; the spirit of fear; the spirit of prayer. But now I want to show you a spirit of a tender heart. A tender heart. Now remember what we're doing here: we're trying the spirits. Are these the spirits that the Lord has revealed to you that are of Christ? A godly fear. The

wisdom of Christ. A spirit of prayer and now the spirit of a tender heart. Turn with me over to Ezekiel 36, beginning in 26 and 27, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." I will come and I will break that hardened heart. Last week we heard that in the message of the pastor. The hardened heart. We are still susceptible to a hardened heart. We get hardened against the things that God reveals. We get hardened when we hear about trials, when we hear about afflictions, when we hear about persecutions. We get hardened by that. We need the Lord Jesus Christ to make our heart tender, to give us a heart that is tender to his word.

"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." A tender heart. "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Do you see his work? Do you see what he does? "And ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." That's how. This isn't any Arminian message of what you must try. This is what the Lord has done. This is what the finished work of Christ is. This is what he does in the soul of the child of God. He tries the spirits by his Spirit. Praise be to God that he does.

When I read the text, beloved, John says, "Listen, dear ones, wake up. Wake up and know when Christ speaks to your soul it's different than when the spirits of the world speak to your soul." We can't get caught up in the idea of this easy believism that everything is joy, everything is happiness and that there are no trials, there is no hardship in you soul. That's not true. It's the furthest thing from these Scriptures. Yes, the Lord must give us a spirit of a tender heart.

I want to show you an example of this real quick if you'll turn with me now to 2 Chronicles 34. This is King Josiah. I told you we were going to go to quite a few places today and we are. Look at this in 2 Chronicles 34:27. This is Josiah's heart now, "Because thine heart was tender," this is what a tender heart leads to. The Lord said, "Because your heart was tender," well, how did it get there? We just saw that. We just saw the Lord's work in his people, how their heart is tenderized, if you will, how it's made tender to his word. "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God," that's what it leads to, the humbleness of Christ, "when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD." What did he rend his clothes for? What was he in great lamenting over? Sin. The sin of his people. The sin of himself. That's what a tender heart does. That's what we saw in the spirit of prayer. The Lord brings us there not in haughtiness, not in pride, but the spirit of a tender heart is one that's humble. It's humble before the Lord and he humbles us by showing us what we are without him, what we're capable of without him. And when he does that, then he lifts us up to see what we are in him, what he has done.

So that is the spirit of a tender heart and that is the Lord's working. Now what about the spirit of faith? Now we're going to spend some time in the New Testament. Please turn over to 2 Corinthians 4. I think this is so important and I don't use this flippantly when I say that the Lord said, "Try the spirits. Believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether

they be of God. Beloved, do this." In the strength of the Lord, as the Lord leads. How much of this examination do you have in your life? How much of your day is void of trying the spirits? And then to see how many spirits go out in this world. But this spirit is also the spirit of faith. Look at 4:13, "We having the same spirit of faith." The spirit of faith, Paul said. He's writing to the believers at Corinth and he says, "We have the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." The faith that was given to David. The faith that was given to Paul. The faith that was given to Josiah we just saw. The faith of all the saints, given to Moses. The faith that was given to Abraham. The faith that was given throughout all of the word of God is the same faith that's given to the child of God today. It's a faith of the Son of God and that's the spirit that the Holy Spirit leads us to see. The spirit of faith is Christ faith. It's the work that he has done. It is the gift of Christ to give and to believe only what the Holy Spirit reveals. That's what faith does. Faith is the vehicle that Christ gives to lay hold of Christ. You and I cannot lay hold of Christ. We can't make Christ come to our soul. We can't force Christ into the Scriptures. We can't force him into our soul. But faith, the Holy Spirit reveals the faith of Christ and it's an eye opener and it leads us and it causes that lively walk and it causes that active walk in the child of God's life to approach unto Christ, to live unto Christ, to walk after Christ.

That is the spirit of faith. That spirit of faith is believing what Christ has done, credits this word as being the truth. It doesn't haggle with it. It doesn't rest with the Scriptures. Faith leads us to the feet of Christ to be instructed. It breaks down that hard heart and it receives what the Holy Ghost is ready to reveal: Christ in us, the hope of glory. But it's also the spirit of a sound mind. That one's a big one. Turn with me to 2 Timothy 1. As I said earlier in the sermon: this week we will be challenged a lot by spirits in this world. Those that are going through this very hard time in their life, the spirits will come. But look at verse 7, it says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear." We've already seen the spirit of the fear of God but this fear is not what he's given us, the tormenting fear. In fact, it's only his love that we're told in 1 John that casts out this fear. The spirit of fear is not from our Lord. It's not from the Lord to his children.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." We're going to talk about love in a minute but power, love and a sound mind. The power must come from the Holy Ghost as we've said all day. I hope that's your testimony. I hope the testimony in your soul today is, "I am nothing without the revelation of Christ in my soul. I can't get to him. I can't think upon him. I can't think pure thoughts." And you can't.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." I don't know about you but what a gift that is. When your mind is not sound, it is usually in fear, it is usually unrest, it is usually wrestling, it is anxious, it is thinking encumbered about many things as Martha was. Oh, it's fearing everything. Everywhere you go, it's fearing something. Everything you do, it's fearing something. Every headline you read, it's fear. Every situation that comes into your life, the first thing is fear. But a sound mind, when the Lord gives a sound mind, what do you think a sound mind is? It's the presence of him. It's him in your mind. It's the mind of Christ to rest in his finished

work. That's the only place a sound mind can be and a sound mind is not entangled or not tripped up and not enticed by everything and every whim of the flesh or in this world. As I said today at the beginning, we are in dire need to hear the voice of the Shepherd. We are in dire need to hear the Holy Spirit reveal what the spirit is of God. But we have three enemies that are pulling in a different spirit and you sit there and you say, "Well, I'm outnumbered. I am. I'm outnumbered. There are three of them pulling against me but only one for me." But that one is greater than all three of them together. In fact, that one is a three-in-one itself: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.

And none of these powers and none of these spirits will win the day in the child of God's life. Oh, they may win the battle for a while. We backslide quite a bit. We listen to the voice of the world; we listen to the voice of our flesh, the lust of our flesh; we listen to the voice of Satan who dresses up as an angel of light. When that takes place, we are certain to fall. Most certain to fall. And as John cried out, "O beloved, beloved, what spirit has a hold of you today? Try them." It's the same thing I say to you today. The same thing. My heart weeps. It weeps from the standpoint that all of God's children in this room have suffered the same battles that I do every day, the same enemies. And I know how fierce they are. I know. I know how much we need a sound mind, how much we need Christ to set up residence in our mind to put all of these false spirits away. Oh yeah, we need him. We need him every moment. I hope the Lord is revealing that to you today.

Then as we just mentioned, the spirit of love. Turn back to Romans 5 real quick. Romans 5:5, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Now let me ask you something as soberly as you could give an answer in your soul right now: what do you think the love of God shed in your heart is going to cause you to love? What does it cause you to love today? Because the love of God that's shed in the heart by the Holy Ghost in the child of God, it leads him to love Christ supremely. It leads him to love the people of God. But now listen to this disclaimer: the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Ghost lead the people of God to love Christ in the people of God, not your flesh. Do you understand that? The love of God that is shed abroad in our heart, that love is the love of Christ, it's the love for Christ and Christ in his people. There is no Christ in the world. There is no Christ in the flesh. I won't even say the other one.

So the love of God that is shed abroad, this is the testing of the spirits. That's what the Greek is for "try," test them. Test the spirits. The love that you have, understand this, what the Bible calls "love" is love for Christ. It's the 1 Corinthians 13 love, that's Christ love. Anything other than that love is inordinate love. If you love and partake in the world, it's inordinate. If you love and indulge in the flesh in someone that you love, it's inordinate. The love of Christ is what is shed abroad in the child of God's heart and it's pure because it's the love of Christ. We use that word a lot, "I love chocolate. I love this. I love that." That's inordinate love. The love of Christ is a reverent, holy, godly love for Christ and Christ's people and the work of Christ in his people.

The last spirit that I want to speak about on this side is the spirit of integrity and uprightness. You see, the spirit that is true, the spirit that we are to try, the spirit that is of

God, leads to integrity and uprightness, holiness, godliness. Turn with me over to Psalms, Psalm 25. I believe this will be our last visit into the Old Testament. It's at the end of Psalm 25, David's Psalm. In verse 20, he says, "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me." David, that soul that had been taught so much that David, you would think, "Listen, this is a king. This is king. Wouldn't you think that the king would have some kind of integrity?" He says, "No Lord, let thy integrity, let thy uprightness preserve me. I'm in need of yours, not mine for I wait on thee. O Lord, cause us to wait for that uprightness," and that goes back to the spirit of prayer. Do we pray over the things that the Lord brings in our life? Because until that takes place, until the Lord gives faith to walk, there won't be any uprightness, there won't be any integrity. Do you know what the opposite of integrity is? It's hypocrisy. It's saying one thing and doing another. Say that you believe something and living a different life. I'm with David, "Lord, I wait on thee. Wait on thee to reveal your integrity, your uprightness." It's the desire in the soul to flee corruptness. It's the vital godliness. It's not calling, as I said last time, not calling light darkness and darkness light. We like to do that. We like to think that we can take the light of Christ and put it in darkness and call it light by doing it. It's sanctified because we're there. That's not true. That's a damnable heresy actually. The light of Christ is where the light of Christ goes, where the light of Christ leads, where the light of Christ is: in the people, in his church. That's what he lit. In this world today. Where the light of Christ is, it's in his church. Everything outside of that is the darkness of this world.

Now, we have looked briefly at the spirits that be of God but what about the ones that John said back in our text here where he said, "Believe not every spirit"? He said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God." Believe not every spirit. Well, he tells us right down here in verse 3 that there's a spirit of antichrist and in verse 6 he calls it "the spirit of error." The spirit of antichrist. Now think about that. That's not a person. I know some of our old brainwashing must of thought that that was a person at one time. I can speak that from my own background but that's not a person. Just think of the word antichrist: anything against Christ. John said, "That spirit is in this world. That spirit is prevalent." It was prevalent in his time, it's prevalent today and the spirit of error.

So what are these spirits that are not of God? The first one that we look at is the spirit of hardness and that's found in Romans 11:7-8. It says, "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Do you know what that blinded is? It's hardness. When you're blinded to the truth, you are hard, you are bitter. You are blind, you are deaf, you are dumb to the truth of Christ. "According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day." That is the spirit of error, the spirit of antichrist. We have talked about what the spirit of Christ is; we have talked about what the spirit in his people is; now these four that I mention now that are on the other side. Don't sit there and think that you're immune to these. That is the point of the message. These are the things that we backslide into, our hardness, it's not a tender heart. We get hardened against God's providence. We get hardened against the messages that we hear. We get hardened when we hear, "Oh, the Lord forbids this? But I like to do

it." We get hardened against it. We're in dire need of the Lord to give us a tender heart to his word, to his will. The opposite of that is this: "eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day." That is a spirit of the world. That is a spirit that is not of God. Do you ever feel that way? Hardened? I do. There are times I just sit by myself and I'm musing and thinking and I'm like, "Aw, I can be so hard." That's not from the Lord. That's a false spirit.

The second one I want to talk about is probably the worst one, it's straight out of hell itself. It's straight from Satan himself and that is the spirit of vain confidence. Now, let that sink down a minute. Vain confidence. The idol of false assurance, false presumption. Turn with me over to Philippians 3:3. Paul says, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." That's what vain confidence is. It's confidence in the flesh. It's confidence in your strength. It's confidence in your wisdom. It's confidence in your knowledge. It's confidence in what you know. It's confidence in what you've done in your life. It's confidence in what you think you're going to do in your life. Remember what the Lord said to Paul when Paul had the thorn in the flesh? "My grace is sufficient for thee. My grace is made perfect in," what? "Weakness." The child of God and only the child of God is shown that he is weak. That he is weak, that he is in total dependence upon his Lord. The vain confidence in this life of, "Oh, everything will be okay. I know it. I'm just going to do it. I'm going to get it over with." It's vain confidence. When the Lord teaches your soul, he shows you that you are weak and that you are in need of his grace. "My grace is made perfect in weakness." Humbled. No false assurance there. No, "I can do this. I can do that." But the demeanor is brought to sit at the feet of God. It is brought to humility, heavenly-mindedness, deadness to the world, godly fear.

That's what the Lord works to counter vain confidence. That's what Paul said here, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." How much do you confide and have confidence in your flesh? Proverbs 14:16 says that "the fool rageth and is confident." How confident are you today? Where is your confidence? Is it in something, some ability you think you have? Some knowledge you think you have? And if it's worldly knowledge, how vain is that to think that that's been imparted by God?

Vain confidence leads to pride and worldliness, earthly-mindedness, self-indulgence, carnality and dead assurance. Do you know what dead assurance is? Well, I've already mentioned it, "Oh, it doesn't matter. Everything will be fine." I told you that as a child I had that dead assurance. I used to, when I had these monumental things in my life, I always made believe that it was the day after. That's all that got me through it. I had a major surgery. I remember it was August 1st and I kept thinking, "If I just get to August 2nd, my whole life will be okay." That's all I had. That's all I had. That's all I had in here. I had the Lord watching over me but it hadn't been revealed. Vain confidence. That's a scary thing if you're left there. It's a scary thing if that's all you have. You just keep going in this life saying, "Well, things will be okay. This is what's written in the word."

How does the Lord teach his children? Where is the struggle? That brings us to the last two of these and they kind of go hand-in-hand: presumption and irreverence for divine things. That's the first one. This one is the most painful one to see. It's painful for me when I hear this co-authorship, that God is my co-pilot. That's irreverence. It's painful for me to see when I hear that all the time about how, "I'm co-equal with God," or "I can do these things, the Lord is wanting me, he's done his part and now it's my time to do my part." It's very sad. Turn with me to Hebrews 12. I think this is our last place for all of you weary people who have been turning with me to all these places. Look how Hebrews 12 ends, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace," let's hold fast to grace, that's the Greek, "whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." That's how the people of God serve God: with reverence and the fear of the Lord, godly fear.

Then they look at verse 29 and it says, "For our God is a consuming fire." They look at that and they say, "Well, praise be to God. Consume the dross that's in me, Lord. Consume the wickedness. Consume these evil spirits that flood my mind all the time. Consume this false assurance. Consume this vanity that I think when I raise up myself to I'm somebody that I'm not. For God, you are a consuming fire. Consume the filth and the dross that I get polluted with in this world every day. Consume it. O Lord, may I serve you with reverence and godly fear."

Then the last false spirit and I think it goes with this one: thinking lightly of sin. I tell you, you want to know one of the devil's greatest weapons, it's thinking lightly of sin. "Aw, it doesn't matter. Aw, this will pass." Where sin never grieves your soul. You don't talk about sin. Sin is not part of your discussion. Sin is not part of your life. There is no mourning. There is no warring going on. It's just an abstract thing. "Well, if I keep myself from this then I won't be this. Oh, I'm glad I'm not like that person over there. I'm glad I'm not like that one preaching up there today. He struggles with sin every day. I don't struggle with it." Well, I do. I'm not ashamed to say that because I know that my fallen nature is something that the Lord has to mortify every day and I believe he does. He does every time he reveals himself. He is faithful to do so.

I want to go back to our text one more time and we'll finish this right now. "Beloved, O beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." I'll tell you something: it is a promise of my Lord that when he tries the spirits and he reveals them to his children, he will show you what is his. He will remove that which is not his. That doesn't mean to go and live in same vain confidence that, "Oh, I can just be bopping along." No, the child of God is brought to a life of soberness to what he's wrestling with. Soberness is a good word. But one thing I can say, I won't say, I'll just read it in verse 4 to the people of God, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them," "them" is those false spirits, "because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." May the Lord reveal to you today what is of his spirit and what is not.

Dear heavenly Father, may you be pleased to use thy word in the souls of thy children this day for the glory of thee only. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.