

“Discernment”

(Check Your Keys)

1 John 4:1-6

November 24, 2013

(last week)

1 John 3:18 & 24

*Let us not love with word and tongue but in action & in truth...
Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in
him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit
whom He has given us.*

Intro Illustration:

Eureka! Gold... vs. “fools gold”

- a. **Deuteronomy 13:1-4** = *“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, **2**and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, ‘Let us go after other gods,’ which you have not known, ‘and let us serve them,’ **3**you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. **4**You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him.”*

2. N.T. (Teachers/Doctrines)

- a. **Matthew 7:15** = *"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves..."*

- b. **Matthew 24:3-16** = *"As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"***4***Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. **5**For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many. **6**You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. **7**Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. **8**All these are the beginning of birth pains." **9**"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. **10**At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, **11**and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. **12**Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, **13**but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. **14**And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

- c. **Acts 20:29** = *I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.*

- d. **Romans 16:17-19** = *I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 18For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. 19For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent and as to what is evil*
- e. **2 Corinthians 11:3** = *For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.*
- f. **Jude 1:4** = *For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*
- g. **Isaiah 30:8-11** = *Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. 9For these are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction. 10They say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets, "Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. 11Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!"*

- h. **Acts 20:30** = *Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*
- i. **1 Timothy 1:3b** = *“...stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any more...”*
- j. **1 Timothy 6:20-21a** = *Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, **21**which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the faith.*
- k. **2 Timothy 2:14-18** = *Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. **15**Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. **16**Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. **17**Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, **18**who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.*
- l. **2 Peter 2:1** = *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves.*

Today...
1 John 4:1-6 =

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the **spirits** to see whether they are from God, because **many false prophets** have gone out into the **world**.**

1. Do not believe...
 - a. Imperative... this is a command!
 - b. Why not trust? (look back...)
2. Test
 - a. Do you "trust or test?"
 - b. Define "test"
3. Spirit vs. spirit(s)
4. Many false prophets have gone out...
 - A. "The problem is NOT that God is ambiguous... The *problem* is that people are ambivalent." (double-minded) - JDP
 - B. "Do not believe... but test"
 1. Illustrations:
 - a. Like military "passwords" & confirmations
 - b. Like parents/children with strangers...
 2. Spiritual Warfare!
 - a. "False teachers demonize discernment."
- JDP
 - b. Discernment... Virtue or Vice?

So... what's the big deal about discernment?

You might meet the Devil... (disguised as an angel...)

- a. Doubt: "...did God really say..."
- b. Distortion: "...you will be like God..."
- c. Disobedience: "...for you will not surely die"

You might meet the demons...

You might meet the deceivers...

You might meet the deceived...

You might end up damaged or doomed in the darkness.

See **2 Corinthians 13:5**

"You are either for Me or against Me... You are either helping Me to gather or you are scattering." - Jesus

See **Jesus' command in John 7:24** (judge righteously)

*"Do not judge according to appearance,
but judge with righteous judgment."*

Don't judge superficially but supernaturally! - JDP

- A. Trust & apply God's Word authoritatively.
- B. Apply God's Word in FULL & PROPER CONTEXT.
- C. INTERPRET God's Word with/by God's Word.
(Note: Interpretation informs Application)
- D. Accept biblical "mystery," but only if necessary.
- E. Live & Love the Gospel as given in God's Word.

How do you know if you are saved? (see J. Edwards)

The Experience That Counts!

by

Jonathan Edwards

Edwards confronted a series of fundamental questions...

The most crucial question for the human race is this, what are the distinguishing marks of the people who enjoy God's favor, *those who are on their way to heaven?*

So much good and so much bad are mixed up in the church!

The mixture of false religion with true religion has been Satan's greatest weapon against the cause of Christ. This is why we must learn to distinguish between true and false religion, between emotions and experiences which really come from salvation, and imitations which are outwardly attractive and plausible, but false.

Satan deludes people into thinking they are holy, when they really are hypocrites... They destroy Christianity far more effectively than outright enemies do...

PART ONE:

Every genuine disciple of Christ loves him above all else. (Luke 14:26)

A hard heart is a heart which is not easy to move or impress with spiritual emotions. It is a stone - a cold, insensitive, "unfeeling" towards God and holiness.

PART TWO:

Things which do NOT prove that our emotions come from a true experience of salvation.

- 1. If our emotions are: strong and lively.**
- 2. if they produce great effect on the body.**
- 3. if they produce warmth/readiness to discuss Christianity**
- 4. if we did not produce them by our own efforts.**
- 5. if they come to us accompanied by a Bible verse.**
- 6. if there seems to be love in them.**

Unfortunately, love can be imitated.

7. if we experience many kinds of them.

Unsaved people can have all sorts of false emotions that resemble true spiritual emotions.

8. if comfort and joy seem to follow...

Satan can produce a false conviction of sin, a false fear of hell, and a false humility before God. Why should he not then produce a false joy in the gospel...?

9. if they cause us to spend much time in the outward duties of Christian worship.

10. if they cause us to praise God with our mouths.

Israel sang God's praises at the Red Sea, but were soon worshiping the golden calf...

11. if they produce assurance of salvation.

False Christians are not aware of how blind and deceitful their heart is.

“Sadly, ignorance & assurance are often partners.” - JDP

Satan does not attack false assurance...

To encourage assurance in those whose hearts are worldly and dead, is to encourage false assurance. *When our experiences and emotions become more important to us than God (and His Word)... then we are in danger!*

12. just because they give a moving account of them.

Scripture tells us to judge by a person's life, not his talk.

PART THREE:

The distinguishing signs of TRUE spiritual emotions.

1. True spiritual emotions arise from Spiritual, supernatural, & divine influences on the heart.

The Holy Spirit within Christians produces results which are in harmony with the Spirit's own true nature.

2. The object of spiritual emotion is the loveliness of spiritual things, NOT our own self interest.

*Men may love a God of their own imaginations...
when they have no love at all for the One true God!*

*Anything is lovely to a selfish person...
if it advances his or her self-interest.*

3. Spiritual emotions are based on the moral excellence of spiritual things.

*What a true Christian loves about spiritual things is their holiness.
They love God for the beauty of God's holiness.*

4. Spiritual emotions arise out of spiritual understanding.

Spiritual understanding sees what is actually in Scripture;
it does not make a new meaning for it!

5. Spiritual emotions bring a conviction of the reality of divine things.

A person can only see & feel the desperate depravity of his own heart, if the Holy Spirit gives him the ability to taste the sweetness of holiness and the bitterness of sin.

6. Spiritual emotions always exist alongside spiritual humiliation.

Spiritual humiliation is the essence of Christian self-denial.

7. Spiritual emotions always exist alongside a change of nature.

8. True spiritual emotions differ from false ones by promoting a Christ-like spirit of love, humility, peace, forgiveness and compassion.

9. True spiritual emotions soften the heart, and exist alongside a Christian tenderness of spirit.

False emotions may seem to melt the heart for a time, but in the end they harden it.

10. True spiritual emotions, unlike false ones, have a beautiful symmetry and balance.

Christ's compassion for the people's souls moved him to teach them, & his compassion for their bodies moved him to feed them.

11. True spiritual emotions produce a longing for deeper holiness, while false emotions rest satisfied in themselves.

The best sign is a longing for a holier heart & a holier life.

12. The fruit of true spiritual emotions is Christian practice.

The softened heart & tender spirit of the true Christian make him painfully sensitive to sin, creating a profound influence & impact on the way he lives his life.

13. Christian practice is the chief sign to others of a convert's sincerity.

Words are cheap.

14. Christian practice is a sure sign of conversion to a person's own conscience.

Holy motives produce an obedient lifestyle.

True religious experience is where we love God, and our love makes us choose him, and obey him, and stand by him in all difficult & testing situations.

Don't ever forget...

God accepts us as righteous because of Christ's obedience, not ours.

15. Conclusion.

If our emotions do not have their basis in an enlightened grasp of God's truth, those emotions are not spiritual in nature, no matter how powerful the emotions may be.

What a lot of trouble the church would have escaped if Christians had kept to what Scripture teaches about a true experience of salvation!

2 *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;*

3 *and every spirit that does **not confess Jesus** is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.*

4 *You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

*** See the eagle / "Overcomers" graphic

The eternal question(s) are:

- a. Who is in you?
- b. How do you know?
- c. ANSWER:
 - Miracle
 - Messiah
 - Mission

5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

Where is your heart from?

You'll know by where it longs to go to... AND...

You'll know by where it consistently goes back to.

Who are you listening to?

Who is listening to you?

*** Be honest...

*** "What do the patterns in your life reveal about the passions in your life?" - JDP

The world's ways are found on the broad path...

Christ's way (singular) is on the narrow.

Many are found on the broad road of destruction

Few live on the narrow path of discipleship.

Now... look around. What do you see?

Are you in the mainstream... OR

Are you in the miracle stream?

Do you KNOW for sure?

Based on what/who?

Most important Questions:

*** Remember:

What you believe is who you become!

Thus... your words & real want-to will define you
as a person of the world...

OR

a person of “the Way”

What is the Bible?

- A man-made book that shapes God?
- A God-breathed book that shapes man?

What role is the Bible to serve in your life?

- Ultimate authority
- Occasional reference

Is there a God?

- Genesis 1:1

What do you believe about God?

- Do you Know... Love... Trust... & Obey Him?
- “The difference between ‘a’ god and THE God is the difference between ‘a’ gospel (a reported way of salvation) and THE Gospel of Jesus Christ (see John 14:6).” - JDP

Who is Jesus?

- Son of God
- Alpha & Omega
- 2 Cor. 5:21
- Romans 10:9
- John 14:6
- Liar... Lunatic.... or LORD!

Is there such a thing as sin?

Where did sin come from & where does it lead to?

Is the devil real?

Are angels & demons real?

Is there a real heaven & real hell?

What do you believe about heaven & hell?

How do you define truth & love?

What is THE Gospel of Jesus?

Who goes to heaven & who goes to hell?

How is this life related to eternity?

- Root issues...
- Fruit issues...

Do your answers up to this point really matter?

*** See 1 John 4:5-6!

What do you want?

- World? (define & describe)
- Worship? (define & describe)

Who do you want?

- Lord, lost, lovers

How do you define & describe:

- Repent
-
- Believe
-
- Grace
-
- Mercy
-
- Lord
-
- Savior
-
- Spirit
-
- Spirit-filled vs. "spiritual"
-

- Christian
-
- Church
-
- Elect/Election
-
- Salvation
-
- Sanctification (fruit & failures)
-
- Servant
-
- Heart
-
- "Patterns of Passion" (real deal)
-
- Rationalization & Responsibility
-
- Deception
-
- Assurance & Accountability
-
- Wolves (false teachers/prophets)
-
- Worship = an identity before an activity - Paul Tripp
-
- Sovereignty & Providence
-
- Forgiveness (linked to love)

-
- Obedience

6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Close:

Drinking bleach vs. H2O...

- Reality = it could have killed me!
- Reality = purging that poison saved my life...
- Reality = many of us need to have our heads and hearts “pumped & purged” in the same way...

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every **spirit**, but **test** the **spirits** to see whether they are from God, because **many false prophets** have gone out into the **world**.

Let's Pray!