

FALSE TEACHERS AMONG US **(1 John 4:1-6)**

I. John tells us to use discrimination (vs 1).

- A. Discrimination is a terrible word in our 21st century English.
 - 1. When it is used in a way to take away someone's rights it is a bad thing.
 - 2. That is not the discrimination about which we are talking.
- B. The very first definition for discriminate is to distinguish.
 - 1. That is what John wants his readers to do.
 - 2. He wants them to distinguish between true teachers and false teachers.
- C. The word try means to test.
 - 1. One of the miraculous gifts of the first century was the discerning of spirits.
 - 2. Men and women were able miraculously to determine whether something being taught was truth or error.
 - 3. Also, they could, without the miraculous, hold up what was being taught them to God's word that they knew and make the same determination.
 - 4. It is interesting that they had to be told to do this.
 - a. This was not something that would automatically happen in their mind.
 - b. They had to use the gift that was given them.
 - c. If it was not used, they could fall into error.
 - d. This is another sign that God does not force people to obey His will.
- D. This discrimination needs to be used today.
 - 1. As I have said many times and still say, don't believe it because I say it.
 - 2. Test what I say against God's word.
 - 3. Don't test me against what some man says about God's word, but test me against the Bible.
 - 4. Any preacher worth anything will give this same advice.
 - 5. Just because someone is in pulpit does not mean he or she belongs there.
- E. John tells us the reason for using this discrimination is that there are false prophets plaguing the church and world.
 - 1. Paul dealt with false teachers known as Judaizers.
 - 2. Peter mentioned to his readers that there were false teachers in the Old Testament just like there would be false teachers affecting his readers (2 Peter 2:1).
- F. There are still false prophets today.
 - 1. Some are in the church and some are out of it.
 - 2. We must make sure that we hold up what is preached to the scrutiny of God's Word.

- G. False teachers need to be dealt with immediately for the preservation of the church and the possible salvation of the false teacher himself.
- H. Woods wrote, "It matters not how pious or religious a teacher may affect to be, he is worthy of belief only when his teaching is in complete harmony with the word of God. If it is not in harmony therewith, he ought to be, he must be, speedily repudiated. To do otherwise is to imbibe the poison of unbelief; it is to espouse false doctrine; it is to become a party to the propagation of error."
- I. We must use discrimination when it comes to the teaching of the Bible.

II. **John gives us the distinction (vs 2-3).**

- A. The distinction between gospel preachers and false teachers in John's day was whether or not they would confess Christ as the Son of God and that He came in the flesh.
 - 1. There was much false teaching about Jesus in that day.
 - 2. The false teaching concerned either the deity of Jesus or His humanity.
- B. The one that would confess that Jesus was God in the flesh was on the side of God.
 - 1. As Woods said, this was an infallible test.
 - 2. The true could be separated from the false in this way.
- C. One that would not confess this was not on God's side and had the spirit, or attitude of the antichrist.
- D. Unfortunately, that attitude is not gone, but the test is not always that easy.
 - 1. Most everyone we would describe as a false teacher accepts the deity and humanity of Jesus.
 - 2. Their false teaching is so insidious because it is surrounded by so much truth.
- E. However, when one aligns himself with false teaching, standing against the doctrine of the New Testament about the church, the Christ or His people, then that person has the same spirit of antichrist as those mentioned in this text.
- F. While the distinction may not be as easy to make as a confession of Christ, it still must be made in order to avoid error.

III. **John makes a great declaration (vs 4-5).**

- A. Those that are of God will overcome error.
 - 1. John points out the fact that his 1st century readers had overcome these false teachers.
 - 2. The tense of the word "overcome" shows they had made their decision about these false teachers and stayed with God.
 - 3. They overcame the false teachers by refusing to listen to them once it had been determined that they were false.
- B. This is something that must be done today.
 - 1. Once a teacher is shown to be in error, we need to refuse to listen to him.

2. Some say, "We know he teaches error on that but we won't let him talk about that while he is here."
 - a. He may not publicly, but how about privately?
 - b. What about not having any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness?
 - c. This is a terrible and dangerous attitude to take.
- C. One that does not speak the truth is of the world.
 1. The world is that realm that stands against the holy realm of God and His people.
 2. It is that realm that is overseen by Satan and his minions.
- D. John tells us that the reason for their success is that the world wants to hear what these false teachers are saying.
 1. This preaching matched what people wanted.
 2. It is the itching ear disease that so many have.

IV. John makes a further delineation (vs 6).

- A. Those that obey the truth are of God and listen to the apostles teaching on the divinity of Christ.
- B. Those that hold to false teaching about Christ will not listen to the teaching of the apostles about the divinity of Christ.
- C. Those who choose to grow in knowledge of God and the truth listen to the teaching of the apostles then and now.
 1. Today, we come to the New Testament with an open mind and heart ready to hear and heed the inspired apostles teaching.
 2. There are others that are not of God that will not believe what is taught because they have preconceived ideas about what the Bible says or they simply won't obey what they read.
- D. We can tell by ones attitude towards the New Testament if they have the spirit of truth or of error.
- E. Jesus told the unbelieving Jews of His day "Ye hear them not (the words of Jesus) because ye are not of God."
- F. The same is true today.
 1. False teachers still refuse to hear the words of Christ.
 2. They twist them and pervert them for their own pleasure.
- G. We must make sure that we always are open and obedient to the words of the inspired apostles.