

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED UPON JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR

1 John 4:1-3 "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. 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."

With countless T.V. channels, a goodly number of news networks, social media and the old-fashioned back fence you are inundated with information. Some of it is good, useful and important. Much of it is not. What are you to believe? Who are you to believe? How do you know truth from untruth?

Spiritually, potentially you are confronted with the same information overload. Every day you can find religious programming on your T.V. The internet is a resource where you can find a variety of articles on any imaginable religious topic. Much of what is available has been packaged, marketed and presented in ways to catch your attention. Again, some of it is truth. Some is not. What are you to believe? Who are you to believe? How do you know what is true and what is not?

John continues to give you his Holy Spirit inspired counsel. He says to you, ". . .do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. . ." Why does he issue this warning? He explains, "many false prophets have gone out into the world."

John's word addresses two critical questions: 1) Who do you believe? 2) What do you believe? His answer to the who and what question is, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. . ." Negatively, he answers, ". . .and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God."

John's answer is critical because the Scriptures reveal to you, ". . . there is salvation in no one else (than Jesus,) for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) There is one Lord and Savior God has given you. There is one faith God has gifted you that apprehends for you the forgiveness and eternal life His Son has won for you.

Listen and read carefully to be sure the spiritual messages that come your way, no matter how well they are presented, how winsome they might be, always direct you to Jesus. This is what the writer to the Hebrews encourages, "let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Prayer: O Lord, give me eyes to see, ears to hear and a heart to believe the truth of Your holy word. Guard me from false teachers and their teaching. In Jesus' name. Amen.

O God of light, Your Word, a lamp unfailing,
Shall pierce the darkness of our earthbound way
And show Your grace, Your plan for us unveiling,
And guide our footsteps to the perfect day.

From days of old, through blind and willful ages,
Though we rebelled, You gently sought again
And spoke through saints, apostles, prophets, sages,
Who wrote with eager or reluctant pen.

Undimmed by time, those words are still revealing
To sinful hearts Your justice and Your grace;
And questing spirits, longing for Your healing,
See Your compassion in the Savior's face.

To all the world Your summons You are sending,
Through all the earth, to ev'ry land and race,
That myriad tongues, in one great anthem blending,
May praise and celebrate your gift of grace.

(LSB 836)