Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Testing the Spirits (John MacArthur)
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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Strange Fire Conference

I want you to open your Bible, if you will, to 1 John chapter 4…1 John chapter 4, and I want to read to you a portion of Scripture that is directly applicable to the subject at hand. First John chapter 4, let me read the opening eight verses. “Beloved, 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. 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 of which you have heard that it is coming and now it is already in the world. 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. They are from the world, therefore they speak as from the world and the world listens to them. 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. Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love, does not know God for God is love.”

I want to draw you back to verse 1, “Test the spirits.” A mandate, a command from the Apostle John, test the spirits. Spirits meaning persons…persons. Test, *dokimazo*, a term used in metallurgy to assess the purity of metal. Test the persons whether they be human or whether they be angelic, test the persons.

We are reminded to do this also in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 21 and 22, not despise prophesying but to examine and the same word is used to test what we’re hearing. This is critical. It is critical because Satan exists, and because demons exist, and because they operate a kingdom of lies that dominates the world. Satan is the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of spiritual darkness in heavenly places and he has been allowed to run loose in this world, going about as a roaring lion, seeking who he may devour. He and his agents are disguised as angels of light, according to the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. And we should not be surprised that Satan operates 99 percent of the time in false religion, in lies and deception.

Satan isn’t the one behind the wretched, corrupt, sinful behavior of any given society, the flesh takes care of that. Satan is behind the corrupt religion, the false systems of belief. It’s really important to understand that. For a moment, turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 10, 2 Corinthians chapter 10. People

talk about spiritual warfare with regard to Satan and demons and I think almost always they get it wrong. They come up with the idea that we're supposed to be chasing Satan around. I remember being at a Pastors' Conference one time and a prominent wonderful church and the pastor got up to begin the pastor's conference with several thousand men and he said, "Let's pray," and the first words out of his mouth were, "Satan, we bind you." And I almost fell over. What? Let us pray…and the first word is Satan and he's talking to the devil, telling the devil what he can or cannot do. Maybe he thinks that spiritual war, and maybe he thinks he has the power to do that. That's a delusion.

Spiritual war is described in 2 Corinthians 10:3 with these words, "The weapons of our warfare," so now we know we're talking about warfare, talking about weapons. They're not of the flesh, that is they're not human. We are in the flesh in the sense verse 3 says that we are human. When it says we walk in the flesh, not talking about sin but just talking about being human, we can't war, however, according to the flesh. Our weapons can't be human. It can't be ingenuity, cleverness, it can't be anything concocted by man, no matter how noble our desires. We cannot fight this war with human weapons. It takes a lot more than that. They have to be, according to verse 4, divinely powerful, they have to be divinely powerful. We're engaged in a spiritual war which cannot be fought with human weapons, no matter how noble and well-conceived and well-crafted we might think they are.

Why? Because we must be engaged, end of verse 4, in the destruction of fortresses. And the imagery here is that human weapons are no match for a massive fortress. The word "fortress" means exactly you would think it meant in the ancient world, a stone edifice, impregnable. By the way, the word for fortress is the word for prison. We're assaulting formidable edifices. We cannot use pea shooters. We cannot use human weapons.

What are these fortresses? At the end of verse 4, the destruction of fortresses, the beginning of verse 5, we are destroying speculations, in the NAS. The fortresses are defined in the next verse, destruction of fortresses, destruction of speculations. The Greek word there is *logismos*, ideas, ideologies, theories, viewpoints, belief systems, psychologies, philosophies, religions. This is what we're engaged in in spiritual war. It's a battle for how people think. It's a battle for the mind. It's not about chasing Satan away. It's not about running off demons. That's not within the purview of our abilities. Ours is a war for the mind.

Why? Because the world is imprisoned in belief systems. They are fortified there in the sense that they are impregnable in their ideologies. Those fortifications in which they live become their prisons and end up their tombs.

And the architect of all of these fortifications is none other than Satan himself. He is the father of lies. He is the arch-deceiver. He is the ultimate angel of light and he purveys his great work through false belief systems.

In fact, they are further defined, look back at verse 5, as every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. What does that mean? Every high idea, every apparently noble idea, intellectual idea, great insight, anything and everything that is raised up as an ideology, listen carefully, against…against the knowledge of God. People are fortified in systems that are anti-God. They're anti-God. To use the language of John, they're anti-Christ. And as I said, people are fortified there, they are imprisoned there and they are entombed ultimately there.

So what is our responsibility? Our responsibility is to smash these ideologies, to crush these fortifications. And to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. This is a battle for how people think. Again, Satan is the architect, the designer, the engineer and the builder of these ideologies. People are fortified in them and ultimately doomed by them to eternal hell. And it all seems so wonderful because it is operated by the ultimate angel of light.

In the Old Testament, people were warned about false prophets. In the New Testament, again we are warned about false prophets. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns about false prophets, Matthew 7. Paul warns about false prophets repeatedly. Peter essentially writes an entire epistle, 2 Peter, to warn about false prophets. Jude follows up essentially the Holy Spirit delivers to Jude with a different verb tense the same thing he gave to Peter in 2 Peter 2, and another warning comes. And the New Testament ends before the apocalypse, before the great book of Revelation which looks at the future, the last message of the New Testament, two little postcard epistles, 2 John, 3 John, five times in the opening verses of 2 John, five times in the opening verses of 3 John, the last word, one written to a man, one written to a woman, the final word before the apocalypse is a warning to continue to be faithful to the truth. You find the word "truth" used five times in the beginning of both of those little epistles. The last word from the last Apostle in the last decade of the first century of the church is to live for the truth. In Jude then, throws in also earnestly contend for the truth. It's a truth war. I think I wrote a book about that. It's a truth war. This is spiritual war.

And part of being able to fight that war is to test the spirits. We can't go blithely along accepting anything and everything that people aver or affirm or avow. We need to test the spirits. This passage gives us the principles to do that, so let's go back to 1 John chapter 4. And by the way, when the Great Awakening broke out 1730 to 1740, there were questions about the legitimacy of that. There were things going on in the Great Awakening that were clearly the work of the Holy Spirit. There were some things that appeared not to be the work of the Holy Spirit. And Jonathan Edwards assessed that movement and he did it on the basis of this same text. So last night Steve Lawson raised Calvin from the dead, and today we're going to raise Jonathan Edwards from the dead, and we're going to let him talk to us a little bit. Jonathan Edwards wrote a work called *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God…The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God.* And he based it on 1 John chapter 4, and it was published in 1741.

Edwards asserted that this passage is foundational to assessing anything that is claimed to be the work of the Holy Spirit. And these are timeless tests given to us not by Jonathan Edwards, he merely looked at them as we're going to do, but by the Holy Spirit. Timeless tests by which we are to measure all spiritual movements, all preaching, all preachers are to be evaluated by these tests. What is truly of the Holy Spirit will conform to these. It's wonderful that the Spirit of God has given this to us. All the lines of examination converge in these eight verses. It is the responsibility of every pastor, every teacher, every preacher, every Christian to examine all claims and test all persons, and prophecies. Like the noble Bereans, examine everything to see what is true.

Now what is the issue here? Clearly the issue is a work of the Holy Spirit. Back up to chapter 3 verse 24. "The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and he in Him." And then this statement. "We know by this that He abides in us by the Spirit whom He has given us." Our salvation, says John, is confirmed and we are assured that we belong to Christ because of the work of the Holy Spirit. That's what he's saying. Our assurance, let me say it again, our confidence, the affirmation of the reality of our salvation is based upon the working of the Holy Spirit. I know the Holy Spirit is invisible, the Holy Spirit works in a supernatural and divine, and imperceptible way within us. However, while the working of the Holy Spirit is invisible, the results are visible. While we do not experience or feel the Holy Spirit, the manifestation of His work we do experience. One of the follies of the Charismatic Movement is to say that the Holy Spirit is leading there, the Holy Spirit is directing me. You have no way to know that. I have no way to know that. I don't have a red light on my head that goes around when it's the Holy Spirit and goes off when it's just me. I don't have any mechanism to know that I'm getting impulses from the Holy Spirit. That's imperceptible, that's invisible, that's supernatural, that's divine. All I know is that I can experience the result of His moving in my life. And it started when I was saved. I immediately had a hatred of sin and a love for the things that honor God. I immediately was indifferent to philosophy and I took a philosophy minor in college and I studied western philosophy. You have never met a person more uninterested in philosophy than me, but I have a passionate and all-consuming desire to know the Word of God.

I didn't see the Holy Spirit do that. I didn't feel Him do that. But I know the result of His doing it. I tolerate people in the world with a compassion for their lostness. I adore God's people. I love people in God's church. I don't even know who you are, and if you'll allow me, I just want to tell you, I love you in a real sense, not in a sense that I know all about you, but there's something about those who belong to Christ, they belong to me. These are things that are evidences…these are things that are evidences of an invisible work by the Holy Spirit within me.

So we know that Christ abides in us because we know the Spirit He has given us is manifest in us. People say to me, "How do you know when you're a believer?" It's not your perfection, it's your direction. It's what you love and what you hate, and what you long for. We're all in Romans 7, aren't we? We don't do what we ought to do, we don't do what we want to do, we do what we don't want to

do and ought not to do and we hate that about us and that's the evidence of the Holy Spirit in us.

You know, it's in John 3:8 that Jesus says to Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it will and you can't see it, and you can't control it, but you can see its effect." And that's an illustration even John 3 of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's work is invisible, the effects are highly visible. By the visible manifest experiential effects of the Holy Spirit's invisible work, we know He lives in us.

What is He doing in us? I'll just give you a quick list. He produces in us a desire for repentance, a hatred of sin. He produces in us a desire to seek salvation and forgiveness. He produces in us a belief in the gospel, a love for the Lord Jesus Christ, a desire to become a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him as Lord. He produces in us a delight in the Holy Scripture, a longing for obedience. He produces in us joy in trials and tribulations, love of other believers, desire for fellowship, understanding of the Bible, illumination of Scripture, inclination to prayer, holy affections, a desire for praise, a heart of thanksgiving, worship as a way of life, and increasing Christlikeness. That's pretty encouraging stuff. And I used to say about that, "This is what the Holy Spirit's doing in you whether you like it or not."

But, there's some other spirits. And it's really pretty surprising to me. I think it's very surprising that in a sudden unexpected shift from the glories of chapter 3 verse 24, the Holy Spirit brings words to John's mind that move from the glorious reality of Christ and the true work of the Holy Spirit, to the deadly dangers of the unholy spirits…the unholy persons who are not from God, the anti-God, the anti-Christ.

And we're not really surprised by this because we've been warned by the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament on. Satanic deceptions always with us, it was there in the Garden, wasn't it? It's always at work. It's always effective. God has always warned His people, called His people to vigilance, called His people to discernment. It's a long war on the truth and it rages, and it rages all the time and the true people of God have always had to battle the false prophets and the liars. And what makes them effective is the deceptiveness of it.

It is a strange irony to me, very strange irony, in the Charismatic Movement that if you criticize them, if you endeavor to be vigilant and discerning, and if you endeavor to contend for the truth and hold them to Scripture, and expose their error, they will condemn you as the sinner. You are the one who are standing in the way of the fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus in John 17 for the unity of His church. How do I know that? I have lived that. I have lived that.

In order for them to succeed, they have to turn discernment into an iniquity. They have to turn discernment into a transgression against Christ and His high priestly prayer. It is essential for the Charismatic Movement to survive that it attack truth warriors and turn them into enemies of the Holy Spirit, because if sound doctrine rules, they do not survive.

Evangelicalism has largely been intimidated into silence. We were discussing this when we started working on the book. We couldn't find a book exposing the Charismatic Movement for what it is that had been published, a book of any note at all that had been published in the last 15 years. They have been very successful in silencing evangelicalism.

And so, we come back to 1 John and we are commanded to test the persons espousing anything in the name of God and in the name of Christ who see whether they are from God. We're instructed at the very outset of this verse with these words, "Beloved, do not believe every person, don't believe it." Why? "Because, many false prophets have gone out into the world. So test the spirits." It ought to be enough to convince you of the error of that movement just to know they don't want examination. If this was a true work of the Holy Spirit, consistent with Scripture, they would be inviting all the scrutiny they could get because they would want the affirmation and the authentication.

So what are the tests? Well, I'm going to give you one and I have several, but I don't know how far I'm going to get. The ones I don't give you are in the book. I told Travis I needed three hours today and he said, "No, you can't have three hours."

All right, test one, the true work of the Holy Spirit exalts the Lord Jesus Christ…the true work of the Holy Spirit exalts the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 2, "By this you know the Spirit of God," here's how you know, here's how you know, "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 of which you have heard that it is coming and now it is already in the world."

The first test is a Christological test. The first test has to do with the person of Jesus Christ. Every spirit that confesses Christ is from God, that's positive. Any spirit that does not confess Christ is not of God. It all starts with Christology. It all starts with a clear, true understanding of the incarnation, that Jesus, God in human flesh, is understood biblically.

Now what is John writing about here in specific? There were some who denied that Jesus Christ was really human. This in early years was called Docetism from *dokeo(?)* which means to appear. And the idea, of course, came out of philosophical dualism, Greek dualism, which said matter is bad and spirit is good. Anything that is material is evil, anything that's spirit is good. And so the Son of God couldn't really be physical, He would be material and therefore He would be evil in a dualistic idea. So they said He only appeared to be human but He wasn't really human. So they were calling into question the true humanity of Jesus Christ.

Does that matter? Yes it matters…yes it matters, because if He's to be the substitute who dies in your place, He must be man. If your sins are to be imputed to Him and He punished in your place, He must be man.

Furthermore, if His life is to be credited to your account, He must live as a man, as a human being. His humanity matters. Now this is not a full ranged Christology here. That is not John's intent. He's merely picking out one error that existed at the time that assaulted the true nature of Christ as fully God, and fully man. And we can simply draw from that that everything begins with a true Christology. Jesus is fully God. He is fully man. It was in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon that what was called monophysitism was declared heretical. And that was that the two natures of Jesus were mingled and mixed. This was a big debate, early on, I'm simply telling you in the history of the church, they settled the issue of the two natures of Jesus Christ being together in one person and unmixed.

Now not all of the elements of New Testament or Old Testament revelation on Christology are here, but the first test is an accurate view of the incarnate Son of God. And if all of it is not explicit here, all of it is implicit here. It's all implied here. False religions and heretical Christian cults you know all have an aberrant Christology. They all have an aberrant corrupted Christology. The Mormons think that Jesus is the spirit-brother of Lucifer who was a created being, created by God who Himself was a created being. All the cults have an aberrant view of Christ.

The Holy Spirit does not. The Holy Spirit has an accurate view of Christ, always truthfully presenting the glory of the Son. Any Holy Spirit-filled preacher will be Christ dominated, Christ dominated and present Him in an accurate and exalting and truthful way. It is a matter of sound theology, but it's also a matter of preeminence , and it's also a matter of the gospel clarity. So where you see any deficiency in the nature of Christ, or the prominence of Christ, the preeminence of Christ, or the gospel, this is not the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says in John 14:15 to 16, when the Spirit comes, He'll show you Me. His ministry is to point to Me. He will lead you into all truth concerning Me.

Anyone who is wrong on Christ or who diminishes Christ, or who pollutes the gospel, or who distracts from the Son to the Spirit, is not operating in the Spirit…not operating in the Spirit. Jonathan Edwards said the devil has the most bitter, and implacable enmity against Christ. He never would go about to beget in men more honorable thoughts of Christ. The devil seeks to twist, confuse, suppress and misrepresent the glories of the Son of God. The devil seeks to draw attention away from the Son of God to a false image of the Holy Spirit while pretending to honor Jesus.

A true work of the Spirit does the opposite. A true work of the Spirit exalts the true Christ in all glorious preeminence and the full and accurate understanding of His gospel.

If the Charismatic Movement was being produced by the Holy Spirit, the glory of Christ would prevail everywhere. It would be Christ dominated and everyone in the movement would be bowing the knee to the true Christ in belief of the true gospel. The people would be humble. They would be joyful. They would be sacrificial. They would be confessional. They would be declaring Jesus as Lord and themselves His slaves. They would be denying themselves, taking up their cross and following Him

wherever He led.

Yet very proudly, a book by Jack Hayford and a gentleman named Moore, announce that the distinctiveness of the Charismatic Movement is the preeminence of the Holy Spirit. I quote, “In the Pentecostal potpourri only one thing is the same for all: *the passion they have to experience the Holy Spirit presence and power.”*

When the Holy Spirit is the person sought, His work has been rejected. Christ is obscured, Scripture depreciated, and a preoccupation with counterfeit experiences imagined to be induced by the Holy Spirit but not having anything to do with Him at all. Ephesians 3:14, “For this reason I bow my knee before the Father,” here’s Paul’s prayer, “From whom every family in earth and on…in heaven, rather, and on earth derives its name that He would grant you…here’s Paul’s prayer, this is what Paul wants…that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.”

Paul is saying, “I’m praying to the Father and I’m asking Him to allow His Spirit to strengthen you so that…here’s the purpose…Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly above all we could ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

What is Paul’s prayer? It is that the Spirit would lead you to a full understanding of the love of Christ. It always points to Christ. Here the Charismatic Movement fails the test of exalting Christ above all by exalting that false image of the Holy Spirit that they have created. Show me a person obsessed with the Holy Spirit, and I’ll show you a person not filled with the Holy Spirit. Show me a person obsessed with the Lord Jesus Christ, never tiring of learning and loving Him, entranced by His magnificent glory and seeking to obey Him and be like Him, and I’ll show you a Spirit-filled person. That’s what a Spirit-filled person looks like.

Much of the movement is actually antichrist. Stories about visions of Jesus in Charismatic circles are really terrifying to me. Some have proclaimed Him dressed as a fireman, others have seen Him 900 feet tall. Others meet with Him regularly in the bathroom. Some have seen Him dancing on the garbage dump. Others have seen Him sitting in a wheel chair at a convalescent home. Some have taken long walks with Him on the beach. And so it goes. One Charismatic author says, “Shortly after the Holy Spirit revealed Himself, I saw Jesus. And then I asked the Lord to take me to His secret place. I was lying in the grass and I said, ‘Jesus, would You lie down next to me?’ We were right there looking into each other’s eyes. The Father came too and reclined next to Jesus.”

Sappy emotionalism, bizarre fantasy, having absolutely nothing to do with Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Delusions? Probably. Lies? Surely. But they do not find their source in the Holy Spirit. But it's not just those bizarre images like you read in *Heaven is for Real*, supposedly a four-year-old went to heaven and came back and described Jesus and Jesus' horse, and Jesus being shorter than Michael. I mean, that's bad enough, but even worse are the heresies concerning Him.

In the book you're going to read about them. Jesus didn't come to earth as God in human flesh. He never claimed to be God, they say. He took on Satan's sinful nature on the cross, died spiritually and went to hell for three days. Prosperity preacher Kenneth Copeland exhibits the blasphemous and unbiblical way in which Jesus Christ is treated in the Word of Faith Movement. I quote: "How did Jesus then on the cross say 'My God?' Because God was not His Father anymore. He took upon Himself the nature of Satan. And I'm telling you, Jesus is in the middle of that pit. He's suffering all that there is to suffer. His emaciated little wormy spirit is down in the bottom of that thing and the devil thinks he's got Him destroyed but all of a sudden God started talking."

Creflo Dollar, another Word of Faith advocate displaying similar irreverence, questioning the deity of Christ, I quote: "Jesus didn't show up perfect, He grew into His perfection. You know, Jesus in one Scripture in the Bible, He went on a journey and He was tired. You better hope God don't get tired, but Jesus did. If He came as God and He got tired, He says He sat down by the well because He was tired. Boy, we're in trouble and somebody said, 'Well Jesus came as God.' Well, how many of you know the Bible says God never sleeps nor slumbers and yet in the book of Mark we see Jesus asleep in the back of the boat." What kind of convoluted irresponsible, ridiculous thinking is that?

Casting aspersions on the deity of Christ. He didn't come as God. And the Word of Faith Movement is guilty on the other hand of positioning themselves and all who are in their movement as if they are God's. Kenneth Copeland pretends to speak for Jesus like Sarah Young does in her silly books. And he says this, this is Kenneth Copeland speaking for Jesus. "Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you are God. They crucified Me for claiming I was God. I didn't claim I was God. I just claimed that I walked with Him and He was with me. Hallelujah."

Rank arrogance, stupidity, gross falsehood, blasphemy, and where are the Charismatics who do believe the truth about Jesus Christ in calling these people out and shutting down their influence? Only the spirit of Antichrist would inspire that kind of blatantly unbiblical teaching.

You can go beyond silly things about Christ and heresies about Christ, to misrepresentations of the gospel. And this gets pretty extensive. We know why the Holy Spirit came, to convict the world of sin and righteousness, and judgment, that they might believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to bear witness to the historical truth of the gospel, as Acts 5 says. He came to empower those who preach its saving message, 1 Peter 1:12. We know the work of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is faithful

to the gospel. The Holy Spirit would never misrepresent the gospel. So wherever the devaluing of the gospel truth is visible, we know that's not the work of the Holy Spirit. And let me be very blunt. Any movement that can fully embrace Roman Catholicism is not a movement authored by the Holy Spirit because that's a false gospel.

Why do they do that? Because it's based upon a common false experience. Sound doctrine is subjugated to spiritual experience. False spiritual experience, false forms of the gospel are happily embraced. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal began in 1967 when a group of students received, quote: "The Baptism" and spoke gibberish, non-language. The movement was officially recognized by Pope John Paul II. Why? Because the Catholics absorb, that's how the system grows. You've heard the Pope recently, "Hey, welcome everybody back to the church. Homosexuals—that's fine. Atheists—you're going to heaven too if you do your best." That's Roman Catholicism. Absorb the heretics. Absorb the dissidence, absorb the people who are on the outside, built the system." Why? Because that system has one king and it's the king of darkness.

By the year 2000, this is the year 2000, there were 120 million Catholic Charismatics. There are well over 500 million Charismatics, so one out of every five is Roman Catholic globally. Catholic Charismatics hold a Catholic theology, Catholic doctrine and they deny that a believer is justified by faith alone, right? It's by…what?...works. They believe in the *ex opere operato* efficacy of the seven Roman sacraments. They are up to their eyeballs in the idolatry of the Catholic Mass, that horrendous attempt to resacrifice Christ. They in an idolatrous way venerate Mary and the saints. They have been fully embraced by Protestant Pentecostals.

Why would anyone do that, make a concession to Catholicism? It's just become part of the contemporary fabric of evangelicalism.

Here's a report. "Ten thousand Charismatics and Pentecostals prayed, sang, danced, clapped, cheered under the common bond of the Holy Spirit during a four-day ecumenical convention last summer….About half the participants at the congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization were Catholics. The Holy Spirit wants to break down walls between Catholics and Protestants, said Vinson Synan, the theological dean of Pat Robertson's Regent University, who chaired the congress."

If this movement can embrace Catholicism, it's not a movement of the Holy Spirit. Roman Catholic theology is corrupt, it has a false gospel. The spirit behind the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is not the Holy Spirit.

Not just them. Worldwide there are 24 million Charismatics who belong to a group that can be called Oneness Pentecostal. What is Oneness Pentecostalism? Sometimes you see it as Jesus only, it denies the Trinity. Twenty-four million, they deny the Trinity, about one out of every four in America. What do they believe? They believe in what is called modalism, that there's one God and He appears

in three different modes, sometimes He's the Father, sometimes He's the Son, and sometimes He's the Spirit, but He's never all three at the same time.

He has these three modes in which He can appear. A little bit of trouble with that at the baptism of Jesus. Right? And he's changing hats really fast. But way back in the Athanasian creed, it was settled that God is Father, Son, and Spirit, three co-equal, co-existent, divine persons. Modalism has been condemned throughout all of church history as a heresy at a foundational level that literally attacks the nature of God and cuts you off from the possibility of salvation. Probably the leading oneness Pentecostal that you would know is T.D. Jakes who denies the Trinity. You don't have the true God, you don't have the true Christ, you don't have the true Spirit.

The modalist, search this, there is one God who can be designated by three different names. He can be called Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at different times. These three are not distinct persons, they're just different modes of the one God. Thus God can be called Father as the creator of the world and lawgiver. He can be called Son as God incarnate in Jesus Christ. He can be called Holy Spirit as God in the church age. Accordingly, Jesus Christ is God and the Spirit of God, but not as distinct persons. Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), modalism was universally condemned as heresy.

The largest church in America is…I guess you could call it a church with a small "c", Joel Osteen in Houston. A shallow saccharine variety of universalism. Universalism, standing starkly at odds with everything Scripture says when he was asked what he thought about people who refused to accept Jesus Christ, he gave an answer that could have come from the lips of Pope Francis. "Well I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe…here's what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe, but I just think that only God will judge a person's heart. I…I spent a lot of time in India with my father, I don't know all about their religion, but I know they love God. And I don't know, I've seen their sincerity, so I don't know, I know…I know for me and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus."

On a different occasion he was asked if Mormons are true Christians. His answer was, "Well, in my mind they are. Mitt Romney has said that he believes in Christ as his Savior and that's what I believe, so, you know, I'm not the one to judge the little details. So I believe they are."

Do you understand the pervasive impact that he has? It's massive. This is universalism. By the way, Mormonism claimed to experience the same supernatural phenomena the Pentecostals and Charismatics experience today. At the dedication of the Kirtland Temple which was built in 1836 by Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith reported the following phenomena occurred at the dedication of the Temple…tongues, prophecy, and miraculous visions. Other eyewitness accounts such as quote: "There was great manifestations of power such as speaking in tongues, seeing visions, administrations of angels. There the Spirit of the Lord as on the day of Pentecost was profusely poured out, Hundreds of Elders spoke in tongues."

There you have it. More than half a century before Charles Parham launches the Charismatic Movement, the Mormons are doing the same thing. The Mormons, I remind you, think Jesus is the spirit brother of Lucifer. Is this a work of the Holy Spirit? It wasn't in the case of the Mormons and it isn't in the case of those who followed them.

And then, of course, another major Charismatic distortion is found in the health-wealth promises of the Word of Faith Movement. This is a false gospel. I'm trying to show you all the ways you can attack a true Christology. The Prosperity Gospel, horrendous but it is the defining feature of all Pentecostalism so that the majority of Pentecostals exceeding 90 percent in most countries hold to the Prosperity Gospel. It is why the thing has grown, because it lies in promising success and health and wealth. And it preys on the poor…it prays on the poor. Prosperity Gospel has no interest in the biblical gospel. It only offers financial prosperity, physical well-being to desperate, desperate people. It offers carnal comforts, earthly riches, worldly success to millions of people who literally give up the little that they have to buy it. It is the worst. It is the ugliest, to prey on the sick and to prey on the poor and become wealthy by lying to them. Is there anything more wretched than that? And then attributing it to the Holy Spirit? And associating it with the name of Jesus?

The peddlers of this perversion stand guilty of selling a false gospel. Trafficking in heretical wares. Prosperity preachers have made Christianity a laughingstock. One writer says, "The prosperity gospel is Christianity's version of professional wrestling." (Laughter) That communicates. But on the other hand, spiritual swindlers will one day be punished for their blasphemous conceit, Jude 13.

If we were to add up the numbers of people connected to the heretical groups, Roman Catholicism, Oneness Pentecostalism, and Word of Faith Prosperity gospel, the sum would be in the hundreds and hundreds of millions. It is, in fact, THE majority in the movement. All this goes back, doesn't it, to our point. A true work of the Holy Spirit does…what?...exalts whom? Christ, His person, His work, His gospel.

Now, when you get the book, and you will, you will read a whole lot more of these kinds of things to substantiate the deviations of this movement.

Let me just throw out the other points and you can wait till you read. The second point, look at verses 4 and 5 of 1 John. "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." They are from the world, therefore they speak as from the world and the world listens to them.

Do you know why that movement grows? Because it is offering to people in the world what they already want. It's worldly. They're offering what the unregenerate heart wants, health, wealth, prosperity. They package it every way they can. They can give them a high-powered emotional

experience. They can take them out of the doldrums of their daily experience. They can put them in a crowd, get the lights flashing, the music blaring and they can elevate them to some kind of an experience that may be equal to the experience that people have when they drink to escape. It's all worldly…music, emotion, liberation, freedom, promises of health, wealth, ecstatic experiences, the hope of prosperity. They are from the world, verse 5. They speak as from the world and the world listens to them.

There you have a description of why the movement works. It's worldly men speaking to worldly people about worldly things…has nothing to do with the Kingdom of God…nothing. On the other hand, I love this, we have overcome the world. We have overcome the world. We're not interested in that. Do they not hear the warning? Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, for all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life is of the world and is passing away.

Joel Osteen writes a book, *Your Best Life Now*. That's it. That's the message. The only way that's true that your best life is now is if you're going to hell, because if you're going to heaven, this is not your best life.

And, of course, all this high-powered emotional music carries the false promises on a mindless, numbing tune of self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction that gets even sensual. The Holy Spirit doesn't provide the mindless superficial lust of a fallen heart. That's not what the Holy Spirit gives. He brings humility, brokenness, repentance, and produces in us love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control without music. The main attraction is the carnal desire.

And did you notice how the preachers flaunt their worldliness? Just flaunt it? They have to, that's how you sell the story. Look at me, look what happened to me. It could happen to you. Ponzi scheme. It's a spiritual version of Bernie Madoff. Nine out of every ten Pentecostals live in poverty. Nine out of every ten live in poverty. Over ninety percent of Pentecostals and Charismatics in Nigeria, South Africa, India and the Philippines, however, believe God will grant material prosperity to all believers who have enough faith.

What a lie. You know, the prosperity gospel is more morally reprehensible than a Las Vegas casino because it masquerades as religion. They take your money in Las Vegas but you expect it…cause it's run by the Mafia. You don't expect the people that represent God to do the same thing. And when Jesus saw the widow put her last mite into the temple offering, He said, "This Temple is going to come down. Not one stone will be left on another." I don't know what you have been taught about that story of the widow giving her last two cents, that was not an example of Christian giving. God doesn't expect you to give your last two cents and go home and die. That's what happens to a widow who is succored by a religion of works. She was trying to buy with her last two cents her way into the Kingdom because that's what she had been taught. And Jesus says, "Any system that sucks people

down to the place where they have nothing left in a false hope is coming down. And it did.

Let me just mention the others. I'm skipping all the good stuff. I'm skipping the story about the drunk prophet up in my office, but you can read about that.

Okay, number three, just really quick, I've got to stop. The true work of the Holy Spirit points people to the Bible. We heard that from Conrad last night, didn't we? The true work of the Holy spirit points people to the Bible, go to verse 6. "We are from God. He who knows God listens to us. He who is not from God doesn't listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of error."

How do we know the Spirit of Truth from the Spirit of error? Because the Spirit of truth runs to…what?...to Scripture, to the Bible…to the Bible. That's how we know, that's how we know.

Listen to Peter Wagner. "Some object to the notion that God communicates directly with us, supposing that everything that God wanted to reveal, He revealed in the Bible. This cannot be true, however, because there's nothing in the Bible that says it has 66 books, it actually took God a couple hundred years to reveal to the church which writing should be included in the Bible and which should not. That's extra-biblical revelation. Even so, Catholics and Protestants still agree on the number. Beyond that, I believe that prayer is two way…we speak to God and expect Him to speak to us. We can hear God's voice, He also reveals new things to prophets as we have seen."

Jack Deere, once a professor at Dallas Seminary, with whom we also had a conversation, says this. He taught at Dallas Theological Seminary and left, says this, "The sufficiency of Scripture is a demonic doctrine. In order to fulfill God's highest purpose for our lives, we must be able to hear His voice, both in the written word and in the word freshly spoken from heaven. Satan understands the strategic importance of Christians hearing God's voice, so he has launched various attacks against us in this area." Did you get that? Satan is the one calling them to Scriptural fidelity.

He further says, "One of Satan's most successful attacks has been to develop a doctrine that teaches God no longer speaks to us except through the written word. Ultimately this doctrine is demonic, even though Christian theologians have been used to perfect it." Demonic? The test has failed.

One other test, just mention it. "Beloved, let us love one another. Love is from God, everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who doesn't love, doesn't know God for God is love." The true work of the Holy Spirit manifesting the love of God. Love toward God, love toward God's people. The true work of the Holy Spirit elevates love, biblical love. That love shows up toward God in pure, true, holy worship. And it shows up toward others in humble, sacrificial desire to serve and edify.

It’s an obvious thing to say, and I’ll close. In the Charismatic Movement, everything is about me, not about you. The gifts are for me, to edify me. Prayers are for me, to get me what I want. I attach myself to this false system in order that I can get what I desire. It lacks love. Jonathan Edwards wrote about this. There’s a false kind of faith/love that exists among people who are in this together, but it is anything but sacrificial. Where you have mysticism and materialism mingled, you have self-absorbed attitudes. It’s about me feeling, experiencing. Me getting, me acquiring, me having what I want. It’s infantile self-love, cold-hearted materialism and selfishness in disguise as a work of the Holy Spirit.

So we don’t need to speculate, we really don’t. We have the tests, just look at the tests, measure the movement, be discerning like the noble Bereans and it should be clear to us.

I want to close by reading 2 John 7, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, this is the deceiver and the Antichrist, watch yourselves that you do not lose what we have accomplished but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and doesn’t abide in the teaching concerning Christ, the truth about Christ, does not have God. The one who abides in the teaching concerning Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, this true doctrine, do not receive him into your house, do not give him a greeting. For the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.”

A warning against any ecumenical embrace of those with an aberrant Christology.

Father, we thank You that we’ve been able to look at these things in the light of Scripture this morning. We don’t want to feel like somehow we’re smarter than other people, better than other people. We have received grace. We have been given life from heaven and we give you all the praise and all the glory, or we would be as much in the dark as those deceived by this movement. Thank You for Your grace. Lord, honor Your name, bring glory to Your name, bring an end to that which dishonors You. And may the pure truth shine through all the lies and deceptions. Place Satan under our feet and may Christ be lifted up and draw all men to Him. We pray in His name. Amen.

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