

BLESSED ASSURANCE

Victory

1 John 3:24 - 4:6

Doubt is driven by much more than just our feelings. Doubt is evidence of a BATTLE that is raging in the soul of every person who has ever lived. **Doubt is the spiritual struggle to decide what you ultimately believe.** Doubts can come and go, but they are always related to some aspect of life that demands FAITH IN SOMETHING. (I doubt that you love me. I doubt that God exists. I doubt that this diet is really going to help me lose weight!) **So, what is FAITH?** Well, we must realize that faith – like LOVE – is much more than a FEELING. Faith is not an emotion. It is also more than just the simple acceptance of information. **Faith is active commitment! It is the dedication of your whole self to the object of your faith.** Hebrews says that faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Based on this, you can SEE faith even when you cannot see what faith is seeing. You see? This is not just a “churchy” concept! Your faith in a chair lets you sit down. Your faith in a pilot and the trustworthiness of a plane allows you to fly to Atlanta. Faith is commitment, and commitment is easy to see!

Everyone has faith. Even those of you who are listening to me who say that you do not have any faith in God must acknowledge that you have faith in something. Maybe you believe in modern science and technology. Your faith is in what MAN can do if he is just given enough time and information. We can put the heart of a pig in a human. We have put a man on the moon and a landing craft on Mars. Most of us have a computer in our pocket that holds more information than you could put in a 10,000 books. **If you don't believe me, GOOGLE it!** This kind of faith is actually SPIRITUAL. It is a faith that is waiting for the ULTIMATE REALIZATION of SOME SORT of HEAVEN or UTOPIA. **That sounds great; but until that day, are you AT PEACE with what that faith is offering you in your CURRENT LIFE and for your IMMINENT DEATH?** If science and technology is not your thing, then maybe you have a GENERAL FAITH in some kind of God that feels right to you. Maybe your god is a kind and gentle god who gave us nature and left it up to us to keep it pristine and perfect. Maybe your god is Allah. Maybe you feel that ALL GODS ARE THE SAME GOD. Maybe your faith is not in a God at all. Maybe your faith is in YOURSELF. You feel that life just IS, and that YOU are the master of your fate and the captain of your soul. I'm just curious about all of these: What is your faith based upon, and how is your faith working for you? Furthermore, is that faith giving you peace, joy, love, and purpose in life? If it is not, then why is it not?

Today, I want to talk about the BASIS OF and the SPIRIT BEHIND your faith. Now, you can believe whatever you want, but you are in church right now, and the Word of God is the Christian's authority. The Word of God makes it clear that there are TWO DISTINCT SPIRITS at work in this world: The Holy Spirit of God, and the spirit of the Anti-Christ who is the Devil. One is far greater than the other (as light is greater than darkness!), but they are both very real, and they have very different agendas in

this world. Let's allow God's Word to set them both before us this morning: **1 John 3:24 - 4:6 NIV**

24 The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. 1 Dear friends, 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. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. 4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 5 They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

The true children of God know that Jesus Christ is the only Savior that this world will ever know. This means that he is the only proper focus of SAVING FAITH. God has given us no other hope for our salvation than this. He is all that we need. When you trust in Christ, then you are trusting in the only One who has actually done all that is necessary to bridge the gap between you and God, to forgive you of your sin, to transform you into his amazing image, and to bring you to heaven. He is the ONLY SAVIOR of the world. Period. Do you believe that? [\[Remember the meaning of FAITH before you answer that too quickly.\]](#) Because we know that Christ is our only hope for eternal life, we also know that there is a great battle raging for the souls of people when it comes to where they place their ultimate faith. In light of this, I want to give you the main point of this entire message:

Satan's main work is to attack and undermine our faith in Jesus Christ.

Simply put, Satan seeks to push you AWAY from Christ, but the Holy Spirit helps to draw you TOWARD Jesus Christ. **If you belong to Christ, then you have been given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to help you deal with your doubts and help you trust in Christ with EVERY ASPECT of your life.** If you do not belong to Christ, then you only have the "spirit of this world" (which is the spirit of the Anti-Christ) to guide your worldview. [But here is the rub: You are listening to one or the other no matter whom you belong to! When you listen to both, you get very confused!](#) So today, I want to help you see how each SPIRIT WORKS in our lives, so you can determine which one you are listening to. Let's begin by talking about our evil, mortal enemy: Satan.

Satan has many names in scripture, but we will only look at the 3 names he is given in 1 John for our study today: The Evil One, the Devil, and the Anti-Christ. Each name is significant. **The Evil One: 1 John 5:19 NIV**

19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

The name “the Evil One” is a reference to Satan’s nature. It speaks of his wicked determination to bring everything underneath him. He is the great destroyer. He is the Thief who “comes to steal, kill, and destroy.” Jesus said that it is this Evil One who comes and “snatches away the Seed of the Word” when it is sown in some hearts. He is the one who “blinds people to the light of the Gospel.” He leads people away from Christ to their destruction. If you doubt me, look at the world around you. He is constantly at work in this world promising good but delivering death. He promises pleasure but delights in pain. [Picture the life of an addict or workaholic]. The most astonishing thing about the existence of this Evil One is that the whole world is actually under his current control. This is why Satan felt free to offer this world to Christ if he would bow down and worship him! He is the “Prince of the power of the air” and the “Prince of this Age.” Jesus conquered him on the cross for our salvation, but he will end Satan’s earthly reign at the Final Judgment. I am counting on that! However, Satan uses his destructive power to make us feel that Jesus is NOT the true SAVIOR of the world. Thus the question, “If Jesus really is the Savior, then why is there still evil in the world?” The answer is PERSONAL. It has to do with our faith in Christ as individuals, and our discovery of his power over evil in our own hearts! This is why our faith and its impact on our behavior is more than a witness to the world; it is an inner reassurance of the validity of our faith! It is a reflection of the fact that – while the WORLD may be under the power of the Evil One - God’s children are NOT! **1 John 5:18 AMP**

18 We know [with confidence] that anyone born of God does not *habitually* sin; but He (Jesus) who was born of God [carefully] keeps *and* protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.

*You don’t have to fear voodoo, witchcraft, or demons! God has you!

The second name of Satan that we are given in 1 John is the DEVIL: **1 John 3:8 NIV**

8 The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

The name devil means, “the ACCUSER.” He is the master of accusation. He loves to accuse us before God (like he did to Simon Peter), but God is not having any of it! God knows those who are his own, they are held in Christ’s mighty hand, and nothing can ever separate us from his love. So, we are SAFE in Christ. But he loves to make us think that we are not actually safe, so he accuses God to us!

*He makes us doubt the Word of God. **[Mistrust]**

*He makes us doubt our IDENTITY in Christ. **[Fear]**

*He makes us feel like utter FAILURES when we fail! **[Condemnation]**

Because he is so consistent in doing these things, you can know when his spirit is the one that is whispering to you. Just apply this FILTER:

How are his words AFFECTING your FAITH in JESUS CHRIST!

- *Do his accusations match the CHARACTER OF GOD?
- *Do his words deny the promises connected to your commitment to Jesus?
- *Are his words TRUE to Scripture? [[80's Rock Group – Twisted Scripture!](#)]
- *Do his whispers make you want to TRUST and LOVE JESUS more?

If not, then you are hearing the words of the worldly vision of the Accuser. John says that it is time for some GOOD DISCERNMENT. Consider this: we live in a world that not only is filled with loud voices that we can hear with our ears, we must realize that we are also being bombarded with IDEAS that have their ORIGIN in the Spirit World. You must learn how to discern WHICH SPIRIT is speaking them to you. God has made this very simple and very clear. This leads us to the final name of Satan we see in 1 John: **The Anti-Christ. 1 John 4:3 NIV**

3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

The term Anti-Christ does not just mean one who is OPPOSED to Christ, but also one who claims to be a SUBSTITUTE CHRIST. He does not just want to destroy Christ and our faith in him; he wants to replace our faith in Christ with a faith in his own self. This means that the Anti-Christ is not just a real person who will one day walk this earth and seek to be worshiped by all men, but he is a present, EVIL SPIRIT who seeks to undermine and replace faith in Christ in EVERY GENERATION. He does this in several ways:

- *He presents “another Christ” to us that is NOT Jesus Christ.
 - Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.
 - He denies that Jesus actually came in human flesh in real history!
- *He belittles the finished work of Christ as IRRELEVANT to real life.
 - He compartmentalizes your faith: Good for church, not good for dating or \$!
 - He makes you ASHAMED of the NAME of Christ!
- *He EQUATES Christ with all other gods.
 - Allah, Jesus, Buddha, etc.
- *He IGNORES Christ altogether, and tries to REDIRECT your faith. [Other saviors]
 - Science, Self, Pleasure, Power

Once again, the simple measure of whether or not you are hearing from God or from Satan is this: Are these thoughts MAKING MUCH of CHRIST, or MAKING LITTLE of CHRIST? Are the words that you are hearing or reading causing you to have a greater vision of Christ and the glory of his work, or is it causing you to develop a DIMINSHING view of his power and worth?

I want to finish with a truth about our faith in Christ that has always made me want to DANCE. It is a secret that our enemy does NOT want you to know. It is simply this:

Faith is our victory.

You don't have to worry about the final battle. Satan has already lost. That is true no matter how well or poorly you and I obey on this side of Heaven. But the fact is, you and I can EXPERIENCE that victory on a daily basis if we will listen to and obey the Holy Spirit who comes to live within us after we are saved. Here is how John states this truth: **1 John 5:4-5 NIV**

4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Hold onto your faith in Christ. Celebrate it! Jesus is the Victorious One, and he will carry you to victory in this life. Satan knows that if he can neutralize our faith, then he can lessen our experience of Christ's victory over him in this world. Nothing would please him more. **Don't give him that pleasure!** Jesus can be trusted with every aspect of your life, and the sooner you entrust all things to him, the greater will be your experience of faith!

So, what is happening to YOUR FAITH in Christ?

Let's pray.

