

I. OPENING TEXT

A. 1 John 4:1-4

KJV "Beloved, believe not every spirit, **but try the spirits whether they are of God:** because **many** false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

B. 1 John 2:20

KJV "But ye have an **unction** from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

C. "Unction":

- The inward witness and illumination of the Spirit
- Spiritual perception that enables a believer to recognize truth from error

II. EXAMPLES OF THE VOICE OF THE ENEMY

A. Satan's Voice to Jesus

1. Matthew 4:1-11

NKJV "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, '**If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.**' But He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."' Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. **For it is written:** "He shall give His angels charge over you," and, "In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, '**It is written again, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God."**' Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory...."

PASTOR'S NOTE: *Satan is quoting Scripture! There are times when Satan will disguise his voice as the voice of God or the Holy Spirit. Discernment is required to recognize the motive behind the voice.*

2. Characteristics of the enemy's voice:
 - a. Appeals to natural desires.
 - b. Encourages independence from God.
 - c. Promotes pride and self-exaltation.
 - d. Misuses Scripture to deceive.
 - e. Always has the goal of MOVING one away from God or His plan.

3. Jesus not only overcame the temptation by speaking the Word, He overcame by discerning the voice of the enemy—even when scripture was being used.

B. Satan's Voice Through Peter

1. Matthew 16:21-23

NKJV “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘**Get behind Me, Satan!** You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’”

PASTOR'S NOTE: *Not every voice comes from an evil person. Sometimes sincere people can unknowingly speak words contrary to God's will. When this occurs, we must discern the motive of these words to hinder God's will for our life.*

Peter had just been commended for speaking from the place of revelation. Now, he is being rebuked for speaking from another realm. Peter's intention was pure. However, Jesus discerned that Satan was attempting to use his words against Him.

*There are people who will have good intentions for your life with no harm intended. However, their words may be used by the enemy to sow doubt or fear into your life. **YOU MUST DISCERN** the voice and the spirit by which they are working. This is what Jesus was doing!*

2. Other characteristics of the enemy's voice:
 - a. Accuses
 - b. Condemns
 - c. Questions motives
 - d. Attempts to produce guilt and discouragement

3. How many times has the enemy disguised his voice as the voice of God when in reality it was a "spirit" of condemnation?

C. Paul's Discernment of the Voice of the Enemy

1. Acts 16:16-18

NKJV "Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, 'These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.' And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And he came out that very hour."

PASTOR'S NOTE: *The remarkable thing about this passage is that the girl was speaking words that were factually correct: "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." The words sounded right, but the spirit behind the words was wrong. Paul did not merely discern the accuracy of the statement; he discerned the source of the statement.*

- *Not every correct statement comes from the Holy Spirit.*
 - *Truth spoken from a wrong spirit is still a wrong spiritual influence.*
 - *Discernment goes beyond evaluating words; it evaluates the source.*
 - *The Holy Spirit enables believers to recognize what is operating behind what is being said.*
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2. Discernment asks two questions:
 - a. Is the message true?
 - b. What spirit is behind the message?

III. PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF DISCERNING WORDS AND SPIRITS

A. Ask These Questions Regarding Inward Leadings and Outward Voices:

1. Where is this leading me?
2. Does this agree with God's Word?
3. Does it produce faith or confusion?
4. Does it glorify Christ or draw attention elsewhere?

B. Discern the Motive!

1. The motive of the spirit of the enemy will always be to MOVE YOU!
2. To move you away from God, away from your assignment, and away from those with whom you are to be connected regarding your assignment.
 - Move you from revelation you have received
 - Move you from the realm of the Spirit to the realm of flesh
 - Move you from faith to fear

C. Pay Attention to Your Spirit Vs. the Natural Mind

1. Pastor's personal example:
 - a. There have been times that my natural mind was filled with thoughts and distracting words. Once I could re-direct to my spirit, I found my answer.
 - b. **Example:** A recent situation was causing some fear to work in my mind. Once I checked my spirit, I found there was no reason to fear.
2. God speaks through the inner peace found in your spirit—not through a mind filled with confusion and turmoil.

D. Develop Discernment Through Greater Fellowship with God

1. Discernment grows through:
 - a. Prayer
 - b. Worship
 - c. The Word
 - d. Obedience to the Holy Spirit
2. The more familiar you become with God's voice, the easier it becomes to recognize a counterfeit voice.