

# THE FIRST 15

Friday, October 18, 2024

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Today is Friday, October 18th, and this week we are reflecting on how God sets us free from guilt by the power of his grace.

## OPENING PRAYER

In this season, we are praying this prayer together.

*May the cornerstone of my life, and of our life together, be Christ and Christ alone.*

## SCRIPTURE

***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. 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, 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. 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. 1 John 4:1-4***

## REFLECTION

If you find this passage confusing, don't worry. You are in good company. It seems like it took me years to even begin to understand John's meaning. If we are honest, the first three verses might be one of those portions of scripture we would skip past in order to "get to the good part." And John does have some really good parts we find just a few verses later in chapter 4. Here's just a few examples.

Verse 7 - *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."*

Verse 9 - *"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."*

Verse 11 - *"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."*

Verse 19 - *"We love because he first loved us."*

For such a beautiful chapter of scripture, it's somewhat surprising that it begins in such a confusing way. So, let's dig in.

John says,

*Do not believe every spirit...*

*Test the spirits...*

*And here is how you distinguish between the good spirits and the bad spirits...*

*Ask them if they know who Jesus really is...*

Well, how exactly does that work? Here's what I would suggest. I would encourage you to think of these spirits (notice the lower case 's') as the thoughts that enter your mind. Some of those thoughts are planted in you by The Spirit (notice the upper case 'S') but some of those come from other spirits. Another way of saying that would be that some of those thoughts give life and

some of those seek to destroy life which points to how we actually “test” those thoughts in order to identify their origin.

We can ask,

*Does this thought nurture abundant life or undermine the fullness of life that Jesus promised?*

*Does this spirit lead me into closer relationship with Christ or does it create distance in my relationship with Christ?*

*Does this thought cultivate the fruits of the Spirit that Paul outlines in Galatians 5:22-23? (Love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control)*

In relationship to the theme we have looked at this week,

*Does this spirit lead me to walk in the freedom that is available by grace and grace alone or does it lead me back into the slavery of guilt and fear?*

**And one last note for the week...**

If you haven't already, memorize vs. 4. There will be ample opportunity for you to turn away from a false spirit by grounding yourself in this truth.

***The one who is in you (the uppercase Spirit) is greater than the one who is at work in the world. (The lowercase spirits)***

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to you, in every way.*

*Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.*

*Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say. AMEN.*

-Prayer from Lectio 365 App