

**Braggs church of Christ Bulletin
December 6, 2020**

Sick & Shut-in

Bennett, Norma
Brashear, Logan
Bunch, Margaret
Cunningham, Jerry
England, Marita
Evans, Carla
Evans, Steve
Hall, Donna
Horn, Bobby
Moore, Jean
Mouse, Tyler
Nunez, Bob
Prichard, Barbara
Prichard, Bobby
Sturgeon, Wayne
Sullins, Ray

Evangelism

Cliff Lyons, Ilya Muzychenko and Markov Roman, Russia
Ricky Gootam, India
House to House/Heart to Heart
Braggschurhofchrist.com
In Search of The Lord's Way- Tulsa, OK, on
KQCW TV 19 - Sun 7:30 am

Attendance

[Average attendance for 2019 - 43]
November Average - 30
Attendance last Sunday - 29

Scripture Reading – Prov. 1:1-3

News & Notes

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13113 White Pine Court
Choctaw, OK 73020
Phone # - 405-987-0506

Please remember Ray Sullins who has cancer.

Marita is in isolation at the nursing home with the coronavirus.

FIRST JOHN 4:1, By Roger D. Campbell

Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits.

That is a message which grabs our attention, does it not? It was written to first-century saints who were facing the challenge of dealing with the influence that false messengers were having on the church.

In its entirety, the wording of 1 John 4:1 is: “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*” Let us examine the meaning and application of those words.

“Beloved” — This comes from a Greek word which means “beloved, esteemed, dear, favorite, worthy of love.” It is an endearing term, found five times in the letter that we know as “First John.” In each of those five instances, it is the beginning word of a sentence (3:2,21; 4:1,7,11). For John to address them as his “beloved” let them know that he cared about them. He has some tough language for those who cast aside the Lord’s instructions, but he loved all of them dearly.

“Do not believe every spirit” — First, we need to identify who or what these “spirits” were. In the same statement, John mentioned prophets (4:1). He went on to write about spirits confessing or not confessing Jesus (4:2,3). John said the spirits “speak” (4:5), and he noted there is a difference between “*the spirit of truth*” and “*the spirit of error*” (4:6). It is clear that when John charged the disciples not to believe every spirit, he meant do not believe every religious *messenger/message*. It is not uncommon for parents, perhaps on several occasions, to warn their children, “Do not believe everything you hear.” That still is sage advice. In the spiritual realm, not every spoken or printed message is good for us. There is sound doctrine — teaching that is healthy for our soul (Titus 2:1). There also are unhealthy spiritual messages. In the context of 1 John 4, John speaks of false prophets (4:1), messengers who are “*not of God*” (4:3). He further describes them as being “*of the world*” (4:5) and “*the spirit of error*” (4:6). Our Lord does not want any of us to be influenced by “*every wind of doctrine, by the sleight [trickery] of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*” (Eph. 4:14).

“Test the spirits, whether they are of God” — How can you and I know which spirits are of God? Test them. “To test/try” is from a Greek word defined as “to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals; to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy.” The charge to prove/test all things employs the same Greek word in First Thessalonians 5:21. It is the word Jesus used when

speaking about a man testing his oxen (Luke 14:19). So, there is testing metals...testing animals...testing religious teachers.

Instead of believing each religious message we come across, we are to test them one by one. How? We must compare what we hear or read with the truth that God has revealed to us. God's word is truth (John 17:17). Truth cannot contradict itself. Thus, if a message *harmonizes* with the revealed will/truth of God, it is true. If it *clashes* with the Bible, it is false. If the message is *an addition to* God's word, it is a human-devised hoax. We recall that the apostle Paul warned the churches of Galatia not to receive any message which was different from the genuine Gospel he had proclaimed to them (Gal. 1:6-9).

In order for a person to be effective in testing the religious messages he encounters, he must have a good knowledge of God's word. This is where many people are in serious trouble! They are in great danger of accepting, following, and promoting falsehoods because they do not have adequate Bible knowledge.

National and world leaders often discuss and identify what they consider to be the greatest problems facing humanity. There is one grave danger which such worldly officials never contemplate: a lousy knowledge of the Bible leads people and communities into violation of God's will, and that has eternal consequences! If a person is convinced that going to heaven is the most important matter in his existence, he will be like the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). It is worth the effort! Failing to arm ourselves will not produce a happy outcome.

“Because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” As an apostle of Jesus, John could not take away man's free will, which included the liberty to speak. The reality is, when people open their mouths to speak, many of them do not teach God's truth. Note that John said in his day there were “false” prophets — “many” of them. Our Lord said to beware of such people who outwardly resemble sheep but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matt. 7:15).

No, not every religious message is acceptable to God. No, not every religious messenger is a great person. We love the soul of each false messenger, but we detest their false words which deceive the gullible and lead them toward eternal torment (2 Peter 2:1,2).

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