

A Fake or Faithful Follower?

1 John 4:1-6

I want to pick up where Tyler Golden left off last week in order to examine chapter 4:1-6. We see in 3:23-24 several truths, but specifically The Holy Spirit causes someone to 1) believe in Christ, or have faith in Christ, 2) to love! Tyler made that crystal clear, love is the sign that you are in Christ! No love, no Christ! Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit confirms that we are in Christ. Listen to Romans 8:16 *"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,"* In fact the Word tells us that there will be those who are cultural Christians, but not real born again believers. Jesus tells us this in Matthew 7:22-23 **"On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"** John gives us a clear way to identify those who are of the faith.

I. They are to be Tested (1 John 4:1) This is a call to examine fruit by the Holy Spirit. What is the difference between trying, proving, or testing the Spirit and Judging? Testing is a biblical command to discern the difference between truth and error. The Bereans did this in Acts 17, they studied the Word of God to see if what Paul was preaching was correct. I hope you do that with me. Judging is condemning someone without loving them. I will say, helping someone know that they are in sin is loving! If a brother or a sister has a venomous snake attached to them, and we don't point it out or try to help them get rid of it, we're saying that they don't matter. Galatians 6:1 ***"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted."*** The most loving thing that we can do is help restore someone in Christ. The world will see it as hate, but we encounter it as healing! I challenge you to read Matthew 18:15-17 about what Jesus said about repentance and restoration.

II. Followers Will Confess the Truth (1 John 4:2) They way to know if they are in Christ, the Holy Spirit will cause us to proclaim that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. It is possible to confess with the lips this truth and not be in Christ, but confession in this context according to John means not simply a statement, but a total transformation of the heart. We see this clearly in 1 John 1:9. The confession of sin isn't mere words, but heart changed proclamation. There must be a genuine confession. None of us will listen, respond, or produce anything apart from the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

III. Fakers Will Totally Deny the Truth (1 John 4:3) So, just the opposite. It is true that they may deny Christ with their lips, or that they may falsely calm Christ, it's the same Holy Spirit transformed confession. They will not confess, if they are not in Christ.

IV. Followers Have Tremendous Peace (1 John 4:4) A Follower Has an Eternal Foundation in Christ. Listen to Paul's sharing of this same truth in Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." You will know that you have Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit will give you peace! Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world. Yes, there will be times of doubt, so run to the Word and find peace. You know when doubt comes, when you're away from the things of God. The Holy Spirit will confirm this!

V. Fakers Treasure the World Instead of the Word (1 John 4:5) A False Follower Has an Eventual Eternal Fatality Apart from Christ because they have built their world on the sand instead of on the Rock of Jesus Christ! In Psalm 73, I challenge you to read it, the psalmist Asaph is asking God why the wicked prosper while the Saints feel crushed? He later comes to his senses and realizes that they will not last, they will be eternally condemned. Jesus warned us more about Hell than he talked about Heaven. If we treasure the world more than Christ, we do not know Him and we will not be with Him. Listen to how Psalm 73 ends in verses 27-28: ***"For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works."***

VI. Followers Will Strive to Obey the Teachings of Christ (1 John 4:6) A Follower Will Exemplify Christian Cooperation (1 John 4:6) We know faithful followers by their cooperation. In John 8:47 Jesus said, "He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." John's teaching in this verse is reflective of our Lord's warning to the extremely religious of His day. In John 17, Jesus prayed for unity among His people, the Bride of Christ, the Church. Believers love the teaching of God's Word. God's because of the Holy Spirit brings about supernatural transformation, and it is all sufficient, satisfying, and corrects us from sin.

The final question today: are you faking or are you a faithful follower of Jesus Christ?