

# Testing the Spirits

by Ray Greenly

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*Ray Greenly's sermon emphasizes the necessity of testing spiritual influences against biblical truth to stand firm in faith amidst spiritual warfare.*

**Duration:** 38:49

**Topics:** "Discernment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the seriousness of Jesus' death on the cross and the need for believers to resist sin to the point of shedding their own blood. He warns against the influence of spirits that try to deceive and block access to the blood of Jesus. The preacher criticizes the reliance on worldly solutions, such as credit cards and doctors, instead of wrestling with problems and seeking God's guidance. He also criticizes the model of church growth that focuses on numbers rather than genuine conversion, sharing an example of a pastor who rejected a passionate plea for repentance. The sermon concludes with a call to test the spirits and acknowledge Jesus as the only way to salvation.

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## Transcript

The message the Lord has given me is entitled, Test the Spirits, Test the Spirits. Almighty God, when I came before your throne, you opened this message from my heart. Lord, I pray now that you'll quicken it by your Holy Spirit's power and your Holy Spirit's presence, quicken it to set us free, to establish us in a firm place where we can't be blown by every wind of doctrine, but Lord, where we can stand firm at the foot of the cross and only see you, Jesus.

I pray in your Holy name, amen. First John, the fourth chapter. I'll begin reading with verse one.

First John, the fourth chapter, beginning with verse one. 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. And 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've heard is coming, and even now is already in the world. This is a difficult passage of scripture.

Many times as I've read through the Bible, that's a passage I just really wanna skip over. I don't wanna even deal with it. I very seldom have preached on this passage, but tonight we need to open it and

understand that our utilitarian mindset in America blocks the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

We believe what we see, but in scripture, it's not about believing what you see. It's about believing what the word of Christ says. That's a totally different orientation that we Americans are not accustomed to.

We're accustomed to strategic planning, problem-solving. We're very cerebral. We put a very high value on worldview and on understanding all of the arguments and the approaches necessary to take in order to win someone to our point of view.

We're very persuasive. And frankly, right now, the number one issue being batted around in the Christian evangelical church in North America is the word worldview. Do we have the right worldview? And now Focus on the Family has come out with a series on worldview and being renewed in your mind.

And that renewal is based on not living sacrifice offered to Jesus, but rather on understanding the correct intellectual approach to the gospel. Now, I'm not an anti-intellectual. I've done the graduate study.

I've carefully observed my doctrine as the scripture instructs us. But there is a mindset that blocks the work of the spirit in our hearts. If I don't see a power or a force that is causing me to behave in certain ways, if I am ignorant of it, I have no defense against it.

So if you look with me, for example, in Ephesians, the sixth chapter, let's begin with verse 10. Ephesians, keep your finger right there in 1 John. Ephesians, the sixth chapter, verse 10, finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Let's read that now in the King James version.

It's more clearly stated in the King James. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Of course, that word principality, literally in the Greek means the chief, the head, the beginning one, the one who is in charge of it all.

So the battle, the wrestling match, I don't know if any of you have ever been involved in wrestling, but in high school, I loved to wrestle. I particularly liked tag team wrestling. It was brutal.

It was physical. And I would leave that place often injured because I always wanted to take on the next bigger guy. And in tag team, it didn't matter how much he outweighed you.

That's what made it fun when you pinned him. This is talking about getting on the mat and wrestling. And it's saying that every one of us will be on the mat.

Now you can be unconscious of that or you can be conscious, but you will be on the mat. And whether you're pinned or not depends on whether you know what your adversary is about. If you go out there and you have no concept of what's going to happen, you're going to be body slammed.

You're going to be beat up. You don't have a prayer. So when American Christians are faced with a trauma, we turn to our credit cards.

We don't know how to wrestle. When we're faced with a medical problem, we run to the doctor. We don't know how to wrestle.

When we're faced with a problem in the church, we want to bring in a consultant. We want to look at how do we build a church. Give me some principles so I can apply my principles.

We're body slammed. The churches that are being built today following the model of the principles of church growth are bringing in thousands of people, but there are thousands of unconverted people who've been vaccinated against the gospel of Jesus Christ. One pastor called me, called me on the phone this morning from Ohio.

He's an associate pastor. He'd gone in and given his senior pastor a CD of a passionate plea for repentance. And the senior pastor called him back in the office and said, I could never let this be passed around in our church.

Why? Oh, it would disturb people too much. We can't talk about sin. We have to talk about grace in our church.

Well, that's because his whole congregation, for the most part, thousands of people showing up for church are all pagans, never been born again, never experienced wrestling with God. So the demonic spirits come and they have a heyday in that church, but against principalities, against powers, those are local authorities, against the rulers of the darkness. This is speaking about superhuman power that is being used against us.

That's why the Lord is saying, put your armor on. If you don't know how to put your armor on and you don't know how to fight with that armor, you're in trouble. That's what Paul is saying in Ephesians.

So we come back to 1 John and he says, test the spirits. In other words, don't just put your head in the sand and pretend that everything is American. There are alien forces that are coming against us that have great power and great authority, and they intend to influence and shape your life.

Look what they've done to America. They've caused the American government to turn against the baby in the womb so that now we have whole generations of children who have died, and now they want cheap labor. So they opened the borders.

The reason they have to open the borders is they've killed their children. Look at prayer in the public school. Oh, you're not allowed to pray in the public school.

It's interesting that in Russia, they want you to pray in the public school. They see it makes a difference in their behavior. But in America, we want to pass out condoms instead of prayers.

We want to open the door for homosexuality. We want to do every kind of wickedness in this nation. Why? Because we've been taken by spiritual powers who are intent on destroying this nation.

They're determined to take us down a socialist, fascist path. They're determined to steal the money, the money lenders, they're determined, steal the money, pour it into the hole of whatever bank they choose, destroy the economy. We're dealing with spiritual powers that are far stronger than anything we could imagine.

They're real powers. So now they come to us. Notice what it says.

Because many false prophets have gone out into the world. Oh, now it's getting up close and personal. It's saying that many false prophets have gone out.

False prophets, that is a prophet who is speaking from a spirit other than the righteous spirit of Christ. Speaking a prophet, speaking a word of prosperity, serving the Baal gods. Speaking a word of strategy and success instead of holiness and the cross.

These are men who've been moved, but now let's take it even more personally. Let's take it right in the body of Christ. Here at the National Prayer Chapel, demonic spirits can come and begin to try to seduce one of us into turning against a brother.

Or come in and try to begin to try to seduce or begin to sow discord, bitterness toward the pastor or toward the leadership of the church. All a spirit has to do is get the church to fight with one another. He's got it.

All he has to do is begin to cause hard feelings between brothers and sisters. Never in their right mind would they turn against each other but suddenly two normal people will suddenly engage in a fight that has no consequences. And you scratch your head and you say, come on guys, how did that happen? Grow up.

And what you're dealing with are spiritual beings that come into a defenseless fellowship. A fellowship who doesn't understand the spiritual warfare and it can be destroyed in a moment. All Satan has to do is have some of you hold bitterness in your heart, hold anger in your spirit, talk behind people's backs, begin to gossip and pretty soon the church is not a safe place.

And then all confession of sin stops, transparency ends, there's a tightness in the air, everybody's walking on eggshells and God has to come in and make an omelet. Pull some teeth. We don't have to let this kind of thing happen to us.

These are spiritual powers that we can quickly recognize and take authority in the name of Jesus over and say, I'm not going to walk your road. I am going to walk the highway of holiness. I am going to follow Jesus Christ.

I'm not going to engage in this cane behavior. It's a choice. But it has to be a choice of recognizing what the weapons of the enemy are as they come against us.

The enemy comes to me and he says, you think anybody's listening on this radio? You're just throwing good money after bad. And so I begin to say, I'm really tired today. I don't think I want to do a broadcast today.

As soon as I begin to feel that way, you know what rises up in my heart? Get to the prayer closet. Begin to deal with that demon spirit. Demand that he leave me in the name of Jesus.

Begin to enter into the rest of Jesus. Ask that I could be in the peace of Jesus. I'm not going to walk by sight.

I'm going to walk by faith. I'm not going to walk by the nudges of demon spirits. I'm going to walk by the drawing power of the Holy Ghost as he brings me into the heart of Jesus Christ.

These are choices we have to make day by day. I could surrender immediately to the barrage, the constant barrage of demonic forces that are arrayed against me. That want to whisper every discouraging

word in my heart.

You're too sick to do that. You can't pull that off. Are you kidding? You say that to me, devil, I'm going to go double hard the opposite direction.

Until finally he learns, don't say it to him. Because if you say it to him, you're in trouble, Jesus comes. He learns after a while, but it takes him a while.

But we have to learn to take that stand in the spirit realm. But now let's be even more clear about what's being spoken here. Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

And so I hear some people say, oh, spirit, are you going to confess that Jesus came in the flesh? And the spirit says, of course he came in the flesh. And you say, okay, pass the test. I'll do whatever he tells me to do.

Do you think the devil does not believe for a moment that Jesus Christ came in the flesh? Believe me, he knows Jesus came in the flesh. So what's being spoken of here? There was a heresy that John was dealing with. It's a heresy called docetism.

The docetists believed that Jesus came as a spirit, that he did not come in a body, that what was visible was simply an illusion, a hologram, if you please. They didn't have that word, but that's what they meant. That Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but instead it simply appeared that he died.

It was spiritual. It was not real. John is referring to this because if a man or woman believes that Jesus did not come in the flesh, that means he did not die in the flesh, and that means there's no blood, there's no atonement.

And that means that the blood cannot cast out our sin, and we cannot walk righteous before God. So let's read it again. This is how you can recognize the spirit of God.

Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, died on Calvary, shed his blood, demanded that sin be removed, this is the spirit that acknowledges that Jesus is from God. No demon spirit is going to say, yes, of course the blood has the power to set you free from sin. A demon spirit's not going to say that.

That's the last thing he wants you to know. He wants you to think that you are captive and in his clutches, and you will be until the day you die. You're helpless, and the power of the blood has no power over you.

It's a lie. The blood has all the power. So you have to understand who John was addressing, and that's why when you look at the whole context of the book of John, look, first chapter, I'm sorry, the second chapter, verse three, we know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

The man who says I know him, but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him.

Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. That takes blood power. Again, look in the third chapter, verse two, dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him.

Notice it does not say we shall become like him. It says we shall be like him. In other words, we're that way already.

We already were given the victory. For we shall see him as he is, and everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure. Everyone who sins breaks the law.

In fact, sin is lawlessness, or sin is rebellion. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. So the devil comes and he says, you can't help but sin.

That's a demon spirit. That's not from the Lord God of heaven. We have to hear the spirit of God, not the spirit of the devil.

And understand that when the spirit of God speaks, he's speaking by the authority of the blood of Jesus Christ. And that blood tells us that we can walk in victory. If we're going to see Jesus, we must walk in victory.

Not by hard work, not by straining muscles, but by faith in the blood. It's a gift given. So we have to test this gift.

We have to test the spirits. You want to know what does this spirit say to us? Does this spirit come speaking to us of righteousness? Or does he come speaking of worldliness? Test the spirits when you sit down in front of a television. Or when you turn on the radio.

Test the spirit. Test the spirit. Does this spirit draw me closer to Jesus? Or does this spirit push me away from Jesus? Test the spirit.

Oh, but pastor, it's just simple fun. No, the devil didn't design any simple fun. There's no such thing as simple fun.

There's recreation, which is being recreated in the image of Christ. That's recreation. It's very enjoyable.

It was meant to be enjoyable, but it's not the loose headed openness to the demon spirits where we're simply consumers of fun. I think that's why the word fun is not found in the scriptures. Joy is found in the scriptures, not fun.

So we're called to walk in joy before the Lord God of heaven. And we're called to bring our children in joy before the Lord God of heaven. As we walk in recreation, where we're recreated in the image of Christ.

I want you to look with me now at another passage of scripture. Romans, the first chapter, verse 16. I am not ashamed of the gospel.

Now I can tell you the apostle Paul would have said, I am ashamed of the gospel. If it did not produce righteousness, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes first for the Jews and then for the Gentile. For in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith.

But now notice, it begins immediately to speak about wrath. The wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of the men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. And then notice verse 21.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. That's the work of demonic spirits. When our minds are darkened, that's the work of darkness.

Although they claim to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal men, birds, animals, and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and they worshiped and served created things rather than the creator who is forever praised.

Now continue with me. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done.

Paul is saying that if we begin to walk with demon spirits, if we begin to walk in the ways of this world, those spirits will slowly darken our eyes. They will take from us our ability to perceive truth. And so the result will be, I'll be reading my Bible, the Lord will convict me of some sin in my life, and I'll say, oh Lord, forgive me for that sin.

That's the end of it. It's done. No, it's not.

No wrestling here. No recognition that demon powers are coming against me. So I'll be right back doing what I just said, please forgive me for.

And so we have this cycle, always going back. Why? Because layer upon layer upon layer of darkness covers North America. So much so that even when a person wants to repent, they think it sufficient to simply say, oh, forgive me.

Forgive me for my sins. Let's just put them all in one basket. Forgive me for my sins.

God is not a vending machine, God. You don't put your quarter in and get out your little prize. God is not a Cracker Jack package where you have little toy inside made of plastic.

And one of the great problems we're having right now in this fellowship is that God will convict us of laziness or gluttony or inattention to the word or whatever. You know, that's what I did, God, and I'm sorry, please forgive me. Next, no weeping before God.

No brokenness of heart before God. No wrestling, no wrestling, no body contact. And so there's no victory because everything is just casual.

And Satan has set it up so that we're too busy to get serious with God. I mean, my plate's too full. I don't have time to pray for an hour.

I don't have the strength or the energy. God, you're just gonna have to understand. Well, God's got eternity.

That's not an issue for him, but I don't have eternity. I have a short period of probation to get right with God. And if I think I can just say to God, oh, forgive me for this sin.

Thank you very much, I appreciate it. Till next time, God. And then next week, oh God, forgive me, thank you.

Next time, forgive me, God, thank you. I'm on my way, I'm busy. God's not a McDonald's.

You don't drive in and give your order and take it out with you and eat on the run. There's going to have to be some serious wrestling before God. It's not enough to just say, I'm sorry, God.

You know, how many times I've gotten down to begin to pray with the Lord, there's a fence there. There's a fence, I'm fenced out of heaven. I'm fenced out of the throne room of God.

Now I know the only way I'm going to get in. I'm going to have to wrestle. I'm going to have to stay in the presence of God until I get the assurance that I'm in and that that forgiveness is granted.

And quite frankly, it's not usually granted until there've been some serious tears. But of course, part of the problem is, if I still love my sin, but just feel a little guilty about it, those are the ones Satan loves. Because on one hand, he gets to make us feel bad.

And on the other hand, we don't feel bad enough to do anything about it. So he gets the best of both worlds for him, that he's taken the peace away from God's people and he's prevented them from accessing the blood to wrestle through to victory. That's why I'm saying, when you begin to confess your sins, test the spirit, test the human spirit.

We can come here week after week and day after day and nothing is going to change. I can't give you any information that is going to get you into heaven. I can't give you any information that's going to cause you to be smart enough to know how to weasel your way past the guardian angel that guards that garden.

There's only one way, the blood, to get into that garden. You know why I call it the garden? Because that's the home we were kicked out of. I want to go home.

The only way past that guardian angel who swings that sword is the blood of Jesus. And I have to finally decide to get serious about my sin and begin to renounce it, to begin to be serious with God, as serious with God as he is with me. You want to see how serious God was about it? He died on a cross.

That's pretty serious. The word says we've not yet resisted our sin to the point of shedding our blood. It's time.

See, every spirit comes and tries to convince us that we can slip in, that we can do it the cheap way, that we can, after all, we're just human. No. Remember, Jesus said it was a groaning gate.

It was a narrow gate. You have to squeeze through it. And you can't take your favorite toys through because there's no room to get them through.

So tonight, what spirits have been troubling you? What spirits have been lying to you? What spirits have been trying to block your access to the blood of Jesus Christ? What spirits have tried to convince you to give up, to rebel, to draw a brother or sister away from the truth? What spirit has been trying to influence your life? Are you aware of that spirit? Have you renounced it in the name of Jesus? You see, demon spirits everywhere in the scriptures are referred to as unclean. That means every demon spirit manifests itself in sin, in uncleanness. So if you're going to test the spirits, you're going to have to say, what spirit causes me to sin? What spirit causes me to turn against my brother? What spirit causes me to grow discouraged? What spirit causes me to walk in unbelief? Now on top of all of that, if that were not enough, there's the rebellious human spirit who above all wants to use any power available to survive.

And you know what? We don't want to kill the human spirit. We want the human spirit transformed by the blood of Jesus. We want to renounce sin and lawlessness and darkness.

And we want to walk in the light of the glory of the cross. Almighty God, I ask that you would give to us the strength to test the spirits and to be brutally honest about anything that draws us away from your heart. To be brutally and unvarnished in our evaluation of what causes our steps to falter on this highway to heaven.

Lord, I pray you'll show us how to put on the armor of God. That you'll show us how to stand with the sword of the spirit to war against the powers of darkness that would own our soul. Lord, we pledge tonight we belong to you and we stand under the bloodstained banner.

Jesus, thank you. I pray in your holy name, amen.

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