

## UNDER THE INFLUENCE

**1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**

a. **You are of God, little children, and have overcome them:**

The child of God need not fear the *spirit of Antichrist*, even though they should be warned of it, because they have the indwelling Spirit of God (1 John 3:24). That indwelling Spirit is greater than **he who is in the world** – Satan and all of his allies.

b. **He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world:** The believer has a resource for victory, the vital presence of the indwelling Jesus, which makes victory always possible – *if* we will rely on **He who is in you** instead of relying on ourselves.

i. This understanding gives great confidence and spiritual power. For those walking in this truth, victory is assured – they **have overcome them**. It is a positive statement, not a wishful hope.

c. **He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world:**

This means the Christian has no place for fear. We have many spiritual enemies, but not *one* of them is greater than Jesus who lives in us.

i. Earlier in the letter, John brought up the idea of the world and its threat to the Christian life (1 John 2:15-17). He presented the **world** not as the global earth or the mass of humanity, which God Himself loves (John 3:16). Instead it is the community of sinful humanity that is united in rebellion against God. Here, John suggests that there are forces of spiritual darkness that guide and influence **the world**.

#### 4. (5-6) The contrast between those in the world and those who are of God.

**They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.**

a. **They are of the world:** Those who are **of the world** are evident because they **speak as of the world**; the influence of the world is evident in their speech. As Jesus said, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks* (Matthew 12:34).

b. **And the world hears them:** Those who are **of the world** are also evident because the **world hears them**. **They face none of the rejection the child of God will face from the world (1 John 3:1), because they are friends with the world.**

i. **The world hears them:** The Christian always wants to speak to the world, and to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. It is exciting when the world will listen to the gospel, but we must take care that they are not hearing us because we **speak as of the world**. Just because the world is hearing the message doesn't prove that the message is God's message.

c. **He who knows God hears us:** Those who are **of God** enjoy fellowship with other believers; they speak the common language of fellowship with God and with each other, because one flows from the other (1 John 1:3).

i. This language of fellowship transcends language, culture, class, race, or any other barrier. It is a true gift from God.

ii. In its official doctrines, the Roman Catholic Church has claimed to be the "us" in **He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us**. But John can only be talking

about the apostles and their authoritative revelation in the Bible when he says **us**. When we know God, and are of God, we hear what the Bible says.

iii. “If this were a mere individual talking, the claim would be presumptuous. But it is not. This is one of the apostles citing the collective testimony of all the apostles and making that testimony the measure of truth and sound doctrine.” (Boice)

d. **He who is not of God does not hear us**: Understanding just who hears what God has taught us through the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament, helps us to know the **spirit of truth and the spirit of error**.

If someone hears what God has said in the Bible, we know he has the **spirit of truth**. If he does not hear it, he has the **spirit of error**.

i. John makes it clear that **error** has a *spiritual* dynamic to it; it isn't just about being educated or smart. Some very educated, very smart people can still be influenced mightily by the **spirit of error**. Since error has a spiritual dynamic to it, keeping in the **spirit of truth** is a spiritual issue.

ii. We keep in the **spirit of truth** by clinging to Jesus, the One who said *I am the truth* (John 14:6).