

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

"For to one is given by the Spirit discerning of spirits" (I Corinthians 12:10)

THE GREEK TRANSLATION

The Greek word translated "discerning" (DIAKRISIS) means to separate, make a distinction, to discriminate. It is used to describe what mature believers do when they "discern good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). "The essential thoughts of the word are a piercing of all that is merely outward, and seeing right through; then forming a judgment based on that insight" (Donald Gee, pg 57, Concerning Spiritual Gifts).

THIS GIFT IS NOT...

- 1...Keen insight into human nature as a psychiatrist may have.
- 2...Character reading, fault finding or human shrewdness.
- 3...Spiritual mind reading or mental penetration.
- 4...Mere human suspicion or psychological insight.

GREAT DANGER

Discerning of Spirits is not the power to discover faults in others. Even the unsaved are able to criticize, find fault and become judgmental. Oh what damage has been caused by those who point out failings and shortcomings in fellow believers, claiming to have, "The gift of discernment". "Much harm has often been done, and the work of God grievously hindered, by unspiritual or prejudiced people judging and condemning a real work of God because it did not conform to their personal standards of just how the Almighty should manifest His power." (D. Gee, Pg 57, Concerning Spiritual Gifts)

WHAT IS THIS GIFT?

Discerning of Spirits is...

1. The Supernatural ability to determine what kind of spirit is behind any activity or behavior.
2. The capability given by the Holy Spirit to discern the spiritual source of things, whether divine (God or angels), human, or satanic (demonic).
3. "By the gift of discerning of spirits, the believer is enabled to know immediately what is motivating a person or situation" (Dennis Bennett, pg 143, The Holy Spirit and You).
4. The God given gift to His church to be able to judge (discern) what is really born of God and what is not.
5. "Knowing and judging, but never guessing. It is to know what is in a person and to know the spirit. The church is guarded against evil spirits and deceivers, and they are exposed" (G. Raymond Carlson, pg103, Spiritual Dynamics).

A NECESSARY GIFT

The discerning of spirits is a kind of "police" gift, to keep the enemy's influence from causing problems in the local church Body. Through this gift, God will expose people and practices that could otherwise harm His precious people (His Bride - His Church).

This gift is especially needed when other gifts are exercised in church gatherings. "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge (discern)" (I Corin. 14:29). God will witness with our spirit what is in agreement with Him and His Word. He will (through this gift) expose, protect, and show us who's who and what's what!!!

No need to worry ladies and gentlemen; where Jesus is lifted up, He (through the Spirit) will protect and preserve the lambs of His flock.

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BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

1. Acts 16:16-18...In Acts 16, a woman possessed with a spirit of divination continued to interrupt Paul with a word which sounded something like prophecy: "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show us the way of salvation" (v.17). What she spoke was true, but she was speaking under the influence of the enemy. Yes, the enemy may send people into a meeting expressly to disturb it with counterfeit manifestations.
Paul discerned this wrong spirit, was grieved within, then commanded the evil spirit to leave her. We learn here that counterfeit manifestations should be dealt with, if possible, at the time they occur.
2. II Kings 5:16-26...Elisha discerned the dishonest spirit of Gehazi, then through the word of knowledge knew exactly what had been done.
3. Acts 8:9-25...Peter was given the ability by God to discern the underlying nature (Deceit) of the spirit of Simon the sorcerer.
4. Acts 13:6-12...Paul "filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on Elymas and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil" (v8-10) Elymas' sin was a willing and determined subjection to demon authority; hence his terrible punishment of blindness by the hand of the Lord.
5. Genesis 44:5...Joseph was able to discern into the heart of things (yet his followers mistakenly attributed this ability to another source).
6. II Samuel 14:17..."David was able to discern good and bad"
7. I Kings 3:9...Solomon asked for and received this gift in time of need.

JESUS' EXAMPLE

Matthew 12:28..."I cast out demons by the Spirit of God"

Acts 10:38..."Jesus went about, healing all that were oppressed by the devil"

Jesus "knew what was in man" (John 2:25) and exercised this gift frequently. He is able today to "see through" all outward appearances, and pierce into the innermost heart. With eyes as a flame of fire and feet as bronze, we dare not trifle with disobedience to the revealed Word of God.

A DESPERATE NEED

In the age we live in and with what God has prophesied to occur in the last days, it is imperative that we live in unbroken fellowship with Christ. Abiding in His intimate fellowship, we will be able to "try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone into the world" (I John 4:1). Remember, "even satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14). Yes, evil spirits are particularly deceiving because they appear so innocently harmless.

WHY THIS GIFT? TO PROTECT HIS CHURCH

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (I Timothy 4:1)

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies...many shall follow their pernicious ways...they shall with feigned words make merchandise of you"

(II Peter 2:1-3)

"Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you...beguiling unstable souls with covetous practices, having forsaken the right way" (II Peter 2:12-15)

"They speak swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh...they promise liberty but they themselves are servants of corruption" (II Peter 2:18,19)

"There will be mockers in the last days...sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 18,19)

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WHY THIS GIFT? TO PROTECT HIS CHURCH

"Earnestly contend for the faith delivered unto the saints, for there are certain men crept in unawares" (Jude 3,4)

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived"
(II Timothy 3:13)

"Mark them...and avoid them...for they serve there own belly and by fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17,18)

"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch" (Acts 20:29,30)

"Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15)

"Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many" (Matthew 24:4,5)

"Let no man deceive you with vain words" (Ephesians 5:6)

"They received not the truth that they might be saved, and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (II Thessalonians 2:10,11)

THANK YOU LORD...

...For protecting us, Your sheep, from seducing spirits, lying spirits and doctrines of devils. With so many foul demons under clerical cloaks preaching with pleasing voices, Thank you for exposing error through this gift of the Spirit. We shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free. (John 8:32)

Love,

Pastor