

#107 A SPOKEN WORD.....

This word is spoken in my sleep: "Do not make the mistake of just seeking for discernment. Seek for the gift of discerning of spirits!"

In my prayer sessions the Lord had been impressing me of the need for discernment as to what spirits were motivating some teachers and so-called prophets. I was thinking more along the lines of the discernment, wisdom and knowledge that come through a study and understanding of God's written Word. The Lord, however, was referring me to the supernatural gift of discerning of spirits. Now "discerning of spirits" is mentioned by the apostle Paul as one of the nine supernatural gifts found in the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians. Discerning speaks to us of distinguishing or being able to tell the difference between the types of spirits influencing a person's words or work.

First we will discuss biblical discernment. Hebrews 4:12 reads:

"For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart."

This discernment is learned by a study of God's Word. God's words will reveal truth and error and give us sound doctrine, and expose that which is false. This discernment, like wisdom which comes from God's Word, will be able to judge and expose truth from error as far as doctrine and biblical teachings are concerned. This discernment comes by maturing in the Lord and in the knowledge of His written words. Read Hebrews 5:13-14:

"For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil."

This type of discernment can judge or distinguish good from evil by the truth and the outworkings and fruit of a person or ministry. We see this in the statements: "by their fruit you will know them" and "a good tree produces good fruit and an evil tree produces evil fruit." Many television and radio preachers could be judged by their works in their methods and misuse of Scripture to obtain support. If most Christians studied and obeyed the Word they would not be so easily taken in by the wolves.

One does not need much discernment to read behind the motives of some of these ministers who live in great luxury and pomp, yet will still beg and bargain with the simple and ignorant to send them more money---of course, for the promotion of "the Lord's work" (pure and one-hundred percent baloney!). My friends, if these charlatans would spend all their wealth on their own ministries, at least they would be a step further in the right direction. If any person or ministry can not use their own stored monies to help in the furtherance of the ministry, surely it is not worth your donation.

Now let us examine the "gift of discerning of spirits." It is somewhat different from what we call normal discernment. It is supernatural in that it is not acquired learning or knowledge. It is given for the moment to uncover a false teacher or prophet, or to perceive the spirit moving a minister or person who may even be using the Word or a gifting of God---but for an evil or wrong motive.

Discerning of spirits is simply a gift to enable one to distinguish a person's motivating spirit---whether from God, the human nature, or demonic in origin.

As time goes on pastors and elders, along with any who govern the church, will need more often the discerning of spirits operating in their midst. With greater false teachers and shepherds arising we will need greater discernment in order to warn and instruct the sheep, especially those that are babes and novices in God's Word and ways. Discerning of spirits as a gift deals more with removing the outward to expose the heart or motive of the one teaching or expounding to us. My friends, it does not take much discernment to realize the motivating spirit when someone is bouncing all over the floor screaming at the top of their lungs. It is either an evil spirit or a poor, demented soul!

It is the exposure of wolves in sheep's clothing that often requires the gift of discerning of spirits. Many wolves will even proclaim the gospel and teach its truths yet their motive is to obtain money from the flock. They are motivated by spirits of covetousness and greed, not by the Lord's Spirit. Even ministers who counsel and advise and use correct scriptural verses may have an adulterer's heart and even attempt to seduce sexually the women or men they are supposed to be helping. Yes, Jesus told the people to listen to what the priests and teachers of the law said for they sat in Moses' seat, yet He said they were not to act like them. They taught much truth but were greedy and proud, and laid aside the truth they did not like.

Again, discerning of spirits reveals the source of the spirit which under normal conditions could not be otherwise known. I'll give an example. I once listened to a minister who claimed to be a prophet. He taught a wonderful scriptural sermon, yet I discerned him to be a false prophet without any outward proofs. For several years I would not listen to this television evangelist-teacher and many told me I was being judgmental. Well, after awhile some dear believer decided to write down all his prophetic words including his predictions. Every prophecy with dated predictions never came to pass. Now, how could he be a true prophet if these prophecies proved false? Yet some of his teachings were good. Do you get my point? Unless one knew of these false utterances one would be unable to discern without the gift of discerning of spirits.

Another example would be ministers who raise funds to send out missionaries with the gospel. They use every biblical verse to encourage you to give, but when the money is collected they use it to build more and bigger homes for themselves at your expense. If this gift of discerning were more prevalent in our assemblies today, the flocks would be less plundered.

This last example will surely upset some. When it comes to exercising the gift of "speaking in tongues" pastors and authorities need both the discernment learned from the teachings of the Bible and the gift of discerning of spirits for more subtle counterfeit situations. How often in our pentecostal and charismatic churches have we allowed much fanaticism and wild fleshly displays for fear of quenching the Spirit. My friends, we quench the Spirit more by allowing this disorderly conduct without proper correction. Pastor and ministers are often more afraid of offending their flocks than of offending the Lord!

Paul gives a good outline of how and when to allow tongues and prophecy to be used. Anything that goes against what he taught is not of the Spirit. Few actions disgust me more than to be listening to a good sermon or teaching and then have some emotional, shouting person stand and interrupt---ranting on for several minutes without any kind of order or interpretation. Sadder and more disgusting is the minister who stops his preaching and permits this fleshly and spurious display to continue. By the time he returns to his sermon one can sense the anointing has departed. Why so? Because that pastor or minister is accountable to the Lord for not maintaining order and dealing with the fleshly outburst.

I believe there is a time and place for tongues, yet those in authority or leadership must judge and discern timing and proper order. Let us be practical, friends, only one person at a time can address a

group of people. Everyone can not decide when and how he or she will speak or perform. Authorities and leaders must make these choices. Being led of the Spirit and moving in accordance with God's instructions by His Word are the proper methods.

Sad again (I believe this to be true), most speaking in tongues at public meetings is nothing more than an emotional outburst which proceeds from the lower nature. I believe in the true gifts, but we should not allow the false. The gift of discerning of spirits will enable us to distinguish true and false gifts and even the misuse of proper gifts. Those who are given to wild emotional spasms and shouting are usually also unteachable in correction and instruction. The one in charge must reprove or rebuke when necessary. We should honor and fear the Holy Spirit more than we fear offending proud and unteachable souls. We also should not allow such to disrupt our orderly fellowship.

Finally, remember this. Though most displays of so-called gifts may be fleshly and not of the Lord, the true gifts do exist. Let us accept the true gifts when manifested and not fear them because so much has been fleshly.