

## THE GIFT OF DISCERNMENT - A SERVING GIFT

TEXT: I Cor. 12:10

### EXPLANATION

#### I. WHAT WAS INVOLVED IN THIS GIFT

- A. This gift is the God-given ability to identify truth from error.
- B. The person with this gift can sense the mixture of truth and error in new teachings or new movements which the devil would use.
- C. Notice while some of the gifts are speaking gifts, this particular gift is for listeners (I Cor. 14:29). And the person with this gift can recognize false teachers although they are disguised by the devil. Note II Cor. 11:14,15
- D. This gift differs from the kind of discernment that all Christians should have.
  - 1. All Christians should be able by the indwelling Holy Spirit to discern the Lord's will (Rom. 12:1,2; Eph.5:17).
  - 2. All Christians should be able to discern Spiritual truths that relate to them (I Cor. 2:14,15).
  - 3. All Christians should be able to discern right from wrong and what pleases the Lord or displeases Him (Heb. 5:14).

#### EXERCISE

## II. HOW THIS GIFT WAS EXERCISED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. This gift was exercised in a greater sense prior to the completion of the New Testament. During the Apostolic Age there were many false teachers who were spreading all kinds of heresies such as Gnosticism. Those with the gift of discernment could "spot" the devil's emissaries.
  
- B. This gift was exercised on numerous occasions to determine truth from error and distinguish between those who were of God and those who were of Satan.
  - 1. Notice Peter evidenced and exercised this gift with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10), and also with Simon of Samaria (Acts 8:20-23).
  - 2. Paul also evidenced and exercised this gift with Elymas the Sorcerer (Acts 13:10,11), and also with the demon-possessed girl of Philippi (Acts 16:16-22).
  
  - 3. Notice the church of Ephesus was commended by the Lord Jesus for using this gift (Rev. 2:2) but the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira were rebuked because those there failed to exercise it (Rev. 2:14; 2:20).
  
- C. In the Apostolic Age one means of discerning truth from error is expressed in I John 4:2,3 - "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."
  - 1. This confession declared Jesus to be the "Christ" or the One anointed of God (I Jn. 2:22,23).
  
  - 2. This confession declared the pre-existence of Jesus in the words "is come" (Jn. 1:1, 14).
  
  - 3. This confession declared the incarnation of Jesus in the words "in the flesh" (Phil. 2:6-8; I Tim. 3:16).

## EXTENT

### III. HOW THIS GIFT OPERATES AND APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALS IN OUR DAY

- A. This gift is especially needed in our day where the church and the gospel message is considered acceptable in a society. Where Christianity is persecuted, counterfeit teachers are scarce because they are not willing to pay the price which is required to be identified with it.
- B. There are numerous devices which the devil uses in our day. We must contend with Satanism, the Occult, the Cults, and different expressions of liberalism. We are faced with the crafty misuse of doctrinal and biblical terminology.
- C. For the need of our day, God has gifted some individuals with the gift of discernment. And while many grope about lacking the discernment to see what's wrong in certain movements and certain teachers, those with this gift are used of the Lord to prevent multitudes from becoming ensnared and entrapped by the devil. This applies to ecumenical movements like "Promise Keepers" and contracts between evangelicals and catholics which depart from Scriptural doctrines.

ERROR

### IV. HOW THIS GIFT CAN BE MISUSED AND MISAPPLIED

- A. Those with this particular gift may have a tendency to become judgmental of the character and motives of others rather than their doctrinal teachings.
- B. Those with this gift may have to guard against becoming proud over their ability to discern.
- C. These spiritually-gifted people may develop a critical

attitude towards others and become "fault-finders" rather than building up others. Those who look for faults in others can always find them but they usually can't see any in themselves.