

Lesson 13

Gifts of the Spirit: Part 5

We continue our study of the gifts of the Spirit in 1Corinthians 12 and we have three remaining gifts to study. In this lesson, we will examine the gift of discerning of spirits.

Discerning of Spirits

Of the nine gifts of the spirits, discerning of spirits is one of the most necessary for leaders in the church and for our own individual walks of faith. Why? Because all of creation functions by “spirit” and our relationship with God is indeed spiritual. Here are a some examples in the next paragraphs:

All creation is by the Spirit. **Genesis 1:1-3** *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”* In the remaining verses of Genesis 1, we see that the Spirit of God moved and led to many other “and God said” moments, including the creation of man. **Genesis 1:26** *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”*

God’s plan is to put His Spirit in us. **Ezekiel 36:26-27** *“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.”*

John 14:14-17 *“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”*

Colossians 1:26-27 *“Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:”*

Our new birth is by His Spirit.

John 3:3-7 *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

The power to become sons of God is by His Spirit. **John 1:12** *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”*

Romans 8:14 *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”*

Matthew 3:11 *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:”*

Acts 2:1-4 *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*

God’s Word and His plan are revealed by His Spirit. **1 Corinthians 2:9-14** *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

2 Corinthians 3:6 *“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”*

We are anointed by the Spirit for the works of God. **Luke 4:18-19** *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

2 Corinthians 4:7 *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”*

We see the power of His resurrection Spirit. **Romans 8:11** *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”*

2 Corinthians 3:17 *“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”*

This list is a small sample of the scriptures about the power of God’s Spirit. This is enough for us to see that the Spirit of God is the most powerful force on the earth and in the heavens. With His Spirit, the words of Jesus are fulfilled. **Mark 10:27** *“And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”*

The Challenge to the Church - Other Spirits

Throughout the Word of God, there are constant mentions of spirits but there is only one “Holy Spirit” or “Spirit of God”. God’s provision for His Church is that we would know and walk in His Spirit and discern spirits that are not of God. “False spirits” are one of the greatest challenges to the church. They are used by the enemy (Satan) to deceive the church and to turn the church away from the true path of righteousness and salvation which is prepared by God for all believers. The gift of discerning of spirits is given unto the church to specifically address the deception of the enemy. We must understand that “deception” is the only real weapon available to Satan. He has no power over the certain victory for believers who walk in the ways of the Lord. We see his deception right from the beginning of the Bible in the garden of Eden. **Genesis 3:1-5** *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”*

This began the battle for the souls of mankind and this battle continues today. The Lord has prepared His church for this battle and speaks in His Word showing:

- the way of the Lord,
- the nature of the battle, and
- the Lord’s power given to the Church over other spirits.

The Way of the Lord

Genesis 3:24 *“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”*

Exodus 13:21 *“And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:”*

Deuteronomy 11:27-28 *“A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.”*

Psalms 5:8 *“Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.”*

Isaiah 30:20-21 *“And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”*

Matthew 7:13-14 *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”*

John 14:4-6 *“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

The Nature of the Battle

Ephesians 6:12 *“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.”*

Jeremiah 14:14 *“Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.”*

Matthew 7:15 *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”*

Matthew 24:4-5 and 11-12 *“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”*

Matthew 24:24 *“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”*

2 Peter 2:1 *“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, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”*

1 Timothy 4:1-2 *“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; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;”*

The Lord's Power Given to the Church Over Other Spirits

God has warned us about the many other spirits that challenge the Spirit of the Lord in our lives. Although there are challenges, there is no spirit more powerful than the Spirit of the living God. Enemy spirits are subtle, including the spirit of man within us. They often try to mimic the Word and ways of God but in half-truths and outright lies to lead the church astray. There are also unclean or evil spirits of the devil that possess individuals. The spirits cannot be discerned naturally but are only discerned spiritually. Thus, discerning of spirits is critical for us to identify if a spirit is the Spirit of the Lord or a false spirit. The Lord gives individual discernment to all believers. He also gives the gift of discerning of spirits by the Holy Spirit to certain members of His body so that we might have the fullness of spiritual discernment working in the church. **Matthew 10:1** *“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”*

John 15:26 *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:”*

John 16:13 *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”*

1 John 4:1-3 *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”*

Matthew 7:15-19 *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”*

1 John 5:6-8 *“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.”*

The gift of discerning of spirits is present in any true work of God. The Lord knows that there will be those with unclean spirits who need deliverance, and that false spirits, teachers, and prophets will try to deceive or lead the church from the truth of God's Word. The believer operating the gift of discerning of spirits will have the ability, by the Spirit, to discern good fruit from evil. Those who have the gift of discerning of spirits will also have the Spirit of Truth (the Word) in them so that they may discern false doctrine and half-truths and reveal them to the church.

It is the will of the Lord for the Church to hear His voice and walk in His way. **John 10:27** *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:”*

Examples of the Gift of Discerning Spirits in the Word and in the Church Today

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.