

# Learn to Discern

LESSON 3 – JUDGE ALL THINGS  
1 CORINTHIANS 2:14-15  
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# 1 Corinthians 2:14-15

- ▶ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.
- ▶ As we have been learning to discern, we have seen that we must work at learning and knowing the difference between right and wrong, and even as we learn which is which we are to flee the evil and cling to that which is good. But is it just a matter of deciding to discern, making up our minds and doing it? No. There is more to it than that. So today I want to spend a little time examining those things that are necessary for us to have in order to actually practice discernment as we go through our daily lives. What do we need in order to discern?

# The Holy Spirit

- ▶ In order for us to discern the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, and sound and unsound doctrine **we must first have the Holy Spirit!** Think about it. Without the Spirit we do not have spiritual life, wisdom, understanding, or faith. Simply put, if we are not indwelt by the Spirit of God then we cannot discern.
- ▶ The natural man, we are told, does not receive the things of God and in fact cannot know them at all because the things of God are foolishness to a lost man (1 Corinthians 1:8).
- ▶ You see, the things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned – meaning that without the Spirit there is no discernment, no understanding, no grasp of the truth of the Word of God that is in any way eternally meaningful. As Jesus told Nicodemus, if a man is not born again by the Spirit of God, then he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

# Sealed with the Spirit

- ▶ As those who have been saved know experientially, we are sealed with the Spirit of God. He is the down payment on our salvation, our Comforter and Convictor, and the promise of the truth that we will finally be saved as we persevere by grace (Ephesians 1:13-14).
- ▶ We also know that we are told not to grieve or quench the Spirit by disregarding the Word of God (1 Thess. 5:19-22; Eph. 4:29-32).
- ▶ Further we are told that if we are filled with (yielded to the control of) and walk in the Spirit then we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).



# Salvation

- ▶ We cannot expect a lost man to discern. While there are those who are believers who refuse to discern as a result of their sinful choices, there are also those that cannot discern for they are masquerading as a Christian when in truth they do not know Jesus Christ.
- ▶ Since they have no part of the Spirit of God it is quite impossible for them to discern. We must have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and leading us if we are to be able to discern.

# Wisdom

- ▶ Secondly, we must have wisdom (Eccl 8:5). Wisdom, as we have discussed it, is the skill necessary to apply the Word of God to the circumstances of life.
- ▶ If we do not have a right perspective of life then how on earth can we be expected to discern the difference between right and wrong?
- ▶ If we do not have wisdom, it is actually quite easy to remedy the problem. The Word of God tells us that whoever lacks wisdom should ask of God who gives to all men who ask liberally (James 1:5-8).

# Faith

- ▶ Thirdly, we see that we must have faith. We must take God at His Word if we are to understand the difference between good and evil.
- ▶ Without faith we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6), and without faith we cannot see His purposes in our trials and tribulations.
- ▶ Without faith we cannot know what the Bible says for to understand it we must believe it. We must trust God and His Spirit through His Word to teach us the difference between that which will harm us and that which will help us.

# Judge All Things

- ▶ Notice now though in 1 Corinthians 2 that the act of discerning is referred to as judging. I want to bring this up because there are those out there who will say immediately, “Wait a minute. We are not supposed to judge. The Bible says, ‘Judge not lest ye be judged.’”
- ▶ Can you hear that objection? It would make us think that we have misunderstood the Word of God, but in reality those who most often quote the verse about “judging not” are the most likely to completely miss the whole context, meaning, and point of that verse! How is that for a mis-judgment?



# Judge All Things

- ▶ I do not have time today to go through all of the facts about what it means to “judge not” so I will provide a link instead to a previous devotional I wrote on the topic if you would like to read it : [Judge Not – Matt 7:1-6](#).
- ▶ But what I do want to cover today includes the fact that we are told often in the Scriptures to judge!! Most often we are told to judge ourselves, but as we will see we are also told to judge each other within the church and to judge the difference between right and wrong. In fact, learning to discern can be defined as learning how to judge rightly.

# 1 Corinthians 2:15; 5:12

- ▶ In 1 Corinthians 2:15 we are told that the spiritually mature man is to judge all things. As we grow out of the milk stage and into eating solid food we are expected to judge.
- ▶ 1 Corinthians 5:12 finds Paul expecting the church to judge its members – to determine and discern whether we are living as we ought. If not, we are to deal with sin in our midst as the Scriptures teach us. But we must make a judgment and ask, is what we are confronting sin or not?
- ▶ To discern is to judge. It is to know the difference and to know how to proceed in dealing with a sinning brother or sister.

# 1 Corinthians 6:5; 11:13, 31-32

- ▶ 1 Corinthians 6:5 finds Paul lamenting the fact that there was not a mature believer who could judge between Christians and thus settle disputes by deciding who was right and who was wrong.
- ▶ We also see in 1 Corinthians 11 several verses where Paul expects us to judge whether something is right or not. In those verses, we are even expected to judge ourselves! We are to diagnose and deal with sin and pursue health and life and goodness.

# Gray Areas?

- ▶ We cannot judge as we ought if we do not know how to discern. Remember, to fail to discern is to sin, and here we have seen that the Bible commands and expects us to be able to judge ourselves and other believers when it comes to determining what is and is not right.
- ▶ No wonder we are confronted with so many gray areas today in the church. We do not know how to discern and judge whether things are right or wrong and so we declare with timid confidence that if we cannot determine if it is right or wrong then it is a gray area, and we should not judge those who do or do not partake in that gray area.



# Gray Areas?

- ▶ Are there really gray areas? Are there categories of behavior that are moral, immoral, and amoral? Can an action or an attitude really be neutral?
- ▶ We are not told in Scripture to flee the immoral and pursue the moral and amoral. No. There is right, and there is wrong. And the reason everything is colored on a gray scale today is that people in the church refuse to judge, fail to discern, and simply do not know what God's Word says about many things.

# Galatians 5:13; Romans 6:19-23

- ▶ This is a sad indictment, but I am sure it is true. Too many today would rather argue about their liberty in Christ all the while using it as a cloak for self-satisfaction and sin. And this is completely contrary to the Word of God.
- ▶ How can I discern that? How can I make that judgment?
- ▶ Because I know that we are warned in the Scripture explicitly about the danger of using our liberty for an occasion for the flesh (Gal 5:13). Further we see that we are told that we are either slaves of sin or slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:19-23).

# Judge It

- ▶ So judge what I have said. Measure it against the Word of God.
- ▶ Am I telling you the truth? If not, then please disregard anything I have said. But if what I have said does match up to the Word of God then I have good news – you have heard the Word and are now therefore responsible to DO the Word.
- ▶ Remember – we are not to be hearers only, but doers of the Word.
- ▶ When it comes to discernment – just do it!

# Next Lesson

- ▶ Lesson 4 - An Exhortation Towards Peace – 1 Thess. 5:14-15