

## The Crisis of Discernment

God has been good to me to pastor such a generous people. They give me their blessing as I travel around the country preaching and teaching the Word of God. In these days of ministry, the Lord has opened a door for me to counsel younger ministers in the Word of God and in the ways of God. Recently while away in conference I was blessed to see younger ministers with an anointing of God upon them. One young man of God in particular captured my attention and the Lord opened the door for us to talk. In conversation, I felt led to warn him of the pitfalls of succumbing to temptations. One of the warnings I gave him was of sinning against the Lord to the point of losing the understanding where he is relationally with the Lord. An old preacher warned me in my youth to stay faithful to the Lord, for men may reach a point where men still praise you, but God cannot use you.

As I write these words, my mind is reflecting upon people to whom I have ministered and have succumbed to the pressure of temptation to the point of sinning against the Lord. There is a spiritually dangerous thing that happens in the lives of those who deliberately, arrogantly and high-handedly disobey God. It is when a frame of mind is so hardened against conviction that a discernment crisis is of monstrous proportions develops in the heart of an individual. The Bible says, “*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off...*” (II Peter 1:5-9). If we add to our faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness and brotherly kindness, we shall be fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and what He desires for our lives.

Last night a young man came up to me with a beaming smile and announced that he had surrendered to preach. Then his pastor with equal joy put his arm around him and informed me he had been asking questions and explained that when I gave an exposition of Psalm 37:4, “*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart,*” God revealed to him that He had placed this desire to preach inside him and therefore, by faith accepted this illumination from the Word to his heart. Oh what peace and joy comes to the open heart to God! Oh what illumination comes to those who seek Him! “*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*”(Isaiah 55:6).

The antithesis of illumination is when we disobey to the point that part of our punishment becomes the loss of discernment. The Scriptures tells us, “*But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off...*” When this happens we enter into a spiritual, mental and emotional fog. The young man in Proverbs who went into fornication is pitifully described, “*He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life*” (Proverbs 7:23). Make note, he “*...knoweth not...*” He does not have the reasoning ability to understand how his playing with fire is going to burn. Samson, the strongest man in the world, crossed the final deadline in his disobedience and in turn lost his ability to discern when the supernatural power of Almighty God departed from him: “*And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him*” (Judges 16:20). Meditating on these thoughts consider:

### **1. Pray for wisdom to discern.**

*“Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”* (I Kings 3:9). So prayed the youthful Solomon when he was taking the responsibility of becoming king. God has promised, *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him”* (James 1:5). God said He would not “upbraid” us; this is the word *oneidizo*, which means to chide, taunt, scold or rebuke. Never presume God will scold or rebuke you because of asking for something He desires to give you. Furthermore, He said He would give you wisdom “liberally” which means bountifully. As we move into the autumn of the year, you will see seasonal decorations. One of my favorite images which comes to mind this time of the year is the horn of plenty. This shows in thanksgiving fashion the bounty of harvest. This is the way God wants to give us wisdom, full and running over. Then, consider:

## **2. Obedience makes your mind a transmitter of truth.**

*“Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment”* (Ecclesiastes 8:5). One who keeps God’s commandments will become a wise man. In contrast were the hypocritical Pharisees, who had much book-learning but little wisdom, because they did not obey the very written Law and Prophets they carried and even wore on their persons. Jesus said of them, *“Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?”* (Luke 12:56).

When we obey God we develop a radar system that is very sensitive to the voice of God. The obedient man or woman will know not only right from wrong, but also what is right and wrong for themselves. *“Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not”* (Malachi 3:18). *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”* (Proverbs 3:6).

## **3. Habitual obedience makes the discerning mind your default.**

A few years ago the word “default” was exclusively used to describe a failure to fulfill an obligation such as repaying a loan. But in this world of computer technology it means: of a computer program or other mechanism; revert automatically to (a preselected option).

The Bible says, *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Hebrews 5:14). God’s Word is saying that when we mature in the Lord through obedience and partake of the strong meat of the Word, we will default automatically to the mind of Christ, which discerns between good and evil. *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 2:5).

- Pastor Pope -

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