

Spiritual Discernment:  
"Understanding the Times"  
(Luke 12:54-59)



Is that a picture of us and our country?!?  
Think of the changes in society and morality  
that have taken place in the last 50 years!!!

Proverbs 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation,  
But sin *is* a reproach to *any* people.

We need spiritual discernment  
(practical wisdom) to see what is  
happening  
and how we need to live...

# I. Examples That Show The Need For Discernment...

## A. Positive Examples:

- I. The sons of Issachar and the advisors of Ahasuerus "understood the times"  
(1 Chronicles 12:32; Esther 1:13).

2. Daniel and his friends exercised wisdom.

Daniel 1:8-20

### 3. Note the example of Paul...

Acts 16:35-40 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go." So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, *and* have thrown *us* into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out." And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. Then they came and pleaded with them and brought *them* out, and asked *them* to depart from the city. So they went out of the prison and entered *the house of* Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.



Acts 23:1-5 Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, *you* whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, '*You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.*' "

**Acts 23:6-10** But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" **And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God."** Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring *him* into the barracks.

## 4. What about the Bereans?

**Acts 17:11** These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.

## B. Negative examples:

1. Rehoboam's refusal to listen to wise counsel  
(I Kings 12:6-16).
2. The prodigal wanted it "now"  
(Luke 15:12-16).

## II. Encouragement To Seek Discernment...

## A. Mandated by Scripture...

1. "Get wisdom! Get understanding"  
(Proverbs 4:5).

2, "...exercise yourself toward godliness."  
(I Timothy 4:7).

3. "Test all things; hold fast to what is good."  
(I Thessalonians 5:21).

#### 4. Note what Paul was praying for...

Colossians 1:9 For this reason we also,  
since the day we heard it,  
do not cease to pray for you,

and to ask that you may be filled with the  
knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual  
understanding;

B. Motivated by the life we need to live...

1. Our walk is determined by our faith and obedience.

**Colossians 2:6** As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,



## 2. Our maturity and love are determined by our discernment...

Hebrews 5:14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

1 Corinthians 2:14 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.

Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

### III. Elements Needed To Show Discernment...

## A. Thinking based on spiritual truth.

Colossians 3:1-5 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

## B. Judgment (discernment) rightly practiced.

### 1. Jesus expected this from His disciples...

Matthew 7:15-20 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Matthew 12:33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit.

## 2. Evil does not have to look bad to be evil.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

C. Living for the hereafter, not the here and now.

1. How are you fighting  
the good fight of faith?

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the  
flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

## 2. What is our "Shibboleth"?

Judges 12:5-6 The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites *arrived*. And when *any* Ephraimite who escaped said, "Let me cross over," the men of Gilead would say to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" If he said, "No," then they would say to him, "Then say, 'Shibboleth!'" And he would say, "Sibboleth," for he could not pronounce *it* right. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites.



## Conclusion:

We need to understand that "perilous times"  
have come (2 Tim. 3:1),  
but "My times are in Your hand" (Psalm 31:15).