

The Gift of Discerning Spirits

1 Corinthians 12:7-11g

I. Intro

● Anecdote

- Deception
 - As we consider the current state of the church - there should be no doubt that most church-goers today lack spiritual discernment.
 - And it's sad to say that time would fail me - to present you with a comprehensive list of all the ways...
 - ...that Christians are being led astray by deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.
 - And while it's true that this widespread deception is being caused by increasing levels of Biblical illiteracy...
 - ...it's also true that the church is filled with Christians who are walking in the flesh - rather than in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - That being the case - we shouldn't be surprised to learn that the church is lacking discerning disciples...
 - ...who are able to discern the difference - between good spirits - and bad.

II. Outline

● Points

- Discernment
 - Here in our time today - - we're going to consider the charismatic gift that Paul called - the discerning of spirits.

- And as we study the scriptures before us today - we'll begin to see that...
 1. ...the Discerning of Spirits includes Distinctions
 2. ...the Discerning of Spirits involves Discrimination
 3. ...the Discerning of Spirits invokes Disputation
- With this as our outline - let's open our Bibles to 1st Corinthians chapter 12...
- ...where we find Paul - presenting the Christians in Corinth with a list of charismatic gifts.

III. Distinctions

● Set up

- Context
- As we make our way to the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians - - we should take a moment to put our text - back into it's context.
- We find ourselves in the middle of a study of the charismatic gifts that Paul presented here in this chapter - and up until this point - we've considered...
- ...the word of wisdom - the word of knowledge - the gift of faith - the gift of healings - the working of miracles - and the gift of prophecy.
- Now - here in our time today - we're going to consider the charismatic gift that Paul called - the discerning of spirits.
- And with this as our focus - let's turn our attention to this list of spiritual gifts - that we find here in 1st Corinthians chapter 12.
- Look with me - beginning there at verse 7 - where we learn that...

● Text

1Co 12:7 ...the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

1Co 12:8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

1Co 12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

1Co 12:10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

1Co 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

- Spirits
 - Here in this list of spiritual gifts - we find Paul - helping his audience to understand that...
 - ...the Holy Spirit is providing some Christians - with the supernatural ability to discern certain spirits.
 - And in order to understand this charismatic gift - we should spend some time considering the different sort of spirits that exist.
 - With this as our focus - let's begin by first considering a definition of the word - spirits - found there in verse 10.
 - The Greek word - pneuma - was used in reference to the breath - or a blast of air - or - a breeze.
 - The same word was also used in reference to the immaterial life force of several different beings.
- Holy Spirit
 - This of course includes the Holy Spirit of God - Who is also known as the Spirit of Truth.

- As a matter of fact - it's in John chapter 14 - beginning at verse 16 - where Christ Jesus declared...

Jhn 14:16 "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

Jhn 14:17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

- Here in these verses - we find the Lord Jesus - using the Greek word - pneuma - by referring to the Helper as the Spirit of Truth.
- This is also the same Greek word that Jesus used in John chapter 4 - where He assured us that "God is Spirit"
 - God is Spirit - - or in other words - God is the immaterial pneuma - Who has revealed Himself as the Spirit of Truth.
 - And as the Spirit of Truth - He empowers some believers with the supernatural ability to discern other spirits.
 - And with this as our focus - let's consider the spirits that need to be discerned.
- Angelic Spirits
 - For example - it's in Hebrews chapter 1 - verse 14 - where Paul referred to the angels of the Lord - as...

Heb 1:14 ...ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?
 - Here we find Paul using the Greek word - pneuma - as he described the angels who worship the Lord - - as ministering spirits.
 - It's in the 7th verse of the same chapter - where Paul also informs us that the Lord makes His angels spirits - and His ministers a flame of fire.

- From this - we can see that the Greek word - pneuma - not only refers to the Holy Spirit of our God...
- ...but - the same Greek word was also used in reference to the spirits of angels - who actively serve the Lord.
 - And not only them - but - the Greek word - pneuma - was also used in reference to the spirits of fallen angels.

- Evil Spirits

- Proof of my point is found in 1st Timothy chapter 4 - - it's verse 1 - where Paul informs us that...

1Ti 4:1 ...the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons

- Here in this verse - we find Paul - using the Greek word - pneuma - in reference to the deceiving spirits of fallen angels.
- Luke also used the same Greek word - when he referred to the seven demons that came out of Mary Magdalene - - as evil spirits.
- We also find the Lord Jesus using the same Greek word - as He referred to demons as - evil spirits - and unclean spirits.
- And in Revelation chapter 16 - we find the apostle John using the same Greek word...
 - ...as he described the spirits of demons who will perform signs before the kings of the earth.

- Hierarchy

- Let's not forget about the hierarchy of fallen angels that Paul presented - in Ephesians chapter 6 - it's beginning at verse 10 - where he declared...

Eph 6:10 ...my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Eph 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Eph 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

- Here in these verses - we find Paul - warning the Christians in Ephesus - about the spiritual enemy that is serving Satan.
- And it's there in verse 12 - where he referred to the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
- That word - spiritual - was translated from the Greek word pneumatikós which in this context - refers to the spiritual beings who serve Satan.
- In light of these things - there should be no doubt that the devil has sent his spiritual soldiers to lead us astray - with doctrines of demons.
- And it's for this reason that we must put on the whole armor of God so that we can fight the good fight of faith.
- Human Spirit
- At the same time - it's also important for us to understand that humans are also spiritual beings.
- Let's consider how Paul put it - in 1st Thessalonians chapter 5 - it's verse 23 where he declared...

1Th 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- From this - we can see that - humans are triune beings - consisting of a body - soul - - and pneuma - - or - spirit.
- Now - I realize that there are those who insist that there is no difference between the soul - and the spirit of a person...

- ...and yet - Paul assured us that the Lord is sanctifying the spirit - the soul - and the body of the believer.
- And while the difference between the soul - and the spirit is difficult to identify...
 - ...the scriptures are perfectly clear about this distinction.
- Division

- I like the way that Paul explained it - in Hebrews chapter 4 - it's beginning at verse 12 - where he informs us that...

Heb 4:12 ...the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

- According to Paul - the word of God is able to draw a distinction between the soul - the spirit - and the body of every person.
- And while it's difficult for us to draw a distinction between an immaterial soul - - and an immaterial spirit...
 - ...the word of God is able to draw a distinction between the soul - and the spirit of every individual.
 - For example - every person is born with an immaterial soul - or psyche - that includes our mind - our will - and our emotions.
 - The spirit - or pneuma of man - is the immaterial aspect that enables an individual to connects with the Spirit of God.
- Dead
 - I like the way that the Lord Jesus explained it - in John chapter 4 - it's beginning at verse 23 - where He declared...

Jhn 4:23 "...the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

Jhn 4:24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

- God is Spirit - - and those who want to worship Him - must worship Him from the core of our spirit - - according to the truth.
- That being said - I should also point out that the stain of original sin has affected the spiritual state of every person.
- As a matter of fact - every person is born spiritually dead according to the curse - caused by the fall of Adam and Eve.
- And it's for this reason that we must be born again - or - born of the Spirit - by faith in Jesus Christ.
- What this also means is that - the unrepentant unbeliever is still spiritually dead.
- Disobedience
- Let's consider how Paul put it - in Ephesians chapter 2 - it's beginning at verse 1 - where he declared...

Eph 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,

Eph 2:2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

Eph 2:3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

- So - according to Paul - the unrepentant unbeliever is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.

- Not only that - but - there is a spirit - or - a pneuma that works in the sons of disobedience.
- In other words - the unrepentant unbeliever is not only spiritually dead...
 - ...they're also being influenced by a spirit whom Paul called - the prince of the power of the air.
 - That being the case - it's crucial for Christians to grasp the value of this spiritual gift that Paul called - the discerning of spirits.
- Discerning
 - Just to be clear - that word - discerning - found here in our text today - was translated from a Greek word...
 - ...which was used in reference to the righteous judgments that enable us to make a distinction between right and wrong.
 - The same word was used of those who are able to determine the difference between good and evil.
 - For example - it's in Hebrews chapter 5 - where Paul used this word in reference to those...
 - ...who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.
 - And what this means is that - those who are reasonable - should be able to make this distinction between good and evil.
- Supernatural
 - At the same time - it's also important for us to understand that - there are levels of spiritual deception that demand help from the Holy Spirit.
 - Let's consider how Paul put it - in 2nd Corinthians chapter 11 - it's beginning at verse 13 - where he referred to those who are....

2Co 11:13 ...false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.

2Co 11:14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

2Co 11:15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

- Christian - listen - the deception of the Devil is more often than not - based on the beautiful lies that our flesh loves to embrace.
- And when it comes to the activities of evil spirits - we tend to think about movies like the exorcist - and the Conjuring...
- ...when in reality - the enemy is more likely to masquerade as an angel of light.
- And you better believe that the Devil and his demons will use spiritually dead unbelievers...
- ...to lead people astray - as they masquerade as ministers of righteousness.

● Application

- Test
- It's for this reason that the Apostle John encouraged every Christian to test the spirits.
- It's 1st John chapter 4 - verse 1 - where he declared...

1Jo 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

- Christian - listen - there are spirits that are obedient to the Lord - - and there are evil spirits who will lead us astray.

- And knowing that there are false prophets in the church today - who are leading people astray...
- ...we can rejoice in knowing that the Holy Spirit provides some Christians with the ability to make a distinction...
- ...between the spirits that are submissive to God - and the evil spirits who are masquerading as ministers.
- That being the case - we should listen to the Christians who have received the spiritual gift that enables them to discern the spirits.

● Transition

• Points

- This brings us to our second point - because listen...
 1. ...the Discerning of Spirits not only includes Distinctions...
 2. ...but - the Discerning of Spirits also involves Discrimination.
- In order to explain what I mean - let's consider the way in which the Lord Jesus encouraged us to engage in discrimination.
- With this as our focus - let's turn in our Bibles - to Matthew chapter 7 - and as we turn to the seventh chapter of Matthew's gospel account...
- ...I should take a moment to point out that - the Greek word rendered - discerning - also speaks of Discrimination.
- With this in mind - let's consider the instructions Jesus presented - here in Matthew 7 - look with me at verse 15 - where He declared...

IV. Discrimination

● Text

Mat 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Mat 7:16 “You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?”

Mat 7:17 “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

Mat 7:18 “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

Mat 7:19 “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Mat 7:20 “Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Mat 7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Mat 7:22 “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’

Mat 7:23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

- Here in these verses - we find the Lord Jesus - helping His disciples to understand that...
 - ...there are false prophets in the world - who present themselves as being sheep - who belong to the flock of our good Shepherd.
 - However - they are nothing more than wolves - who are masquerading as the servants of our Savior.
 - It's for this reason that He encouraged us to test the fruit of those who claim to be followers of Christ Jesus.
 - And yes - this includes those who are doing wonderful things in the name of the Lord.
- Lawless
 - Let's consider again how the Lord Jesus put it - here in Matthew chapter 7 - look with me again - beginning there at verse 21 - where He declared...

Mat 7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Mat 7:22 “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’

Mat 7:23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

- Christian - listen - there are false prophets who are proclaiming prophecies in the name of our Savior.
- There are spiritual charlatans - who casting out demons in the name of Jesus.
- And there are wolves in sheep’s clothing - who are doing many wonderful things - in Jesus’ name.
- And yet - they are nothing more than unrepentant unbelievers - who are leading people astray.
- It’s for this reason that Christ Jesus encouraged us to discriminate between the good fruit of believers and the bad fruit of unbelievers.
- End Times
- We should also consider the warning that the Lord presented - during the Olivet Discourse.
- With this as our focus - let’s turn in our Bibles to Matthew chapter 24 - where we find the Lord Jesus...
- ...helping His disciples to understand what the world will be like - prior to His second coming.
- And as we make our way to the 24th chapter of Matthew’s gospel account...
- ...I should take a moment to point out that the Lord took the time to warn His disciples...

- ...about the false teachers who will masquerade as ministers of our Messiah.
- Take Heed
- With this as our focus - let's consider Matthew's account of the Olivet Discourse.
- Look with me there at Matthew chapter 24 - let's begin reading there at verse 3 - where the apostle Matthew writes...

Mat 24:3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Mat 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

Mat 24:5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

- Here in these verses - we find the Lord Jesus - describing the last days as a time of great deception.
- And knowing that there will be many who claim to be the second coming of Christ...
- ...the Lord Jesus encouraged His disciples to take heed - - or in other words - He was instructing us to pay attention...
- ...so that we can mentally discern the deception of those who are here to lead us astray.
- And it's here in the same message - where the Lord directed His disciples to engage in discernment - for the sake of discrimination.
- Deceivers
- With this as our focus - let's skip ahead to verse 23 - where Jesus declared...

Mat 24:23 “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it.

Mat 24:24 “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Mat 24:25 “See, I have told you beforehand.

Mat 24:26 “Therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it.

Mat 24:27 “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

- Here in these verses - we find the Lord Jesus - helping His disciples to understand that...
- ...the deception that will take place in the last days - could possible deceive the elect.
- That being the case - Jesus encouraged those who trust in Him - to reject the spiritual charlatans who are here to lead people astray.
- And with this as the goal - we must understand how a proper use of divine discernment...
- ...will result in the spiritual discrimination - of those who are deceivers.
- Discrimination
- In order to connect the dots - between discernment - and discrimination - we should consider something that Paul wrote - to the church in Galatia.
- Let's turn in our Bibles to Galatians chapter 1 - and as we make our way to the 1st chapter of Galatians...
- ...I should take a moment to point out that - when Paul referred to the spiritual gift that he called - the discerning of spirits...
- ...he was using a Greek word that is not only rendered - discerning - but - the same Greek word can also be rendered - discriminate.

- And while I'm sure we all agree that it's wrong to discriminate based on a person's race - or gender...
- ...there are times when we must engage in religious discrimination - according to the discerning of spirits.

● Application

- Accursed
- Let's consider the sort of discrimination that Paul promoted - here in Galatians 1 - look with me beginning there at verse 6 - where he declared...

Gal 1:6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

Gal 1:7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Gal 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Gal 1:9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

- Here in these verses - we find Paul - encouraging the Christians in Galatia to reject the false teachers - better known as the Judaizers.
- Just to be clear - the Judaizers were Jews - who were perverting the gospel of Christ - by adding works - to grace.
- And being that they were preaching the cross of Christ - and the works of the law...
- ...Paul encouraged the Christians in Galatia to engage in religious discrimination - according to gift of spiritual discernment.
- And listen - we should engage in the same discrimination - even if an angel were to present us with another gospel.
- Avoid

- I like the way that Paul put it in Romans chapter 16 - beginning at verse 17 where he declared...

Rom 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

Rom 16:18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

- Christian - listen - the discerning disciple who wants to avoid deception...
 - ...should actively avoid those who are causing divisions and offenses that are contrary to the essential doctrines of the Christian faith.
 - And knowing that the church is now filled with false teachers - who are deceiving the hearts of the simple...
 - ...I encourage every Christian to realize that - the Holy Spirit is still providing the spiritual gift - known as the discerning of spirits...
 - ...so that the church might receive the discernment we need - to avoid the deception of the Devil.

● Transition

• Points

- Now - this brings us to our third and final point - because listen...
 1. ...the Discerning of Spirits not only includes Distinctions...
 2. ...and - the Discerning of Spirits not only involves Discrimination...
 3. ...but - the Discerning of Spirits also invokes Disputation.
 - In order to explain what I mean - let's consider the way in which the Lord Jesus engaged in a dispute with the Devil.

- Let's turn in our Bibles to Matthew chapter 4 - and as we make our way to the fourth chapter of Matthew's gospel account...
- ...I should take a moment to point out that - the Greek word which was rendered - discerning - can also be rendered - dispute.
- Let's consider how Jesus disputed with the Devil - here in Matthew chapter 4 - look with me there at verse 1 - where we learn that...

V. Disputation

● Text

Mat 4:1 Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Mat 4:2 And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.

Mat 4:3 Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

Mat 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Mat 4:5 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,

Mat 4:6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and,

'In their hands they shall bear you up,

Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

Mat 4:7 Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"

Mat 4:8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

Mat 4:9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

Mat 4:10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Mat 4:11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

- Now - as we consider the way in which the Lord Jesus engaged in this dispute with the Devil...
- ...we must not fail to notice that - the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness - where He was tempted by Satan.
- But rather than giving in to those temptations - Christ Jesus responded with divine discernment...
- ...which resulted in the dispute that Matthew recorded here in these verses.
- And in light of His example - it's important to realize that - there are times when the discerning of spirits will result in disputation.
- Argumentative
- We find another example of this - in Luke's account of a situation that happened - during Paul's second missionary journey.
- With this as our focus - let's turn in our Bibles to Acts chapter 16 - and as we make our way to the 16th chapter of Acts...
- ...I should take a moment to point out that - there are some Christians who mistake discernment - with defensiveness.
- These are the Christians who are always found in the comment section arguing with everyone they disagree with.
- Sadly - they don't have the discernment to realize that we've been called to win souls - not arguments.
- With that being said - it's also important for us to realize that - there are times when we are called to stand against the enemy...
- ...according to the spiritual discernment that comes from the Holy Spirit.
- Deliverance

- With this in mind - let's consider how Paul disputed with a demon - that had possessed a slave girl in Philippi.
- Look with me - there at Acts 16 - let's begin reading there at verse 16 - where Luke writes...

Act 16:16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

Act 16:17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."

Act 16:18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

- Here in these verses - we find Paul - greatly annoyed by a girl - who was saying all the right things.
 - Notice again - there in verse 17 - where Luke tells us that this girl was announcing Paul - and his missions team...
 - ...were servants of the Most High God - who were there to proclaim the way of salvation.
 - Well - rather than thanking her for the endorsement - - Paul exercised spiritual discernment by realizing that...
 - ...the girl was possessed with a spirit of divination - which was trying to discredit the ministry and the message of Christ.
- Dispute
 - It was at that moment when Paul commanded the unclean spirit to come out of that girl.
 - It's for this reason that Paul immediately found himself in a dispute with her masters.

- And according to Luke - the men who owned that fortune-teller - dragged Paul and Silas before the authorities...
- ...in order to accuse them of troubling the city of Philippi - with the gospel message of Christ.
- And it didn't take long for that legal dispute to culminate in the imprisonment of Paul and Silas.
- Christian - listen - there are times when the discerning of spirits will result in doctrinal disputations...
- ...with those who are cashing in on the schemes of Satan.

● Application

- Arguments
- I like the way that Paul explained it - in 2nd Corinthians chapter 10 - it's beginning at verse 3 - where he declared...
2Co 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.
2Co 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,
2Co 10:5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,
2Co 10:6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.
- You might not know this - but - the Lord has provided us with the weapons we need...
- ...to cast down the arguments that people make against the Christian faith.
- This not only includes the doctrinal truth of God's word - but - this also includes the laws of logic - by which we are able to reason.

- And when we factor in the spiritual gift that Paul called - the discerning of spirits...
 - ...there should be no doubt that there will be times when we must address the arguments of those who reject Jesus.
- Some
 - Sadly - there are many in the church today who are unwilling to debate those who contradict the Christian faith.
 - And not only are they unwilling to engage in a doctrinal dispute with those who are preaching false doctrines...
 - ...but - they are also quick to disagree with the Christian apologists - who address the arguments of unbelievers.
 - One reason why is due to the fact that - they don't understand the spiritual gift...
 - ...by which some believers are able to discern the evil spirits - that are leading people astray.
 - And it's for this reason that I encourage you to grasp the importance of this charismatic gift.
- Profit
 - With this as our focus - let's turn back to 1st Corinthians chapter 12 - so that we can revisit this list of spiritual gifts.
 - I wanna draw your attention back to verse 7 - where Paul writes...

1Co 12:7 ...the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

1Co 12:8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

1Co 12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

1Co 12:10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

1Co 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

- It's crucial for Christians to remember that - these gifts are distributed to every Christian - individually - for the profit of all.
- And listen - this includes the discerning of spirits - - which has been poured out on some - for the profit of all.
- The Holy Spirit is empowering some Christians - with an extra measure of discernment...
 - ...so that we might all benefit from their ability - to identify the false teachers - who are proclaiming doctrines of demons.
 - And yes - this includes those who are proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ.
- Rely
 - Christian - listen - the false teachers who espouse the doctrines of demons will not only proclaim the name of Jesus...
 - ...they also endorse the ministries of those who are truly serving our Savior - much like the servant girl - who was possessed with an evil spirit.
 - Not only that - but - remember - they will prophesy in the name of the Lord.
 - They will cast out demons - and do many wonders in Jesus' name.
 - And let's not forget that they will masquerade as ministers of our Messiah - as they lead people astray with doctrines of demons.

- And it's for this reason that we must learn to listen to those who warn us about the false teachers who have infiltrated the church.

VI. Conclusion

● Wrap up

• Points

- Now - as we begin to wrap up this study - I encourage you to remember that...
 1. ...the Discerning of Spirits includes the ability to draw Distinctions...
 - ...between Angelic spirits - and evil spirits - - and between the spirit of a born-again believer - and the unregenerate spirit of an unbeliever.
 2. ...the Discerning of Spirits also involves the ability to engage in religious Discrimination...
 - ...so that we can identify false teachers - and actively avoid those who are causing divisions and offenses...
 - ...that are contrary to the essential doctrines of the Christian faith.
 3. ...and finally - the Discerning of Spirits invokes the doctrinal Disputation that occurs....
 - ...as Christians address the arguments of those who are rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - And knowing that it can be difficult for us to discern the demonic deceptions declared by those who are serving Satan...
 - ...I encourage every Christian to seek the discernment that is provided to us - by the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - And in this way - we will all benefit from this charismatic gift - that Paul called - the discerning of spirits.

