

Lessons From Prison Pt.4

August 30, 2020

Godly Discernment Of Circumstances And People Is Vital

Philippians 1:9 ESV

9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,
10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

- *How desperately we need God's wisdom to accurately apply His Truth to the present circumstances and people!*
- *God's Word and Spirit will always break through the fog and the darkness to illuminate.*

Hebrews 5:13-14 ESV

13 *for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.*
14 *But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

James 1:5 ESV

5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

- *Knowledge is the accumulation of information; wisdom is making life choices by applying God's Truth.*

"What else do we know about this population, 18-24? They are stupid. That is why we put them in dormitories and they have a resident assistant. They make really bad decisions."

—Kamala Harris, Aug 12, 2015

Proverbs 4:4-9 ESV

4 *he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.*
5 *Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.*
6 *Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.*
7 *The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.*
8 *Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.*
9 *She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."*

Isaiah 30:20-22 ESV

20 *And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher.*
21 *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.*

22 Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, "Be gone!"

Acts 16:16-23 ESV

16 As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.

17 She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."

18 And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

19 But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

20 And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city.

21 They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice."

22 The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods.

23 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely.

What Man Calls Defeat And Failure, Is Victory And Success With God

Philippians 1:12-14 ESV

12 **I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,**

13 **so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.**

14 **And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.**

- ***The greatest of all works among mankind, the advent of Jesus Christ, was deemed a failure by men.***

Isaiah 53:2-3 ESV

2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

John 1:45-46 ESV

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

- **Whenever the success or failure of a ministry is judged by human or worldly criteria:**

- the spiritual discernment of verses 9, 10 is not present and working.

Philippians 1:9 ESV

9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

- the ministry is not pure, but corrupted by worldly business models, marketing strategies and metrics-driven standards. (Only in the U.S. are there so many pastors who are multi-millionaire celebrities.)

2 Corinthians 10:12 ESV

12 Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

measure (metreō) to judge according to a rule or standard, to mete out with a measurer's reed or rule

2 Samuel 24:9-13 ESV

9 And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to the king: in Israel there were 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000.

10 But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

11 And when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,

12 "Go and say to David, 'Thus says the LORD, Three things I offer you. Choose one of them, that I may do it to you.'"

13 So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now consider, and decide what answer I shall return to him who sent me."

- **With God, there is one and only one standard of success: faithfulness to what God has appointed to you.**

1 Corinthians 4:1-5 ESV

1 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself [by human, worldly criteria].

4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 ESV

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Isaiah 55:8-9 ESV

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

- **How do you judge your personal life:**

- by worldly standards of "success?"
- by faithfulness to what God has appointed for you?

Matthew 25:14-30 ESV

14 For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property.

15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability (dynamis - strength, power, might, ability). Then he went away.

- The person assigned 5 talents is not superior to the person with 2 talents.
- God specializes in "load-balancing;" ability vs. load.

1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV

13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

"When we truly live in 'the secret place,' it becomes impossible for us to doubt God. We become more sure of Him than of anyone or anything else. Enter into 'the secret place,' and you will find that God was right in the middle of your everyday circumstances all the time. Get into the habit of dealing with God about everything. Unless you learn to open the door of your life completely and let God in from your first waking moment of each new day, you will be working on the wrong level throughout the day. But if you will swing the door of your life fully open and 'pray to your Father who is in the secret place,' every public thing in your life will be marked with the lasting imprint of the presence of God."

—Oswald Chambers, "Prayer, Battle in The Secret Place" My Upmost For His Highest, August 23

1 Corinthians 3:5-7 ESV

5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each.

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

Matthew 25:14-30 ESV

16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more.

17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more.

18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

- Your eternal judgment will never be based upon, "Why didn't you bear witness to 200 more people in your life?" or "Why didn't you produce 5 more miracles in your life?" or "You should have cast out 43 more demons!"
- Your eternal judgment will be based upon, "Were you faithful to what God appointed in your life?"

Matthew 25:14-30 ESV

20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.'

21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.'

23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed,

25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.'

26 But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew [?] that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?

27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.

29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

James 2:17 ESV

17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

James 2:24 ESV

24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Even In Persecution, There Will Be False Christians and False Leaders In The Church

Philippians 1:15-17 ESV

15 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will.

16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

17 The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

- *Persecution is good for the Church for the purification of its members and the hardening of its convictions.*
- *But even among the 12 closest to Jesus, there was a Judas.*

2 Timothy 2:19-22 ESV

19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

- *False Christians may deceive other people, but they can never deceive God, He knows.*
- *Sin corrupts and destroys. True Christians hate sin and depart from it.*

2 Timothy 2:19-22 ESV

20 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.

21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

- *Choose purity over the appearance of success.*
- *Choose genuine, Biblical worship over entertainment, including the gifts of the Spirit.*
- *Choose the study of God's Word, line upon line and precept upon precept, over religious or humanistic sermons.*

Matthew 7:21-23 ESV

21 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

- When Jesus states, "I never knew you," it is not referencing a gap in God's omniscience.
- Rather it is speaking of a heart that is closed to Jesus, unsundered behind a wall of stubborn defiance, control and rebellion. Basically Jesus is saying, "You never let me in."
- What is the difference between a true and false Christian?
 - A true Christian wants to be searched and known by God. He wants to be cleansed, sanctified, truly changed and transformed in heart and life.
 - A false Christian keeps the door to his heart shut in stubbornness, pride and lawlessness. He/she wants to be known as a Christian, but wants to remain autonomous and in control of his/her life.

Psalm 139:23-24 ESV A Psalm of David.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

1 Corinthians 8:3 ESV

3 But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

Matthew 7:23 ESV

23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Psalm 51:5-10 ESV A Psalm of David

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Revelation 3:19-21 ESV

19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Galatians 4:9 ESV

9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

Job 42:1-6 ESV

1 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

2 "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

3 *'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.*

4 *'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.'*

5 *I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;*

6 *therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*"

"What matters supremely, therefore, is not, in the last analysis, the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it — the fact that He knows me. I am graven on the palms of His hands. I am never out of His mind. All my knowledge of Him depends on His sustained initiative in knowing me. I know Him because He first knew me, and continues to know me. He knows me as a friend, one who loves me; and there is no moment when His eye is off me, or His attention distracted from me, and no moment, therefore, when his care falters."

—J.I. Packer, Knowing God:

Though We Discern The Evil Surrounding Us, Our Minds Must Not Dwell There

Philippians 1:15-18 ESV

15 *Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will.*

16 *The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.*

17 *The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.*

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

- *What we think about, dwell upon in our minds, is truly transformative, for good and for evil.*
- *What a balance we must strike between "watch and pray" and "think about these things."*
- *We shouldn't and can't ignore the evil around us, nor pretend that it doesn't exist. As we watch and pray, we are very cognizant of the spiritual warfare and schemes of Satan; but that is not what we meditate on.*
- *Paul is making a deliberate and calculated choice to not think about and not dwell upon the fact that, "Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry...proclaim[ing] Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment." Paul chooses to think on and rejoice in the good that God can bring even in an evil situation.*

Matthew 26:41 ESV

41 **WATCH AND PRAY** that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Philippians 4:6-9 ESV

6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, **THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS.**

9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Proverbs 23:6-7 KJV

6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:

7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.

- You are not what you project yourself to be before others. You are what you think in your heart.

Matthew 15:10-11 ESV

10 And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand:

11 it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person."

Matthew 15:15-20 ESV

15 But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us."

16 And he said, "Are you also still without understanding?"

17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled?

18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.

19 For out of the heart come EVIL THOUGHTS, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

20 THESE ARE WHAT DEFILE A PERSON. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

2 Peter 2:6-9 ESV

6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked

8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);

9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.

- What you take in by seeing and hearing will vex you, but it cannot defile you unless you dwell on those thoughts in your heart.
- Learn to strike the balance between "watch and pray" and "think on these things."

Romans 8:5-6 ESV

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.

6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

- set their minds (phroneō) to exercise the mind, to direct one's mind to a thing, seek, to strive for

Romans 12:2 ESV

2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- conformed (sychēmatizō) to conform to the same pattern, fashion alike
- transformed (metamorphōō) to change into another form, transfigure, transform
- renewal (anakainōsis) a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 ESV

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds (ochyrōma - castle, fortress).

5 We destroy arguments (logismos - thought, imagination, reasoning, computation, judgement) and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:8-11 ESV

8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;

9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

- Afflicted in every way and always given over to death, but never without hope, never defeated, never destroyed!
- What is the secret to live in such victory?

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ESV

16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.