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Spiritual Name-dropping

by Hendrik Joubert

There are a number of passages from which we may learn that Christians have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, as they do with the Father and the Son. It seems logical that if one has a relationship with God, you have a relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is often associated with the miraculous – *Super Powers*. For this reason the relationship with the Holy Spirit is more appealing and receives more attention.

Often attention is focused upon the individual, rather than upon what the Holy Spirit accomplished through the Christian. A manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit is erroneously considered a sign of spiritual maturity and a superior relationship with God. In more than one place the apostle Paul, as well as other inspired writers, emphasizes that the messenger (or medium) is not important. What is important is that which is revealed through the individual, and the *Source* of the revelation. Consider the following statement: ***Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. ⁷ For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 1 Corinthians 4:6-7.***

That which came through the Holy Spirit, the inspired written word, is the *objective* source Christians are exhorted to focus on – ***so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written.*** The written word, *inspired by God* is ***profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17.***

What the apostle figuratively applied to him and Apollos may be seen in the first chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians. (1:12-13) ***Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." ¹³ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*** Here too, individual teachers became the focus of attention. They were following after men as if they were the source of truth. Instead they should realize that the gospel is *the power of God* for salvation. Believers in Christ should not follow the doctrines of Luther, Calvin or identify with and praise any other person. Worshipping God by teaching what people decided upon for doctrine is ***in vain (Matthew 15:9)***, and the body of Christ – the church – cannot be divided among men, giving them the credit for (the message of) salvation.

Christians are to focus upon the written word revealed ***so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.*** Here the tendency to elevate the medium rather than the message of salvation is clearly exposed. The point is further emphasized by what follows: ***For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?***

It is interesting to notice how the authority of the Scriptures is often attacked by those in our age who claim to be guided by the Holy Spirit in the same way the apostles and prophets were. (Ephesians 3:1-7) This becomes necessary to justify their teachings which are foreign to the Scriptures. As the competition for superiority among the “anointed” men continues, it indeed is a matter of becoming ***arrogant in behalf of one against the other*** as the anointing of the *Holy Spirit* becomes the *evidence*, a form of name-dropping.

The next question by the apostle clearly illustrates the relative insignificance of the messenger: The message of salvation was designed and revealed by God. It is the messenger who assumes that he has superior qualities, and therefore was selected to be a medium for God's message to be delivered, or confirmed. The gifts they exercised were given them by God. In spite of them exercising the gifts, the apostle writes: ***And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³ for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? 1 Corinthians 3:1-4***

In the name of the Holy Spirit men create the division God describes as being fleshly: ***For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?*** The gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to reveal and confirm the word of God, first announced by the Son. (**Hebrews 2:1-4**) It had nothing to do with the spiritual maturity of the person, as may be seen from what Paul wrote to those who exercised the gifts in . The apostle had to explain to them how to properly exercise the gifts of the Spirit: ***Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. 1 Corinthians 12:1***

We have the true message delivered through the gifts of the Spirit and confirmed in the Scriptures, therefore Jude appeals to Christians to ***contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. Jude 3***