

The Power of Subtle Manipulation

by Hendrik Joubert

Consider the manipulative power of general perceptions. Do you find it increasingly difficult to alert people to the ease with which they are lead down the proverbial garden path with regard to the simple truths contained in the Scriptures? Does the mere thought of pointing this out to them make you feel egotistical and self-righteous, causing you to talk less about it? *Who died and made you king? So, you are the only one able to understand these things properly, are you?* These are some of the remarks we may fear.

This attitude causes those who ridicule your efforts to feel snug and safe – they do not feel badly at all about ignoring obvious and exclusive truths revealed in the Scriptures. They do not consider themselves arrogant in the least bit for ignoring, or even changing what God says. What is worse is that many lay their actions at the feet of the Holy Spirit, suggesting that He guides them in what they do. We are clearly warned: ***Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*** (1 John 4:1)

How are we to ***test the spirits to see whether they are from God?*** Naturally the *spirits* will claim to have the power to test, and to declare *themselves* tested. The answer lies in the following statement Paul makes in his first letter to the Corinthians: ***If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.*** (1 Corinthians 14:37)

In same letter he wrote: ***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 on behalf of one against the other.*** (1 Corinthians 4:6) To the Ephesians He writes: ***...by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. ⁴ By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; ⁶ to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,...*** (Ephesians 3:3-6) The gospel, by which Jew and non-Jew alike may become children of God, was being revealed and written down for that generation as well as generations to come.

In 1 Corinthians 12 he explains the nature and the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit. It is in chapter 13 he explains why love is superior to these temporary gifts, and declares that once the revelation is complete, the gifts will cease.

In his second letter to Timothy he writes: ***All Scripture is inspired by God and 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. The Bible is to be used for both negative as well as positive actions. Teaching and training in righteousness implies being reproofed and corrected, and he mentions it specifically. Notice also that reproof and correction demands a form of judgment by the person who is doing the correcting or reproofing. It is obvious that the Scriptures are given as standard. The Lord declares: ***"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."*** (John 7:24) Judgment should not be according to frivolous human standards. (Matthew 7:1ff)

Some object that when Paul made this statement to Timothy only the Old Testament was available. Notice how Paul places emphasis, not on the gifts which brought the Scriptures, but rather on the Scriptures themselves. Peter says about the writings of Paul: ***...just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*** (2 Peter 3:15-16)

Notice the double purpose statements – ***profitable for*** and ***that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*** As he wrote to the Ephesians, the revelation was being handed down through the apostles and prophets. It has been written down for us so we may have everything we need in order to please God. In the Scriptures we have the only objective source of truth. It supplies us with the standard by which to reprove and correct the false prophets who want to lead us away from the Bible as they attempt divide what they consider the body of Christ among themselves. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13) ***But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! ¹⁰ For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.*** (Galatians 1:8-10)