

General Topics :: he who is spiritual judges all things

he who is spiritual judges all things - posted by philologos (), on: 2007/2/10 4:27

I have been considering recent event and meditating on the passages... "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 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. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ." (1Cor 2:13-16 NKJV) On the surface it would seem that a lot of 'spiritual judging' goes on in Christian circles and even on web forums.

There is a phenomena which I have observed over many years in which one person describes another as being 'carnal' or 'unspiritual'. It is always said in a spirit of final judgment. It is a kind of spiritual death sentence; there is nothing more to be said. It should usually be interpreted as 'I don't agree with the way he does things and I know I am right'. There's not a lot of room for relationship when the death sentence has been delivered.

There are several things which come to mind. The first is that the passage quoted here is not talking about persons but things. In fact, it is talking about 'doctrine'. It is actually speaking about the words that are used to convey truth. Paul claims that the natural man cannot receive the 'truths' that the Spirit conveys; they are foolishness to him. He then goes on to say that the spiritual man judges/discerns all 'things'. The word 'judge/discern' here is ([http://www.blueletterbible.org/cgi-bin/words.pl???hrhttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.blueletterbible.org%2Fsearch.html&iconhttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.blueletterbible.org%2Fgifs%2Fsearch\\_tools.gif&bgcolorFFFFFF&textcolor000000&linkcolor39398C&vlinkcolor0000FF&strongso350&languageG&anything.x33&anything.y13](http://www.blueletterbible.org/cgi-bin/words.pl???hrhttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.blueletterbible.org%2Fsearch.html&iconhttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.blueletterbible.org%2Fgifs%2Fsearch_tools.gif&bgcolorFFFFFF&textcolor000000&linkcolor39398C&vlinkcolor0000FF&strongso350&languageG&anything.x33&anything.y13)) anakrino which really mean to investigate or assess something. In other words people is saying that the spiritual is constantly assessing 'truths' and that only a 'spiritual man' does this.

The Corinthians (and the Greeks) were notoriously independent and autonomous. Much of this Corinthian letter addresses that problem. When a 'spiritual' man behaves in the way of a 'natural' man he is described as being 'carnal', he sees and lives from a 'human' point of view; only Christians can be 'carnal' in this sense. Hence the little protest of Paul in 1 Cor 3:3 where he says that the Corinthians are behaving 'like men'; this is a strong reproof, spiritual men have no excuse for behaving like 'men'. The Corinthians independent spirit brings other reproofs from Paul throughout the book. It is plain that the Corinthians thought that they and their opinions and customs were as 'good as anybody'. Paul reminds them that they are not 'independent' but part of a body etc. The condition of the Corinthians is neatly summed up in the earliest verses; each one of you says 'I'. That is to say 'each one' is making their own mind up without regard to being part of the body.

The Corinthians prided themselves on their power to make their own judgments but Paul says But we have the mind of Christ. That 'we' is emphasised in the Greek; to get the meaning try reading it aloud and emphasising the 'we'. Paul is not saying here 'I have the mind of Christ' but 'we have the mind of Christ'. In other words 'truth' is to be found in the family and not in any one individual. Truth will be recognised in and by the whole family. (This is part of the reason for his statement on another controversial passage in 1Cor 11:16 where again the 'we' is emphasised.) This truth is also contained in another passage of scripture which is often used by those of an independent mind-set; "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." (1John 2:20 KJVS) Again it is in the plural; the unction is a corporate function. Many in pastoral settings will have known the pain of trying to help those who say 'but God told me'. It shuts the individual up into an isolation that makes them a prime target for the circling wolves.

So do we have a biblical warrant to 'judge' each others 'spirituality' or 'carnality'? Did Paul accuse Barnabas of 'carnality' when he decided to take Mark? Not at all. There can be difference of opinion without resorting to this peculiar form of Christian totalitarianism. I call it totalitarianism because it cannot tolerate anyone who will not submit to its own creed. Freedom of conscience is a prime Christian teaching. We may pray for another to get 'revelation' but when that prayer is made public it is just another judgment which says 'this person does not have revelation'. On our site here we have fairly frequent allusions to 'just pray brother, God will show you'. This is a monstrous assumption that the person who does not share my point of view is not 'praying' and is another glimpse of Christian totalitarianism.

Why do I want other people to believe just as I do? Because I don't like being out on my own even if I do like my independence. I am safer, or at least more comfortable, when people believe as I do. Behind it all is the compulsion that 'I

must win and he must lose. This is an intolerable mind-set for a Christian. If you win one of these exchanges, God forgive you.

So how do we assess/scrutinize words and ideas to know whether they are of God or not. Not by recourse to some inner witness. The witness of the Spirit is made to serve all kinds of purposes but the real meaning of that is that God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God. It was never intended to bear witness with my spirit that this man or woman is NOT a child of God. We cannot use the witness of the Spirit as a kind of Christian divining rod. So how do we assess/scrutinize? By remaining in fellowship with the community, by listening to others. And not with others of the website or local church only but with the community of the saints down the ages and particularly with those to whom God entrusted the writing of scripture. That old quote from Isaiah is always relevant; "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Is 8:20 NKJV)

This is one of the special blessings available to members of this forum. We can share and we can assess/scrutinise the things that others share. We must not be over-sensitive to others' questions or protestations; this is a forum, a market place where we can discuss things. If I cannot bear my teachings to be assessed/scrutinised and discussed, my time in the forum is going to be very uncomfortable for you. What I must not do is to put on the judge's black cap and issue the death sentence of 'this man is carnal' because I am not getting my own way. If I do so I may bring myself into the category of those who are somewhat cynically described by Job... "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." (Job 12:2 KJVS)

**Re: he who is spiritual judges all things, on: 2007/2/11 13:56**

philologos said

Quote:  
-----Paul is not saying here 'I have the mind of Christ' but 'we have the mind of Christ'. In other words 'truth' is to be found in the family and not in any one individual. Truth will be recognised in and by the whole family.  
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While Ron is away, I wonder if it is possible to keep this thread on the front page of the Lounge?

Does not the possibility of 'truth' being 'found in the family', rest on the essential ingredient of all members of a local assembly being free to speak, be heard, being willing to listen and also to be changed?