

Dear all, greetings.

“Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately. And when he wished to cross over to Achaia, the believers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. On his arrival he greatly helped those who through grace had become believers, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the scriptures that the Messiah is Jesus. While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied-- <sup>7</sup> altogether there were about twelve of them.” (Acts 18:24 - 19:7)

This is a beautiful story. What does it teach us?

- 1) Apollos was well-versed in the Scriptures, a powerful preacher, and led 12 disciples to God in Ephesus, yet he knew not of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Apollos preached the baptism of John – a baptism of repentance from sin. He did not preach on the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- 3) When Paul arrived, and questioned the 12 disciples, he learned that they had come from A to B, but not to Z. They still needed to grow in their understanding.
- 4) Paul then introduced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, at which time the Holy Spirit came upon these 12 disciples.

How does this apply to us today?

First, in our own communion of faith, many voices are denying the reality of the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Godhead. He is, so they say, merely the shared mind of the Father and the Son, their combined presence, but not a Person within the Godhead. Yet, this passage from Acts makes no sense if a baptism of repentance towards God the Father is indeed sufficient. Why would Paul inquire about the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and differentiate between the baptism of John (of repentance) or of Jesus Christ (in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), if the Holy Spirit is not a self-existent Being?

Second, in our own communion, many voices are arguing that we need to go back to the allegedly pristine faith of our pioneers. Allegedly, they were united in understanding (absolutely false) and united in theology (again, absolutely false) at some date in the early 1850s, e.g. 14<sup>th</sup> March 1850. And it is to those understandings that we must return. In so doing, they forget that many pioneers were flesh eaters, pork eaters, Sunday keepers and smoked until the full impact of the Sabbath Conferences and the Otsego health vision and other prophetic messages could

flourish from hearing to realization in the lives of believers. They refuse the self-evident facts that our pioneers grew in grace and truth and understanding over many years. EGW's own understanding of the Godhead grew and then flourished in her post-1888 writings, e.g. SC, DA and COL. Those books would not have been written by her with her pre-1888 understandings for instance in the 1850s. Imagine if the 12 disciples of Apollos had heard Paul's teachings, and said, "No! We will not grow in our understanding! We insist on going back to the understanding of our pioneers, of Apollos himself – who only taught the baptism of John and not of Jesus." Had the 12 disciples of Apollos insisted on their pioneer's limited understanding, they would never have grown in grace and truth when Paul preached to them.

Third, the baptism of John was of repentance. It focused on a change in behavior. It did not bring the transformation of the Holy Spirit. This is a fundamental point. Preaching a baptism of repentance towards God does not necessarily bring about the infilling of the Holy Spirit and an internal transformation with the fruit of the Spirit. No – a baptism of repentance tends to major on externals and the obvious lifestyle issues that need to be brought into harmony with God's will, but it does not lead to a change of heart. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. We must guard against this dichotomy in our own ministry. It is relatively easy to focus on externals and lifestyle related matters: stop smoking clinics; vegan cooking seminars; personal wellness expos.....all of which are important and reflect the abundance of life that Jesus came to bring us. However, without the accompanying baptism of the Holy Spirit, which brings about a transformation of the heart, one is left with an external lifestyle that is motivated by compelling argument rather than conviction of the heart. And it is to the heart that God looks....and judges. Thus, while we rightfully call people towards a God-fearing lifestyle – the baptism of John – we must never forget the equally important, if not more important, baptism of the Holy Spirit. A daily baptism. A daily infilling. A daily call upon and cry to God. A daily surrendering of self for loving service to God and fellow humanity.

My prayer today is that each of us will not merely focus on the experience of the disciples of Apollos – the baptism of John that results in a rigorous yet external holiness, but we will cry to God for the daily baptism of the Holy Spirit – for conviction of sin, conviction of belief, and the conviction of love for the lost.

Kind regards,

Conrad.