

## **BAPTISM UNTO REPENTANCE NOT BAPTISM INTO CHRIST.**

– ACTS 18:23-19:7. – *MARCH 1.* –

**"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him?" – Luke 11:13.**

AFTER leaving Corinth the Apostle completed his second missionary tour, and returned to Antioch, stopping en route at Jerusalem, where he greeted the Church and, no doubt, gave them an account of the Lord's blessing upon his recent ministries in Europe. Aquila and Priscilla went with the Apostle as far as Ephesus, and the vessel on which he traveled remaining over the Sabbath at the port, he improved the opportunity to speak for Christ in the synagogue of Ephesus. His discourse was no doubt in the nature of a preparation for a future work which he hoped to do there. He doubtless spoke only along the lines of first [R3152 : page 59] principles – respecting the glorious prophecies of Messiah, and the fulfilment which should now be expected. His discourse was well received, and he was urged to remain longer, and gave his promise of a later return. We are not informed how long the Apostle remained at Antioch, but "after he had spent some time there he departed and went over all the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, establishing all the disciples." While the Apostle was energetic in the establishment of new companies of the Lord's people, he was not slack in looking out for the spiritual welfare and growth of those which he had already established, as is evidenced by this statement – this being his third visit to these churches.

When the Apostle returned to Ephesus he found that in his absence a Christian brother named Apollos had come and had preached eloquently in the synagogue, using very close, logical and convincing arguments, and securing twelve converts to Christianity. He was a Jew, born at Alexandria, one of the chief cities of that time,

specially noted for its schools of learning, and extensive libraries. The common version says that Apollos was "eloquent"; the revised version, that he was "learned", and the Greek word seems to be with equal propriety translatable either way: in all probability he was both learned and eloquent. However, he was not as thoroughly advanced in the knowledge of the Lord and of the truth as were Aquila and Priscilla who had for a time companied with the Apostle; and as soon as they heard Apollos in the synagogue they recognized him as a Christian brother, and took him to their own home, where they had good opportunity for communicating to him "the way of the Lord more perfectly."

We have here a beautiful illustration of how the Lord is pleased to use his consecrated people. He had use for the talents and education of Apollos; he had use also for the less talented Aquila and Priscilla who, though not qualified to speak in public in the synagogue, were, nevertheless, used of the Lord to bless his more eloquent disciple, and thus to be sharers with him in the fruits of his more public ministry. The same is true today, as the Apostle explains. (1 Cor. 12:12-26.) No member of the body of Christ can say that he has no need for another member, and no member may say that there is nothing whatever that he can do in the service of the body. Under the guidance of our glorious Head each member who is filled with his spirit, and desirous of serving him, may do so. When the time for rewards will come, who knows how much of the usefulness of Paul and Apollos may be accredited to some of the humble ones such as Aquila and Priscilla, who in various ways ministered to and encouraged and supported their abler brethren in the Lord's work. The Apostle mentions very tenderly some of this class who colabored with him, supporting his work by their influence and by their means. (Phil. 4:3.) Similar opportunities are still open, and no child of the Lord should be content to let the days of the present harvest time go by with their golden opportunities for service and cooperation without seeking each day to lift the royal banner himself, and to publicly show forth the praises of him who hath called him out of darkness into light, or by assisting and cooperating

with others whom the Lord in his providence has placed in more advantageous positions for public service.

Apollos, hearing from Aquila and Priscilla of the glorious work accomplished by the Apostle Paul at Corinth, went thither, taking with him a letter of introduction from his newly found friends at Ephesus, who had so recently left Corinth. Incidentally we are told that his going to Corinth proved a blessing to the Church there, because of his thorough acquaintance with the Scriptures and his ability in expounding them, so that he could "forcefully confute the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." That the Corinthian brethren were greatly pleased with the masterful ability of Apollos as a teacher of the truth is implied by the fact that some of them were disposed to say that they were followers of Apollos, while others, also sectarian in spirit, claimed to be followers of Paul, and others of Peter – all of which sectarianism the Apostle distinctly reproved subsequently in his epistle to them. – 1 Cor. 3:3-7.

There is room for all the ability of all the brethren in the Church, and such a thing as rivalry or partisanship is entirely out of place. We have one Lord, one Head: we all are brethren, and our highest aim should be to honor our Head and serve the fellow-members; and each one who so endeavors should be highly esteemed, whether his talents are greater or smaller than those of others. Another lesson here is the importance of being well versed in the Scriptures. The sword of the spirit is the Word of God, and he who would serve the cause best must know how to use this weapon which the Lord himself has provided – forcefully, convincingly and yet lovingly. The Scriptures with which Apollos was familiar were the Old Testament writings, since the New Testament was not yet compiled, though doubtless a few of its books had already been written. Whether Apollos had seen these or not, he had from some quarter "been instructed in the way of the Lord," before meeting Aquila and Priscilla, and was now, through them, still more thoroughly furnished for his ministry of the truth. Let us each resolve that by the Lord's grace we will put on the entire Christian armament,

supplied us by the Lord, not neglecting the sword of the spirit – the Word. Let us learn, too, to be ready [R3152 : page 60] to accept further instruction as from the Lord, however humble may be the channels through which he may send it to us. Humility is one of the graces highly esteemed by the Lord, and one of the points upon which he frequently tests his followers: "Except ye become as little children [teachable, guileless], ye shall in nowise enter the Kingdom of heaven."

It was while Apollos was at Corinth that the Apostle Paul came to Ephesus, according to promise, and began a ministry there which lasted two years (19:10). Aquila and Priscilla had seemingly left Ephesus by this time, as they are not again mentioned; but the Apostle speedily found those whom Apollos' ministry had reached, twelve in number. (Vs. 7.) Our Common Version would seem to give the inference that the Apostle was surprised that these believers at Ephesus had not yet received gifts of the holy spirit. But not so; he merely wished to bring to their attention the fact that such gifts were possible to them, for only an apostle could convey the gifts of the holy spirit, as we have already seen. (Acts 8:14-17.) The preaching of Apollos was merely along the lines of first principles of the doctrine of Christ, represented in the baptism of John to the Jews, while these believers were, evidently, by nature Gentiles.

Apollos had explained the gospel merely to the extent of repentance from sin and faith in Christ as the Redeemer. He had no knowledge of the fuller meaning of baptism as explained by the Apostle (Rom. 6:3-5) – a baptism of consecration, to suffer with Christ – to be dead with him, to participate in his resurrection to the new nature and to be ultimate sharers with him in the heavenly Kingdom. The Apostle explained to them this "mystery" of fellowship with the Messiah – participation in his sufferings, and by and by in his glory (Col. 1:26,27): and when they heard this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus – as members of his body, to fellowship in his sufferings, even unto death.

How many believers there are today who, like these described, are members of "the household of faith," but not members of "the body of Christ" – who have gone so far as a baptism of repentance and reformation, and faith in the Redeemer, but who have not been instructed respecting the great privileges which belong to this dispensation – that we may become "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together!" Wherever we go, let us each seek by the grace of God to explain the way of the Lord more perfectly to these already partially indoctrinated ones. So long as there are a plenty of such to labor with, it would be unwise, yea, contrary to our covenant and commission, to specially devote our lives and energies to the world; for although we are to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, it is to be chiefly to the household of faith. All around us, in the churches of the various denominations, are, we believe, hundreds, yea, thousands, who are in the condition of these mentioned in the lesson, knowing only the *baptism of repentance*, knowing not the *baptism of Christ* – the baptism into his death, the baptism of full consecration. Let us be diligent in this highest department of the work of the ministry, feeding, instructing, the Lord's flock. **[R3153 : page 60]**

After instructing them thus respecting the true baptism, and after performing upon them its water symbol, the Apostle laid his hands on the believers and they received the holy spirit – that is to say, the "gifts of the spirit" were manifested in them – they spake with tongues, prophesied, etc., as described in 1 Corinthians 12. We have no power to communicate such gifts today, nor have others this power. It was an apostolic power, not transferable to others, as it was not the Lord's intention that those gifts should remain with the Church, but merely should be a witness in its infancy period; – until the New Testament writings should be within reach, and until the fruits of the spirit could be developed.

However, let none envy the primitive Church this special blessing, so necessary to its progress and joy; but remember that under

the Lord's providence our conditions in some respects are still more favorable, in that we have the written Word for our admonition. Let us remember the testimony of the Apostle in our last lesson, too, – to the effect that faith, hope and love, *fruits* of the spirit, far excel the tongues and interpretations and miracles of the *gifts* of the spirit: so that, as he explained, if one had all these gifts, and lacked the one fruit of love, he would be "nothing"; – it would profit him nothing as respects a share in the body of Christ, and in the glorious blessings, present and future, which belong to it.

Our Golden Text evidently refers, not to the miraculous gifts of the spirit enjoyed by the primitive Church, but to the holy spirit, or disposition, "the mind of Christ," the common privilege of all who are baptized into Christ's death, and who seek by faith to walk in newness of life. The miraculous gifts of the primitive Church could come only through apostolic hands; but the spirit, in the sense that we still enjoy it, the mind of Christ, the mind of God, with all the fruits and graces thereof, is still the privilege of the Lord's people, and dependent not upon apostolic or other hands, but upon our heavenly Father and upon the zeal with which we seek by prayer and every endeavor to have his mind, his disposition, controlling our thoughts, our words, our conduct. It is God's good pleasure to give us this spirit of love; but he gives it only to those who desire and seek it with patient perseverance.

