

The Case Of Apollos

Introduction. Many objections of the New Testament position arise largely out of emotionalism. If there are those today who hold an undenominational position and wear the name "Christian," what shall be their attitude towards those who belong to denominational bodies? In order to see our obligation toward those within denominationalism, we shall use the case of Apollos as an illustration (Acts 18:24-28). Paul mentions Apollos eight times in the Corinthian letter and in his letter to Titus, and all of these references are of a positive nature as to Apollos' ability as a servant of God. Paul always spoke of him in a positive light. However, in the beginning of Apollos' early teachings, there were things that needed to be corrected.

Within the book of Acts, we see Apollos, Aquila and Priscilla carrying out the divine commandment to teach. The situation which occurred between the three of them shows us the correct way to deal with error.

I. *Some Preliminary Observations*

- A. I openly admit that there are good people in all churches. It is possible, however, for the best of people to be mistaken. Religion does not rest upon conscience, but upon divine authority (Matthew 7:21-23; John 17:17).
 1. Saul of Tarsus was at one time a zealous persecutor of Christians; later, in reviewing his early career, he says he was the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:12-15).
 2. Saul proves that just because you think you are right is no evidence that you are right (Acts 23:1).
- B. There is no substitute for obedience to the word (Matthew 7:24-27; 1 John 2:3-6; Revelation 22:14). The only right course to pursue is to believe and obey the gospel. There are three kinds of people who reject the truth.
 1. There are those who do not even believe and are judged already (John 3:17-18).
 2. Others believe to a certain extent, yet willfully allow prejudice to blind them to the truth (Hebrews 10:26; James 4:17; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Matthew 23:37-39).
 3. Still others look at salvation from a purely denominational point of view because they have never been informed (Acts 3:17).
- C. It is our duty to tell an honest inquirer what to do to be saved in the words of the Lord and the inspired apostles (1 Timothy 4:11-16). The Lord's servant must be able to teach (2 Timothy 2:24). Jesus and the apostles told us what to do to be saved.

1. No man can be certain that he is reconciled to God until he has complied with the terms of pardon as laid down in the New Testament.
 2. Since God is the offended party, He alone has the right to state the terms upon which He will receive the sinner back into fellowship with Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
- D. We must admit that all who wear human names and follow human creeds contribute to the sin of division (1 Corinthians 3:2-5). We must also admit that division is contrary to the will and prayer of our Lord, and is condemned (John 17:20-21; Romans 8:6-7).

II. ***His Standing Prior To His Meeting***

- A. There are a number of qualities of Apollos revealed in the passage:
1. He was an eloquent man (vs. 24).
 2. He was mighty in the scriptures (vs. 24).
 3. He was instructed in the way of the Lord (vs. 25).
 4. He was fervent in spirit, that is, in his own spirit (vs. 25).
 5. He speaking and teaching diligently the things concerning Jesus (vs. 25).
 6. He knew only the baptism of John (vs. 25).
- B. One could make the same statements about most Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc., preachers now.
1. Next to the Pope, Billy Graham is one of the most well known religious figures in the world. Men like Spurgeon, Beecher and Moody were all eloquent speakers.
 2. Since the days of Luther and Calvin, I am sure that denominational preachers have constructed and delivered good sermons on the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the incarnation, the resurrection and perhaps other fundamentals.
 3. There is no doubt that denominational preachers are full of enthusiasm. No one doubts their earnestness and dedication.
 - a) But it may be possible for one to be fervent in spirit, but mistaken (Romans 10:2).
 - b) Emotionalism and enthusiasm cannot be mistaken for truth.
 4. Like most denominational preachers, he was in error on the subject of baptism. With all his learning, eloquence, diligence and zeal, he was wrong. His position was the same as the disciples before Jesus gave His commission. John's baptism had been superseded by baptism into Christ, but Apollos did not know it, and was therefore teaching error (Acts 19:1-6).
- C. Suppose now, for illustration, that Apollos would have died in this condition. He was eloquent, diligent, fervent in spirit, and true to the knowledge which he possessed; yet he was in error. Had he died in

this condition, would Apollos have been eternally lost? I leave all judgment with God. I can do nothing more than preach the truth in order that error may be dispelled.

III. ***The Duty Of Aquila And Priscilla***

- A. Aquila and Priscilla were two Christians, members of the church of Christ at Ephesus and associates of Paul. When they heard Apollos preaching the baptism of John, what did they do? Did they allow him to go on in his error without attempting to correct him? Certainly not!
 - 1. They took him privately and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately. They no doubt explained to him that John's baptism was no longer valid; that it was his duty to baptize all believers according to Christ's instructions in Matthew 28:19.
 - 2. Apollos, having "a good and honest heart," was willing to be taught, and immediately corrected his error.
- B. We need to possess the firm conviction that we have a message for the denominational world.
 - 1. The preachers of the Restoration Movement possessed this conviction and as a result, people who were in denominational error would leave that error and become just members of the church that Christ built (Matthew 16:18).
 - 2. We today seem to have generally lost this conviction. We cannot preach and teach with an air of apology. We cannot preach and teach with an attitude of compromise.
- C. We need to continue to repeat the familiar message (Luke 8:5). Let us never forget that we have a specific duty, like Aquila and Priscilla; and that duty is to teach the way of the Lord more accurately.
 - 1. Every member of every congregation should follow the example of these two Christians and become an expounder of the way of God.
 - 2. We have got to do our very best to inform the denominational world so that the prayer of our Lord can be answered.

IV. ***The Standing Of Apollos After His Meeting***

- A. Suppose Apollos had refused to listen to his teachers. Suppose he had hardened his heart against them. In this case, he certainly would have been held accountable in the judgment. One who is intolerant is one who closes his heart against all truth and refuses to allow the light of understanding to illuminate his soul.
- B. Suppose that Apollos, after the instruction he had received from Aquila and Priscilla, had disregarded it. Suppose he had said, "It does not make any difference what you do just so you are sincere. John's baptism is just as good as any other baptism, if your heart is right. I am willing to leave this matter to each individual's conscience." This

would have been flagrant mishandling of the truth (2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:1-3).

- C. As an ambassador of Christ, Apollos felt his responsibility. He corrected his error and preached the gospel in its fullness and simplicity (Acts 18:28). If there is anyone here who is a member of a denomination, now that you have learned the way of God more accurately, where do you stand? Will you be swayed by prejudice? Or will you be as honest with yourself and with God as this man Apollos?

Conclusion. Someone might object and say, "You want us to come into your church." I beg to differ. I have no way to offer you except the way laid out in the New Testament. I have no church. I am not asking you to come to my position. I am pleading with you to do as I have done -- to return to the New Testament position. I am pleading with you to forsake these divisive names and creeds, and thus do your part in tearing down the walls of division. You may say, "My mother was a Baptist, and what was good enough for her is good enough for me." Well, because your mother may have been lame is no reason that you should cripple yourself.

After hearing this sermon, are you convinced? If so, are you not in the same position in which Apollos found himself after his conversation with Aquila and Priscilla? Will you not have the courage now to act upon your convictions? Fear not opposition, persecution nor discouragement. Obey Christ and do your part in helping to achieve the condition for which He prayed.