

REFLECTIONS

Thoughts on nature and the Christian faith - 4/8/19

"Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit." - Joel 2:29



I took this image at Ash Cave in southeastern Ohio after a period of heavy rainfall. There is usually only one cascade of water pouring over the upper rim of this cave, but on this day there were three distinct columns of water falling to the floor of the cave. The roar of the water echoed off the sides of the cave as I stood there in wonder, along with a few others who were there at the same time. No one spoke a word. Sometimes it is best to be silent when God speaks. I did not do it, but I wanted to just walk under the waterfall and experience the feeling of cleansing, of washing, of renewal. It reminded me of the time when, reading the book of Romans, God opened my heart to the gospel and caused me to be born again. My eyes were opened to understand scripture in a way I never had before, and I became a new creature. What I had experienced was what the prophet Joel had predicted, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. This happened as I was confronted with the gospel in scripture. Martin Luther once rightly said that the Holy Spirit comes riding in the chariot of the gospel. The new birth is a work of God alone. Does that mean we are to do nothing in response? Of course not. Obedience is the true sign of conversion and without the evidence of obedience, we can be sure no conversion occurred. Baptism, as an example, is not optional. As a result of this new birth, we are sealed and gifted with the Holy Spirit. Each true conversion is then followed by a gift of ministry. Our gifts may vary but the purpose is the same, to edify others and to advance the kingdom of God. To not use the gift you have been given is an affront to the Giver, and to not allow a gifted person to use his or her gift is to weaken the church and insult its Head. The Holy Spirit does not give a gift that is not to be used. The outpouring of water at Ash Cave prompted wonder. The outpouring of the Spirit in the church would do far more if it was unrestrained. - John