



LESSON II.—Jan. 10.

The Holy Spirit Given.

Acts ii., 1-13.

(Study also V's. 14-31. Commit V's. 1-4.)

GOLDEN TEXT.

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.—Acts ii., 4.

LESSON STORY.

When the day of Pentecost at last came, the disciples were all together in one place. Suddenly they heard a sound like a mighty wind rushing through the house, and they saw 'cloven tongues, like as of fire.' These fiery tongues abode on each one present, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in foreign tongues.

Now, there were at Jerusalem devout Jews from many nations, who, when they heard of this strange event, all crowded to hear the disciples, and were filled with amazement because every man heard them speaking in his own language. 'Are not all these which speak Galileans?' they asked. 'How is it, then, that we hear every man speaking our languages?' There were Parthians, Medes, Elamites and men from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, men from Phrygia, Pamphilia, Egypt, Crete, Arabia, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and those who had embraced the Jewish religion. And they were all amazed beyond measure and troubled in their minds about this strange event, and some mocked, saying, 'These men are full of new wine.' But Peter stood up to defend their conduct and to preach about Jesus to the people.

LESSON HINTS.

'When the day of Pentecost was fully come.' The disciples were obedient to the command and waited till they received the promise. If they had waited patiently for nine days and then became discouraged and gone back to their nets, or gone out to do the preaching in their own strength, they might never have received this wonderful blessing. 'They were all with one accord.' The reason a great many churches and societies do not receive this blessing is that they are not 'of one accord.' The dove of peace cannot dwell in hearts full of contention and strife.

'There came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.' Our Lord used the simile of the wind in His talk with Nicodemus (John iii., 8), and to us it must ever stand as a mystery, the symbol of that with which we come in continual contact, but which we may never behold or fully comprehend. The balmy zephyr which plays about and scarce disturbs the tiniest flower is part of the same force which tears up great trees, lashes oceans into fury, and wrecks great ships. So the gentle Comforter, the dove of peace, is the same Holy Spirit, who convicts and breaks down the most hardened sinner.

'It filled the house.' So the Holy Spirit would take possession of our natures, filling every nook and cranny.

'There appeared . . . cloven tongues' to show that the tongue was to be the chief implement in their future work. When the prophet Isaiah had complained of his inability to preach for God, a 'live coal' was laid on his lips and his iniquity was taken away, that he might be the Lord's mouth-piece. Many of God's people hold back from active service because they have not yet received 'the gift of tongues,' and seem not to know that He is able and willing to bestow it upon them. These tongues appeared to be of fire, signifying the fiery enthusiasm with which the disciples were to preach the Gospel. It is very necessary that we should have 'hot hearts' in this work. God warns us against lukewarmness (Rev. iii., 16). The water in the engine may be very warm, but if it is not actually boiling it cannot move the engine.

'It sat upon each of them'—the women as well as the men. This was to show that the Holy Spirit would permanently abide with them.

'They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' The gift is for all, headstrong Peter, doubting Thomas, fervid John, and all the other

disciples, with their widely different temperaments and characteristics.

They began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Skeptics have cavilled at the command of our Lord to the disciples to preach to all nations; how could these ignorant men, with no leisure time, sit down and study the languages of those whom they were to go among? How could they preach without the language? Pentecost has been called 'the reversal of Babel,' for at Pentecost God gave these men the power to speak in the different languages they would need.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation. The Jews were much scattered. Jewish colonies were to be found in every known country of the world. Great numbers of them came up to the feast of the Passover, and many foreign Jews came to spend their declining years at Jerusalem. Besides this, the 'weeks' of Daniel's prophecy were nearly run out, and devout Jews, looking for the coming of the Messiah, had assembled at Jerusalem to wait there for Him. When the sound of the 'mighty wind' and the apostles' speaking was heard abroad, the people all crowded to the spot to hear them, and each one heard in his own language. Probably eighteen or twenty different languages were spoken by as many different disciples, and the Jews, seeing that the apostles were simple Galileans, wondered more and more that each man heard plainly about the wonderful works of God. 'What meaneth this?' they asked, and some (probably those who lived in Jerusalem and Judea, and not understanding the other languages, thought that the disciples were talking nonsense) were willing to put the worst construction upon the strange doings, and said, 'These men are full of new wine.' To these Peter made his defence in their own dialect, while the rest of the disciples probably continued to preach and explain to the others in their own tongues.

Suggested Hymns.—'Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,' 'Ho! every one that is thirsty in spirit,' 'Come Spirit, source of light,' 'Jesus, we Thy promise claim,' 'More about Jesus,' 'Almost Persuaded.'

LESSON HYMN.

Thy Holy Spirit, Lord, alone
Can deeper love inspire;
His power alone within our hearts
Can light the sacred fire.

Thy Holy Spirit, Lord, can give
The grace we need this hour;
And while we wait, O Spirit come
In sanctifying power.

O Spirit of Love, descend;
Come in our midst, we pray,
And like a rushing mighty wind
Sweep over our souls to-day.

Conversion of Children.

Sunday-school teachers should co-operate with parents in seeking the conversion of every child old enough to comprehend the truth that 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Childhood we believe to be the normal time of life to turn to God for salvation. We will give a few reasons for this our belief:

In childhood the spiritual instincts are quicker, stronger and truer than at any other period in life. The heart is tender, having not yet become hardened by long resistance to the claims of the Gospel. The heart is especially susceptible to religious impressions in childhood, and is easily moved by hearing of and reflecting upon God's love as shown in human redemption. Children are not bound with the habits of sin as is the case with older people. They are comparative strangers to pride, lust, ambition, love of money and love of fashion.

Children are free from the engrossments of family and business cares. These things are formidable barriers in the way of the conversion of adults. The characteristic qualities of childhood are docility, trustfulness and readiness to be led heavenward as much as earthward. Their minds and hearts are not preoccupied with all manner of things that must be dislodged before religious thought and truth can find a foothold.

Children are free from skepticism. They give unqualified assent to every statement of God's Word. They have no doubts and fears to deplore. Their minds have not

been poisoned with the sharp sayings of men, whose life work is to undermine the religious faith of others. They believe what God says concerning themselves, concerning Christ, concerning heaven and hell, without asking any questions. There is a primal impulse Godward in childhood, and we do well to recognize this fact in the most practical way.

To secure the conversion of children there must be definite work. Exhortations, pleadings and prayers are often too general. In aiming at all no one is reached in particular. Let the children be individually spoken to and urged to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour. The work should be definite in another sense. Let there be no vagueness about what we are after. We mean to secure the conversion of their souls, the renewal of their hearts, and their entire devotion to the cause of Christ.—'Evangelical Sunday-School Teacher.'

What Is Needed.

At this happy season of the year the Sabbath-school is full, and teachers are happy; but after the holidays there is a growing decline in interest. As the months of the new year pass by, teachers begin to tire in the work, and scholars to drop off. So there is more or less of a drag in keeping things going until warm weather sets in, when, in large towns and cities, there is great difficulty to secure enough teachers for the classes, and many children absent themselves for the summer. Then in the fall there is an effort to reorganize and revive the school, and it increases in numbers and vitality until Christmas-time. This is the history of too many Sabbath-schools in our land. Is it not time to institute a reform? Shall it not begin at once? Shall it not shape itself in seeking a revival of religion in our Sabbath-schools? To this end, let there be individual and concerted prayer. Let teachers get together for this special object. We have teachers' meetings for the study of the lesson, and sometimes for general consultation as to ways and means for carrying on the school. Why, then, not have a prayer-meeting from day to day for the avowed purpose of seeking the outpouring of the Spirit upon teachers, officers and scholars? With his manifestation in quickening and converting power, the attendance on the part of all will be more regular, and greater spirituality and energy will be imparted to all departments of Sabbath-school work.—'Presbyterian Observer.'

Tact in Teaching.

In nothing is tact so essential to success as in teaching the young. The best equipped teacher without it will fail; a very ordinary one, so far as talent or mental culture is concerned, with it will succeed. Lytton, speaking of some ancient philosopher, says: 'He possessed the nameless art of making a personal impression upon his disciples, and of creating individual enthusiasm.' The nameless art of which Lytton speaks is tact. It is a thing that seems to defy definition. We know not how to characterize it, but we recognize it wherever it exists.

It is only by tact that a teacher can make a personal impression upon the scholars. In this way he stamps his own individuality upon them. In this way he attaches them to himself by the strongest ties of love and friendship. Having drawn them to his own heart, he is more likely to lead them to the heart of the blessed Saviour. A teacher who fails to secure the love of his scholars is a failure. A boy in speaking of the love of his class for their teacher, said, 'Any of us would die for him.' This may have been an extravagant expression of devotion, and yet it expressed their feelings of attachment and affection.

It is the teacher with tact who has an insight into the religious feelings and spiritual desires of the members of his class. The young, as a rule, are rather reticent to express their religious yearnings. They need to be drawn out. Only the efforts of a truly sympathizing heart can do this. Sympathy without tact, without an insight into the struggles that are going on within, will not be sufficient. The necessary tact to help struggling souls into the kingdom of light and peace is a gift worth coveting. May we not add, a gift which the Holy Spirit is ever ready to impart.—'Evangelical Sunday-School Teacher.'