



LESSON III.—Jan. 17.

A Multitude Converted.

Acts ii., 32-47.

(Commit Vs. 38, 39.)

GOLDEN TEXT.

The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off.—Acts ii., 39.

LESSON STORY.

Peter was preaching to the Jews who had crowded to see and hear the disciples, upon whom the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit had descended. He first reasoned with those who had accused the disciples of drunkenness. He explained that this was what the prophet Joel had prophesied long before, 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy.' And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' He then began to preach to them about Jesus of Nazareth, saying that they had seen the miracles God wrought through Him, and that they knew the prophecies David had spoken concerning Him, how David spoke of the resurrection of Christ, and how the disciples were all witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, after the Jews had crucified Him, thus proving Him to be the Christ, the long expected Messiah. And the people were mightily convicted and began to ask Peter and the rest of the apostles what they should do. Peter replied: 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,' and with many other words he testified and exhorted them to be saved. Three thousand gladly believed and were baptized that same day. These all continued steadfast, and those who had possessions sold them and shared with those who had nothing. Many wonders and signs were done by the disciples, and numbers were added to the Church daily.

LESSON HINTS.

Peter's sermon was addressed to the Jews, who were well versed in the Scriptures. He quoted to them the prophecy of Joel concerning the outpouring of the Spirit, and the prophecies of David concerning the Messiah, proving Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, to be the Christ whom God had raised from the dead. The disciples were all witnesses of the resurrection, they having seen him many times after he rose from the dead. Therefore, being exalted to heaven at his ascension, and having received the promise which he had often mentioned to the apostles (John xiv., 26; xv., 26; xvi., 7, 13; Acts i., 4), 'He hath shed forth this,' the Holy Ghost, 'which ye now see and hear.' Perhaps the fiery tongues still rested on the disciples, and certainly they could hear the different tongues in which the disciples were speaking.

'David is not ascended,' his body is still in the ground, therefore he had not been speaking of himself when he said, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool,' therefore this same Jesus was proved Lord and Christ.

'When they heard this'—that they had crucified their long-expected Messiah, 'they were pricked to the heart'—conscience-stricken at the thought of their part in the matter, 'and said . . . what shall we do?' It would be well if every sermon were forceful enough to cause anxious inquiry at the end. This seems to have become an inquiry meeting in which the talk became personal with all those who were anxious for their soul's salvation. 'Peter said unto them, Repent'—turn from all sin with a genuine sorrow for it and God will remove it from us 'as far as the east is from the west.' 'Be baptized,' as a testimony to the world and as a symbol of the washing away of sin. 'In the name of Jesus Christ'—to show that we are now under his control, and henceforth must live as His representatives here on earth. 'Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'—the promise is

to all those who receive Jesus as their Lord. 'As many as the Lord our God shall call'—every one who hears the gospel message. 'With many other words did he testify and exhort'—the whole of Peter's sermon is not given here, probably he gave his own personal testimony as to the power of God in changing his own heart. 'Save yourselves,' he continued; 'give Christ the right of way in your hearts, that he may save you. This untoward generation'—not tending toward God, as 'froward,' away from God.

'They that gladly received his word'—the gospel everywhere brings gladness and joy to those who accept it. 'Were baptized'—they complied with all the conditions laid down for them. 'There were added unto them about three thousand souls'—these may not all have heard Peter's sermon; those who heard and believed may have gone straightway to tell their friends the glad news of the gospel, as Andrew had first found his own brother, Simon, and brought him to Jesus. 'They continued steadfastly'—it was no momentary enthusiasm, no new and interesting theory of which they soon tired; but a real, living fellowship with a real, living Saviour. 'In the apostle's doctrine'—the apostles taught them daily the things pertaining to the kingdom. 'Breaking of bread'—partaking of the Lord's supper. 'In prayers'—praying together, public prayer has many advantages; the Lord gave special promises to those who agreed together in prayer, and promised that 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. xviii., 20); at the same time we must not forget private prayer, for the moment we begin to omit this most important of all duties we lay ourselves open to all kinds of temptation.

'All that believed were together, and had all things in common.' This ideal state of the early Christian Church was only possible where the people were all of one mind, and all filled with the Holy Spirit, that there might be no jealousy, no laziness, no shirking of duty. Socialists sigh for this Utopia, seemingly ignorant of the fact that this kind of a commonwealth, without the people being all of one mind, would become but a refuge for all those who could not earn an honest living. Gladness and singleness of heart—characteristics of true Christians. 'Praising God'—a Christian's life should be one long hymn of praise to the Giver of all good gifts. 'Having favor with all the people.' Jesus had 'favor with God and man.' Happy-hearted people are generally loved by all. 'And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved' (R.V.). The good work goes on; there are daily rejoicings in heaven over the sinners who repent and are saved through the precious blood of Jesus.

Suggested Hymns.—'The Morning Light is breaking,' 'All hail—the power of Jesus' name,' 'There is a green hill,' 'I know whom I have believed,' 'I hear my dying Saviour say,' 'Awake and sing the song,' 'I will sing of my Redeemer,' 'Sinners Jesus will receive.'

LESSON HYMN.

'Whosoever heareth! shout, shout the sound! Send the blessed tidings all the world around! Spread the joyful news wherever man is found:

'Whosoever will may come.'

Whosoever cometh need not delay; Now the door is open, enter while ye may: Jesus is the true, the only Living Way, 'Whosoever will may come.'

'Whosoever will,' the promise is secure; 'Whosoever will,' forever shall endure; 'Whosoever will'—'tis life forevermore, 'Whosoever will may come.'

ILLUSTRATION.

Mr. Moody tells how some divine has pictured Peter preaching on the day of Pentecost. A man pushed his way through the crowd, and said, 'Peter, do you think there is hope for me? I am the man who made that crown of thorns and placed them upon Christ's brow; do you think He will save me?' 'Yes,' said Peter, 'whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. You are a 'whosoever'; if you call He will hear your cry. He will answer your prayer and save you.'

Another man pushed his way up and said to Peter, 'I am the man who took that cruel crown of thorns, sending it into His brow; do you think He will save me?'

'Yes,' said Peter, 'He told us to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and He did not mean any to be left out; salvation is for you. He did not come to condemn men: He came to get His arm under the vilest sinner and lift him up toward heaven.'

Another man, elbowing his way through the crowd, pushed up to Peter and said, 'I am the Roman soldier who took the spear and drove it to His heart, when there came blood and water; do you think there is hope for me?' 'Yes,' answered Peter, 'there's a nearer way of reaching His heart than that: whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' And the Roman soldier might have cried then and there, and might have obtained forgiveness and salvation. If the Lord heard the cry of those Jerusalem sinners, whose hands were dripping with the blood of the Son of God; if He heard their cry and saved them, do you not think He will hear you and save you?

Joining the Church.

In the Sabbath-school the child memorizes and studies the Bible, learns the beautiful hymns, is impressed by the prayers. Even those who know nothing of the sweet influences of the Christian home learn what it is to be a disciple of Christ. Unconsciously, as the years pass by, the Spirit of the Lord is directing them. We do not know when such children are converted. At what age should they be influenced to unite with the church? Three-fourths of our church-members unite while young. Some children have as clear and decided religious convictions at twelve as others have at fifteen years. A girl of twelve desired to confess Christ. 'Are you not too young?' was the question put to her. 'I know I love the Saviour,' was the reply. How many young people from twelve to seventeen years of age, some of them Christians, others trying to be, drift from our Sabbath-schools and are lost to the church because they are not individually importuned to profess Christ? How can such be influenced? Most of these are conscientious. They fear they are 'not converted,' or are 'not good enough.' Let us teach children over and over again what conversion is. For a child to accept Christ as his Saviour and determine to live a Christian life, that is conversion. It may have taken months or years to reach this decision. Let him understand the Holy Spirit is leading him; it will make him more earnest and thoughtful. Let us make the most of our opportunity while the child is in this state of mind, and by our continued personal interest the child's faith will be strengthened and he will be moved to take his stand on the Lord's side.—Alice Cooper, in 'Morning Star.'

Influence of a Worshipful Teacher.

Older and younger scholars alike will be largely affected by their teacher's bearing. A worshipful teacher often makes a worshipful scholar. A sincere seriousness, a prayerful attitude, as well as a prayerful spirit, earnestness and feeling in using and teaching the Bible, careful attendance at church services, with invitations to the scholars to do the same, a sense of the real presence of God, and a constant confidence in the power of the Spirit, a hearty presenting of Christ as the personal Saviour for each scholar—all these characteristics of a worshipful spirit do not fail of notice by the scholar, and do not fail eventually of inspiring him with a worshipful spirit. A teacher without these characteristics must confess to a great lack.—'Sunday-School Times.'

Gaining Familiarity With the Bible.

Occasional Bible drill during the general exercises of the Sunday-school is a good thing. Let the superintendent select beforehand a few brief passages from various parts of the Bible. At the appointed time let him call upon different classes or individuals to turn to these passages one by one, as rapidly as possible, and to read them. In this way familiarity with the Bible and a knowledge of the location of its several books will be promoted. If the passages selected have a bearing on the lesson of the day, all the better.—'Sunday-School Times.'