

Sabbath School Lesson #12 – The Work of the Holy Spirit – 18-24 Mar 2017

Christ who breathed on His disciples saying, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22), wants us to receive the same “Spirit of Christ” which was in all the prophets (1 Peter 1:11), because “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9), which Spirit is Christ Himself, as “the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17), for Christ being “the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45) and “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6), and for these reasons, let us have Christ; as Ellen White says, “It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ” {Lt66-1894 (April 10, 1894) par. 18}.

The memory text for this lesson reads: “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:13). Our joy comes from believing in God. That is reason enough for rejoicing. He who really believes in the Lord must rejoice. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1-2,11). Let God “fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope.” He who does not rejoice does not believe.

Jesus said that He would ask God to send us the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit was to come and convict the world of sin: “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). Peter, to whom among other disciples these words were spoken, understood that the one who was to come and help us in turning away from sin, was Jesus: “Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26). Paul understood this as well, for he said: “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6). It is Jesus, after His resurrection, who comes to us to turn us from sin. Jesus Christ is that Comforter who knows what we are going through because He has been there Himself; the Comforter is not a different third Individual of the Godhead.

Of the jailer at Philippi, who was witness to God’s wonderful care for His servants, and who asked and found a way of life, and was baptized after Paul and Silas had preached Jesus to him and his house, it is said: “And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house” (Acts 16:34). Instead of the present participle in the case of the word rendered “believing,” the Greek has the perfect, as rendered in the Revised Standard Version thus: “And he brought them up into his house, and set meat before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God.”

The participle, whether present or perfect, is often used to indicate the cause, as in the sentence, ‘Having been present, I can speak with authority.’ That is, because I was there. Or this, ‘Having suffered the same thing, I could not help sympathising with him.’ In each of these cases everybody understands that the participle indicates the cause of that which is afterward stated. Now read what is said of the jailer: “He rejoiced greatly, having believed in God.” It is easy to see that the reason why he rejoiced was because he had believed or was believing in God. Reading several translations gives this rendering plainly. Well, that was only natural, because joy is the consequence of believing on the Lord. Jesus indicated the same thing when He said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11). Fulness of joy comes with belief of the words of Christ. And so we read what Paul wrote, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

This is the last Lesson in this quarter that has focused on the Holy Spirit. But if you have read all our weekly comments and still believe in the false trinity doctrine that the Holy Spirit is a separate Individual Being apart from God and His Son, we remind you that Christianity is Individual. Since the religion of Christ has to do with the heart, the inner life and thought, of men, and not merely with outward acts, it is evident that it must deal with individuals, and not with masses. Salvation is Individual. The following texts of Scripture plainly show this.

“Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat” (Isaiah 55:1). “We see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour; that He by the

grace of God should taste death *for every man*" (Hebrews 2:9). "For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and *to every man* his work" (Mark 13:34). Consequently the Lord says: "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give *every man* according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

In order that we may properly carry on the work assigned, "*Unto every one of us* is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Ephesians 4:7). The Spirit distributes gifts for the work, "*dividing to every man severally* as He will" (1 Corinthians 12:11).

For the manner in which men perform the work left them by the Lord, every man is responsible to God alone. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own Master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4). The same principle applies also in matters of faith. "Let *every man* be fully persuaded in his own mind" "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God" (Romans 14:5,22). Jesus said, "If any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not" (John 12:47). Paul says, "*Every one of us shall give account of himself* to God" (Romans 14:12).

Since no man can answer for another in the Judgment day, but each one must give account of himself, it is evident that no one can believe for another, or prescribe another's belief. Each man stands accountable to God for himself, independently of priest or minister.

It is further evident, also, that no man can be justified before God for believing something just because some other person does, even though that thing be true. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10). Truly, faith is the appropriation of the living presence and power of Christ, in His word. Accepting a theory merely, and that, too, on the authority of some other person or the church believes it, is no more like real faith, than taking food at another person's hands and putting it in a safe place in the cupboard is like eating.

Some one will ask, 'How about *hearing the church*, if each one is to decide his own faith and practice for himself? Is each individual to set himself and his ideas in opposition to the church?' By no means. And this brings up a principle that is too often lost sight of. A few words may suffice to set it forth. First, let it be understood that 'the church' is not a law-making body. "There is one lawgiver" (James 4:12), and that is God. The church is made up of members who, although they have different offices and different work, are in their relation to God absolutely equal. The greatest minister, even though he was called Pope, has no more authority to lay down rules for faith and practice, than the poorest and most ignorant child, and a thousand men assembled in council, have no more authority in matters of faith than each man has individually. Truth rests on God's word, and not in numbers or influence.

That which is committed to the church is the word of God. This, and this alone, is to be spoken. This we are to hear. The fact that a number of men are agreed on a certain point, or on an unbiblical belief, is no evidence that the thing is true. In a matter of faith, one hundred men are as likely to be wrong as one man is; and they are all sure to be wrong if they say anything aside from the word of God. Therefore if 'the church' does not speak the word of God, it is no more to be listened to than is any individual. The issue 'private interpretation' is not involved in this question. It is not a matter of private interpretation, but of loyalty to the plain word of God. For one man to accept an interpretation of Scripture simply because another man says that it is correct, is to accept that other man as pope; but for each man to set his own judgment and authority against everybody else, and to interpret Scripture according to his own judgment, is to make himself a pope, and that is no better. What then shall we do? – Accept the Spirit of Christ, the divinely appointed guide. This gift of the Spirit is to every man, to guide him individually into all the truth, which is the pure word of God.

The Spirit will not lead a man to set himself in opposition to his brethren. He will take the word of God just as it reads, and humbly rest upon it. If all in the church do the same, there will be perfect unanimity because the word says the same thing to every man. But if his brethren do not the same, he will not fight them, nor create a rebellion. The child of God will never resist authority. He will hold to the truth, and if the 'authority,' whether it be the Church or the State, condemns him, he will submit to the condemnation and punishment, yet not compromising the truth. In this way he will be a true follower of the Master, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously;" yet who never swerved in His steadfast witness to the truth.