

## Sabbath School Lesson #10 – Jesus Won Their Confidence – 27 Aug-2 Sep 2016

**C**hrist won the confidence of the people who believed on Him. Of this confidence, it is recorded: “But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities” (Luke 5:15). We focus on the question on Thursday Lesson: “What connection was there in the early church between “enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:47) and church growth?” We read Acts 2:37-47.

A little company of men, and women too, spoke the wonderful works of God, and as a result, three thousand souls were baptized, and added to the early church. “And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46-47).

The great number of conversions on the day of Pentecost is attributed to the recounting of the wonderful works of God. The most wonderful work of God that was told that day was that “God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). The humble Carpenter of Nazareth, the poor Man who had no place that He could call His own, in which to sleep, – “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour” (Acts 5:31). When the people heard this story told with such assurance and power that it carried conviction with it, they cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then came the answer, “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. For the *promise* is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:37-39). This exhortation was heeded, with the result of already stated above.

What is this *promise* that is so extensive, of which Peter spoke? Was it the *promise* that they should receive the Spirit? This is the idea often obtained from a too hasty reading of the Scriptures, and from the prevalent, though unspoken, thought that the possession of the Spirit, with the distinct power which the Spirit gives, is the end of the *promise* of God. But the possession of the Spirit is but a means to an end, – a step in the fulfilment of God’s *promise* to mankind. For the *promise* of God we must go to the Garden of Eden, and to the record of Abraham’s life. It is the *promise* of the complete redemption of man and the earth from the curse of sin, and the “restoration of all things.” The Holy Spirit is the earnest, the assurance, of this inheritance, “until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The *promise* is to many as the Lord our God shall call. How many does He call to Him? “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 45:22). “Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Matthew 11:28; Revelation 22:17). The *promise* of the inheritance is to all mankind; for when God made the earth He made man (not only one, but mankind) ruler over it; and the Holy Spirit is given in order that this *promise* may be fulfilled. The possession promised is the new earth, – a spiritual inheritance, – and the possession of the Spirit is the assurance that this inheritance is ours. Therefore every one to whom the *promise* is made may receive the Holy Spirit, if he is willing to accept the righteousness that the Spirit brings.

The preaching of the gospel is committed to men. “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak” (Hebrews 2:5). This is because “the world to come,” the new earth, was from the beginning put in subjection to man, and not to angels. Since it was given to man, and God never withdraws a gift, it naturally falls to man as its lord to restore it; that this word may be accomplished, God gives the Holy Spirit, the first-fruits of the inheritance. It is by “the powers of the world to come” that we gain that world (Hebrews 6:5). Thus, the pouring out of the Spirit on Pentecost was God’s witness to the truth that He had given the people the world to come, for the Spirit’s power is the power of that world.

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Read also verses 46, 47, already quoted. We see that this breaking of bread was both in the temple and at home, and, moreover, it was to the disciples a token of fellowship. The question arises: With whom was the fellowship? Some will say at once that it was fellowship with the apostles; but a little study will show that it was fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ that the disciples enjoyed. “That

which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Here it is made very plain that “our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Without this, all human fellowship is nothing. Again: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [fellowship] of the blood of Christ? The bread, which we break, is it not the communion [fellowship] of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one Bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

Do not misunderstand the statement that they continued “in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship.” It is the same as in 1 John 1:3: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” “Fellowship with us” means the same fellowship that the apostles had, namely, “with the Father and with His Son.” We are “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:20); not on the apostles and prophets, but on the foundation on which they built and were built – the foundation is Jesus, laid in Zion by God.

Clearly the new converts had fellowship “with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ,” and we note the fact that the breaking of bread had a close connection with this fellowship. Indeed, as stated in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, the breaking of bread is the indication of that fellowship. Christ is the bread of life (John 6:48), and we, by feeding upon Him, become one bread with Him. It is said of the disciples that “breaking bread at home, they did eat their food with gladness and singleness of heart.” Note that the breaking of bread at home was as much a religious matter with them, and contributed as much to their gladness, as breaking bread in the synagogue or the temple. Why? Because they had learned from the Lord Jesus that the food which He gives us to eat contains His life; and that, as we live by eating, if we eat in faith discerning His body, we shall live by faith, being partakers of His righteousness.

This breaking of bread is mentioned in connection with the fact that “all that believed were together, and had all things common” (Acts 2:44). Those who believe in the true Father and His Son, having perfect fellowship, can do this; for they know that they have nothing of their own, and that He who from His own life supplies their wants, belongs equally to others. They have no table of their own, but eat continually from the Lord’s table. He prepares a table for us, and we are fed daily by His hand. Consequently, when we give to our needy brother, we are simply doing what we might do if we were both dining at a rich man’s table, – we might pass the food to some one with an empty plate. If we look at the matter in this light, it will affect us in two ways: it will cure us of selfishness, – the tendency to seize food from the table and go into a corner and eat it by ourselves, – and also cure us of the false pride which makes us feel ashamed if it is necessary for us to receive assistance through a fellow-man.

Another thing: When we continually recognise the fact that we are fed only from the Lord’s table, our table will no longer be a snare to us, because when we eat and drink we shall do it to the glory of God; and this means health to us, since our welfare is God’s glory. It is the Lord “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; so *that* thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Psalms 103:4). We shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God’s house (Psalms 36:8), and nothing that does not tend to build up, nothing that is poisonous or that contains elements of decay, – will be eaten by us, simply because we like the taste of it.

“And fear came upon every soul” (Acts 2:43). Not the slavish fear that hath torment, but the fear of God, which is true wisdom. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). And yet the Spirit of the Lord, “the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” is given us in Christ, to make us “of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:2-3). “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” and “By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil” (Proverbs 8:13; 16:6).

Thus was the early church built and only thus can the true church of Christ ever be built. It is not built by human ideas of attracting un-churched communities into church. The house that is “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22), is “not made with hands” (2 Corinthians 5:1). Christ calls men out of the world to Himself, and adds them together. The whole body, knit together by joints and hands, and having nourishment ministered from Christ the Head, “increaseth with the increase of God” (Colossians 2:19).