

"The End of Simon"

Acts 8

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we looked at the power of the cross as Samaritans were saved through Philip's preaching and we also could see the power of the cross in the life of John. Here in Acts 8 he and Peter came from Jerusalem to pray for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit. They laid their hands on them as they prayed which was a sign of identifying with them. John and Peter welcomed the Samaritans into the body of Jesus Christ. But John did not always feel this way.

Luke 9:51-54

⁵¹ *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,*

⁵² *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.*

⁵³ *And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

⁵⁴ *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*

Here John and his brother James desired to see the Samaritans destroyed but the cross would change all of this.

Now as we followed Philip to Samaria we met an individual by the name of Simon. He was a sorcerer or a wizard who had the ability to exercise demonic power and that power was used to deceive the Samaritans.

Notice Acts 8:8-11

This Simon was worshipped in Samaria. But when Philip came preaching the Gospel many of the Samaritans were saved and baptized and we are told that Simon also believed and was baptized. But his faith was not unto salvation. He believed in the miracles that Philip did but he had no concern for the message that Philip preached.

Notice Acts 8:12-13

Simon was a tare among the wheat. He was a false convert that Satan was trying to plant inside the church.

"Simon's True Intentions"

Now when Peter and John laid their hands on the believers, and they received the Holy Spirit Simon was watching. No doubt Simon was not pleased with what was happening because he was not getting all the attention. He longed to be the main attraction and he therefore requested to buy the power to grant the Holy Spirit.

Notice Acts 8:14-19

Simon is a famous man because even today there is a practice known as "Simony" which is the practice of buying and selling church offices which can only be given by God. This practice caused major problems in the Middle Ages. In those days, a person could buy the office of a bishop or even the position of the Pope. This then crossed over into people in the Catholic church giving money to buy others out of purgatory. Simony goes beyond all of this however because it still happens in many churches today. When people serve for personal gain or recognition that is a form of Simony. When preachers preach for popularity, it is a form of Simony. Anytime we seek to gain the blessings of the Lord in illegitimate ways it is Simony.

Notice Acts 8:18 again.

If we look closely here we can see the heart OF Simon. He SAW that through the laying on of hands they received the Spirit he desired to have the same power. It is revealing that he did not desire the Holy Spirit but only the power to do what Peter and John had done. Simon's eyes were on personal profit and not on personal salvation.

Application:

Jeremiah 17:9

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Let us learn to be very careful and always examine our own motives because we too have sinful hearts that can easily deceive us. Let us remember Balaam in the Old Testament and how Balak offered him great rewards if he would curse Israel. God had warned Balaam not to curse Israel, but Balaam was so set on the rewards that he was determined to find a way to get the rewards. Then we read the following text that show the depravity of Balaam's heart.

Numbers 22:

²¹ And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

22 And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.

23 And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

24 But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.

25 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

26 And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

27 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

30 And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? and he said, Nay.

He was so deceived by his own heart that he entered into a conversation with a talking donkey and does not seem to view this as unusual. Now let us get back to Acts.

Notice Acts 8:20

Peter was boiling with righteous anger here in this verse. The statement he made is very strong against Simon because Simon desired to buy that which was a gift from God. The word "perish" means "to be destroyed" and it is used in the Bible to describe the eternal destiny of the unbelievers.

Application:

When we consider the strong words of Peter here in this text it should cause us to stop and think about how God views those who believe they can earn their salvation because it too is a free Gift from God.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Jesus paid our sin debt completely when He died upon the cross and He paid that debt with His blood. There is nothing left for us to do or to pay.

John 19:30

³⁰ When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

The phrase "it is finished" is one Word in the Greek and it means "to bring to a complete end, to finish" therefore when Jesus cried out "it is finished" He was not speaking of His life because it was not brought to an end for He was resurrected, and He still lives today and forever more. The phrase refers to "the payment for our sin." The debt was paid in full. So when someone desires to work for or somehow earn their salvation it is a slap in the face to the Lord. Even those who believe they can lose their salvation are guilty because they basically are saying, "God did His part and we must do ours." That is saying that Jesus did not do enough to keep us saved and so to keep our salvation we must live a certain way. This is Simony! It is an attempt to earn or purchase the Gift of God.

Notice Acts 8:21

How did Peter know what Simon's heart was like? Peter had the gift of discernment. We saw this earlier in our study.

Acts 5:1-4

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

² *And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

³ But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

⁴ Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

To have the gift of spiritual discernment is a very good thing to have but it is not a popular gift. I say this because if you have spiritual discernment you can be with a group of people who hear a certain teacher or preacher and they all say, "He is wonderful!" But then there is you and you listened, and you heard things that were not exactly correct and when you speak up there are those who do not like that fact that you poured water on their fire. This discernment is a spiritual gift given by the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11

⁸ For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

⁹ To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

¹⁰ To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

¹¹ But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

The Apostle Paul had the gift of discernment also.

Acts 16:16-18

¹⁶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

¹⁷ The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

¹⁸ And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

All gifts in the body are important but the gift of discernment is of great need in the church today. Now we all have the anointing of the Spirit that gives us the ability to know Truth from error but this is not the same as the gift of discernment.

1 John 2:20

²⁰ But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

Notice Acts 8:22-23

Simon still had the opportunity to be saved if he would repent and exercise true saving faith. In verse 23 we see characteristics of unsaved people.

Simon was in "gall of bitterness" which spoke of a bitterness within him because of the ministry of Philip, John and Peter because it caused him to lose his influence in the city. The "bond of iniquity" referred to how Simon was a slave to his sin. The sin had him enslaved and he was unable to get free on his own.

Proverbs 5:21-23

²¹ For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

²² His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

²³ He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Notice Acts 8:24

This is the sad ending of Simon. We read no more about the man. I will close with the words of Whitcomb on this verse.

Conclusion:

"Simon's response was absolutely pathetic: "Pray to the Lord for me that none of these things which you have spoken come upon me." That was not true repentance. He was not concerned about his sin, but only about the consequences he might face. He was saying, "I do not want to get hurt! I do not want to suffer consequences for what I have done." We have millions of people in America who are in institutions called "penitentiaries." Supposedly once they enter these places, they will become penitent. Really? Millions of these people are sad, frustrated and angry, but very few are penitent. The fear of suffering serious consequences due to sin does not automatically bring genuine faith and repentance. So as far as the record goes, Simon never believed unto eternal life."