

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson #38

COMMENTARY ON: 8:18-25

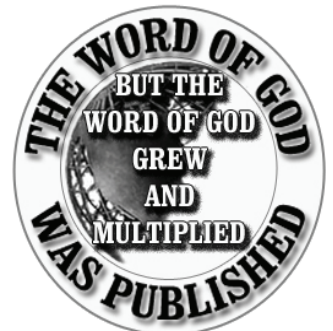
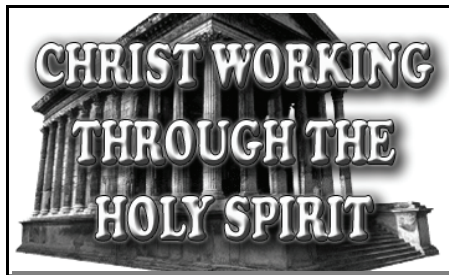
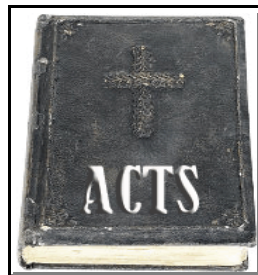
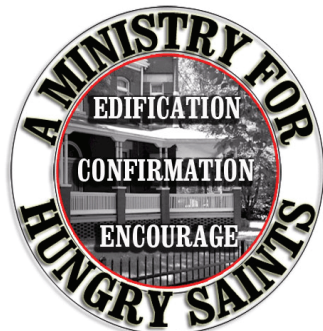
SIMON THE SORCERER

In the inspired record of the advancement of the truth and the growth of the body of Christ, we are also given a glimpse of "the flesh" and the activity of the wicked one. Already these things have been revealed in the surfacing of Ananias and Sapphira. Having made a place for Satan, he put something into their hearts, and they gave expression to it. We are now confronted with another outbreak of wickedness. This time there is a graduation in the seriousness of the incident. There is also a different kind of judgment administered. In all of this, we behold the nature of Divine workings among men. Sin is not always judged in the same way, for men attempt to capitalize on fixed patterns. This also confirms that there are different nuances, motives, and appearances of sin, making it imperative that those who confront it have a strong faith and a spiritually cultured wisdom. This will be our first exposure to the sin of emulation, which is covetousness in a different garb. The sin will be precisely defined and assessed. More of the manner of Christ's rule is made known.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

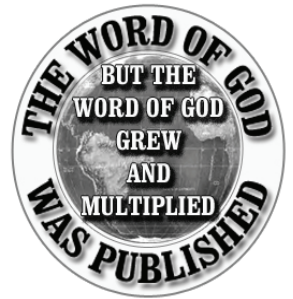


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 38



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God'S Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

SIMON THE SORCERER

“8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. ²⁰ But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. ²¹ Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. ²² Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. ²³ For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. ²⁴ Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. ²⁵ And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.” (Acts 8:18-25)

INTRODUCTION

In the inspired record of the advancement of the truth and the growth of the body of Christ, we are also given a glimpse of “*the flesh*,” and the activity of the wicked one. From the Garden of Eden until this very day, wherever God has worked upon the earth, the “*old serpent*” has injected his presence, working to the fullest extent that has been allowed by

the God of heaven. Whether it was keeping the Garden, a nation journeying through the wilderness to Canaan, or a specially chosen king standing in the privacy of his palace, the devil has been there. He was there when the “*King of the Jews*” was born, making every effort to slay the young child. He reared his ugly head during Jesus’ ministry, a

moving his children to attempt lay traps and snares for the Master. When a man was chosen to be an Apostle, and even given the keys to the Kingdom, Satan asked God for permission to sift him as wheat. Now, we are seeing evidence of his working during the infancy of the church. He raised up opponents to the truth from among the Jewish leaders. He put it into

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the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira to tempt God by lying. He fomented murmuring among the early disciples over the distribution being made to the widows of the assembly. He raised up the Jewish council and moved them to oppose, and finally stone Stephen.

SOMETHING TO BE SEEN

This confirms that salvation is being worked out in an arena of conflict and competition. It is not accomplished in a spiritual vacuum where there are no opposing forces. That is why it is so foolish to embrace the notion that once a person has believed and obeyed the Gospel there is no further jeopardy or danger of falling away. In fact, the very passage we are going to receive violently throws that misconception down to the ground where it belongs. The embrace of this bit of theological nonsense is the direct result of an academic understanding of the Gospel, as compared with *"spiritual understanding"* (Col 1:9). The purpose of God, and the nature of His salvation, have, in such a case, **not** been comprehended.

The salvation of God is intended to be initiated and brought to maturity in a volatile arena – where forces are at work that are transcendent to human wisdom and strength. It is in this kind of

environment that the necessity of faith can be most clearly seen – for from beginning to end, salvation is *"by grace through faith"* (Eph 2:8). Because faith is the substance of things *"not seen,"* and the evidence of things that are not present – *"things hoped for"* – it must get past the seen in order to take hold of the unseen. Herein is the jeopardy of our situation. If faith is *"little"* or *"weak,"* the unseen realities so sorely needed for survival become less and less apparent, until they finally fade from view. When this happens, all stability goes away, for we *"stand by faith,"* and are *"kept by the power of God by faith"* (2 Cor 1:24; 1 Pet 1:5). Religion without faith is nothing more than idolatry.

It is essential to comprehend that as long as men are in this world, *"the flesh"* is the Achilles heel of all believers. This is because they are *"in the body,"* (Heb 13:3) – which is appropriately referred to as *"the body of this death."* This is why insightful souls long for deliverance from the body (Rom 7:24-25). It circumstance is also why the prospect of a glorified body is so precious to them (Phil 3:20-21; 2 Cor 5:2). Until our appointed deliverance from our present bodies, we must bring them under subjection, for they, and the life that is connected with them, are fundamentally recalcitrant (1 Cor 9:27). They remain a part of the world, which has been cursed, and therefore, as it is written, *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"* (1 Cor 15:50). In such a case, to boast some form of automatic security nothing more than folly. The very idea of such an existence puts faith to sleep, for faith moves about with the full awareness of danger, pitfalls, snares, and delusion.

This circumstance confirms the foolishness of living as though there was no jeopardy while we remain in the world. That imagine is disarming, which causes the danger to be all the greater, for Satan and his hosts always capitalize on the presence of unbelief or waning

faith.

Already these things have been revealed in the surfacing of Ananias and Sapphira. Having made a place for Satan, he put something into their hearts, and they gave expression to it. When the judgment of God came upon Ananias and Sapphira, the working of the wicked one was dealt a devastating blow, and *"great fear came upon all the church"* (Acts 5:11). Now, however, another hub of kingdom activity has developed elsewhere, and a mighty move of God is being made known. As though privy to this circumstance, the head of the old serpent raises up in Samaria – this time with a corruption even greater than the one of Ananias and Sapphira. This time there is a graduation in the seriousness of the incident. There is also a different kind of judgment administered. This confirms the living nature of Divine dealings, as opposed to the cold and lifeless working of a mere system.

THE ABSENCE OF A PATTERN

In all of this, we behold the nature of Divine workings among men. **Sin is not always judged in the same way, for men attempt to capitalize on fixed patterns.** Therefore Solomon said of Divine judgments, *"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil"* (Eccl 8:11).

Our text also confirms there are different nuances, motives, and appearances of sin, making it imperative that those who confront it have a strong faith and a spiritually cultured wisdom. **This will be our first exposure to the sin of emulation, which is covetousness in a different garb.** The sin will be precisely defined and assessed by Peter. As we would expect from a discerning man, the proper response to the sin will be expressed, as well as the only acceptable action of the transgressor.

This will be our first exposure to the sin of emulation, which is covetousness in a different garb. The sin will be precisely defined and assessed by Peter.

Peter will deal with the matter without having to wade through a cesspool of doctrinal corruption. We do well to pay careful attention to what he says, for we are being exposed to the straightforward confrontation of sin.

More of the manner of Christ's rule is made known in this text. We will find that the recovery of the sinner is not the primary thing. In fact, in this case, the possibility of recovery is not guaranteed, although there is a slight glimmer of hope. We will find that the God of heaven does not respond to all sin in the same manner. As revealed in Jesus, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, the transgression of the scribes and Pharisees was not approached in the same manner as the sin of a woman caught in the act of adultery, or a palsied man who had unforgiven sins. This is a hard lesson for

some to learn, but it is a needful one, lest men become complacent in their attitude toward sin. Jesus said there was such a thing a sinner who *"hath never forgiveness"* (Mk 3:29). Whether or not men understand all of the implications of that text, it ought to be crystal clear that all sin is not alike. John also spoke of a sin that was *"unto death,"* as well as a sin that was *"not unto death"* (1 John 5:16). David spoke of *"presumptuous sins"* that led to *"the great transgression"* (Psa 19:13) Jesus spoke of those who committed *"the greater sin"* (John 19:11). Paul wrote of *"the sin which doth so easily beset us"* (Heb 12:1). Thus, there

has been enough said on this subject to justify removing from our vocabulary any expressions that leads people to believe there all sin is alike.

Of course, at the time of our text, much of the confusion that exists in our day concerning sin had not yet been brought into the church. Peter will deal with the matter without having to wade through a cesspool of doctrinal corruption. We do well to pay careful attention to what he says, for we are being exposed to the straightforward confrontation of sin. There are no explanations for why this or that is or is not said. There is no explanation of what this does not mean, or how it does not conflict with some other statement of truth. Such explanations have become necessary because of doctrinal error. If, therefore, what Peter has to say is difficult to receive, it is certainly not because of any ambiguity or confusion in his words. Luke, the writer of Acts had no difficulty with the words. Philip asked no question about them. Even the transgressor clearly understood them.

WHAT SIMON SAW

^{8:18a} And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given . . ."

Simon, having believed and been baptized, has been following Philip, wondering, and *"beholding the miracles and signs which were done."* These were apparently out of the domain in which he had been operating, with the many sorcerers with which he had deceived the people. It is my judgment that he should have been occupying himself with the message that Philip was preaching, more than with the works he was doing – although the works were legitimate, giving witness to the truth of what Philip was preaching. Here, however, for the first time in the book of Acts, we are confronted with a man who put the teaching after the works, and was enamored of the works more than the doctrine. Keep in mind, this is a man that believed and was baptized. However you wish to classify those who believe

and are baptized, here was a man who, by the Holy Spirit, was thus classified. If it is true that such people are insulated against error, that will surely be fulfilled in Simon – for *"Simon himself also believed"* and *"was baptized"* (Acts 8:13). If such a person cannot fall away, then Simon will not do so. If he cannot lose what is possessed in Christ, then He will lose nothing. If forgiveness is guaranteed, then he will be guaranteed forgiveness.

In this case, as with all Scriptural accounts, the doctrines of men are put to the fire-test. If they are true, inspired accounts will support them. If they are not true, those accounts will contradict them and expose them.

SIMON SAW

"And when Simon saw . . ." Other versions read, *"But Simon having seen,"* DARBY *"Simon, having beheld,"* YLT and *"when Simon perceived."* MONTGOMERY

We do not know how long it took the word of the Samaritans receiving the Word of God to get to Jerusalem. But, however long it took, Simon was still following along with Philip, for when Peter and John had arrived, and through them the Holy Spirit was given, Simon saw it.

What men see reveals who they are, and does make a difference. This will be confirmed in Simon. What Simon saw was the events related to the preceding verse. It is said of Peter and John, *"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 8:17). This action was prompted by the fact that the Samaritans, although they had believed and were baptized, had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Peter and John discerned this, and had *"prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit"*^{NKJV} (v 15). Because the apostles were the ones appointed to lay the foundation for the church (Eph 2:20), it was apparently

necessary for this gift to be associated with them. This, in my judgment, was required because of the limited exposure of the Samaritans to the ministry of John the Baptist or Jesus, and the fact that when Jesus sent out the twelve, they were not permitted to enter into any Samaritan cities (Matt 10:5). This was, then, a kind of spiritual epoch – the establishment of the Kingdom of God in new territory. Care was therefore taken to avoid the forming of a church that was independent from the apostles, for it was their doctrine in which the believers were to continue (John 17:20; Acts 2:42).

THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS GIVEN

“. . . that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given . . .” Other versions read, “was bestowed,”
NASB “was conferred,”NAB “was imparted,”
AMPLIFIED and “is being given.”INTERLINEAR

Whether or not Simon received the Holy Spirit is not stated. Some have surmised that he did not, but I do not know how that supposition can be established. It seems to me that if this was the case, he would have asked to receive the Spirit. Notwithstanding, it is not profitable to delve into this matter, for God has not provided an answer concerning it. Some say the gift was conferred upon selective Samaritans – but the text does not say that, and we must confine ourselves to the text.

Note what Simon “saw” – “that the Holy Spirit was given.”NKJV And how did Simon know this? There was obviously some outward indication that the people had received the Holy Spirit. Some commentators have the answer for us. John Gill says, “he saw, that upon this men began to prophesy, and to speak with divers tongues they had never learned, and to work miracles, cure men of their diseases, and the like: and when he observed this.”COMMENTARY ON ACTS Albert Barnes says, “he witnessed the extraordinary effects, the power of speaking in a miraculous manner, etc.”NOTES ON THE BIBLE Adam Clarke says, “By hearing these speak with different tongues and work miracles.”ACTS OF THE APOSTLES Matthew Henry says, “that the gift of the Holy Ghost was conferred upon them; for, upon the use of this sign, they received the Holy Ghost, and spoke with tongues.”COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE However, after all us said and done, this is not what the text says. That something was surely seen by Simon cannot be denied, but that such a sight is

the point of the text, I emphatically deny. If that was intended to be the case, the Spirit would have spoken precisely, as he did of Paul’s experience with the Ephesians disciples (Acts 19:6).

The fact of the matter is that there are two records – and only two – of the giving of the Holy Spirit being associated with the laying on of hands. In both cases, the hands were those of an apostle or apostles. Ananias did put his hands on Saul, saying, “*Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 9:17). However, no details are given about Saul receiving the Holy Spirit.

THE POINT OF THIS TEXT

The point of this text is not to

In this text, the point being drawn out is the corruption that was in the heart of Simon, and how the Lord responds to carnal assessments. The way in which heaven responds to an incorrect analysis of Divine working, is reason enough for us to zealously avoid falling into such a trap.

establish that a certain procedure was followed by the apostles for the conferment of the Holy Spirit. That is error that Simon made, and it is certainly not fitting for us to make the same error. While the giving of the Spirit is a common experience for all believers, it is not always reported in the same manner. Nowhere is the receiving of the Holy Spirit **confined** to the reception of miraculous powers – nowhere. Nowhere is it taught that the apostles had power to transmit miraculous abilities and gifts by the laying on of hands. In His commission to His disciples, Jesus told them they would “*lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*” (Mk 16:18). He never told them they would confer either the Holy Spirit of spiritual powers by this means. My point in saying this is to draw attention to the manner in which Jesus shaped the thoughts of the apostles, and how the Holy Spirit shapes our thoughts

in the various reports of Scripture.

In this text, the point being drawn out is the corruption that was in the heart of Simon, and how the Lord responds to carnal assessments. The way in which heaven responds to an incorrect analysis of Divine working, is reason enough for us to zealously avoid falling into such a trap. **No religious doctrine of tradition is valuable enough to risk the reproach, and possible rejection of the Almighty.**

Suffice it to say, when God actually works within an individual, there will be some outward indication of that work. The form that the indication takes is determined by heaven, not men. That it is not always the same is confirmed in the reports of the various conversions in the book of Acts. Scarcely

- any two of them are identically the same.
- ⇨ The day of Pentecost, when the people “*gladly received the Word*”, and “*were baptized*.” 3,000 souls “*were added*” to the disciples. There is no record of them receiving the Spirit (Acts 2:37-42).
- ⇨ At Solomon’s porch, when the number of men who believed “*was about five thousand*.” There is no record of them receiving the Spirit (Acts 3:19; 4:4).
- ⇨ After Ananias and Sapphira were judged, when “*believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*.” There is no record of them receiving the Spirit (Acts 5:14).
- ⇨ At Samaria, where the people

“believed Philip preaching,” and “were baptized, both men and women.” In this case they are said to have received the Spirit after they were baptized (Acts 8:5-17).

- ⇨ The Ethiopian eunuch, believed, confessed Jesus was *“the Son of God,”* and was baptized. There is no record of him receiving the Spirit (Acts 8:27-39).
- ⇨ Saul of Tarsus, who arose, and was baptized, washing away his sins, and calling upon the name of the Lord. No account is given of him receiving the Spirit (Acts 9:16-18; 22:16).
- ⇨ The household of Cornelius, who received the Holy Spirit, and was commanded to be baptized with water. Here they received the Spirit, before they were baptized (Acts 10:44-48).

also of the Greeks believed.” There is no mention of them receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 14:1-3).

- ⇨ In Antioch of Pisidia, after hearing the preaching of Paul, it is written that *“when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”* There is no record of them being baptized or receiving the Spirit (Acts 13:48).
- ⇨ The household of Lydia, *“whose heart the Lord opened,”* resulting in her attending to the word of Paul and being baptized, There is no mention of her and her household receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:14-15).
- ⇨ The Philippi an jailor, who was told to *“believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,”* heard the word of the

Spirit (Acts 17:11-12).

- ⇨ In Athens, after hearing Paul, *“certain men clave unto him, ands believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.”* There is no record of them being baptized or receiving the Spirit (Acts 17:34)
- ⇨ In Corinth, *“Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”* There is no record of them receiving the Spirit (Acts 18:8).
- ⇨ The disciples at Ephesus, who were told they were to believe on Christ Jesus, , and were *“baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”* Paul then laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they *“spake with tongues and prophesied”* (Acts 19:1-7).

- ⇨ The book of Acts concludes by reporting that Paul, while a prisoner, was appointed a day when many came to his lodging. He *“expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.”* There is no record of them being baptized or receiving the Spirit (Acts 28:23-24).

If the purpose of the inspired record is to provide a crystallized view of the working of the Lord, these accounts would all have been similar. The only thing consistent in them all is the preaching of the Word of God, the believing of the recipients, and their willingness to do what was required of them, including being baptized.

However, if you were to take these reports and seek to develop a doctrine concerning receiving the Holy Spirit, you would have a great deal of difficulty. The reason for this circumstance is that they were not written for that purpose. If you want to know the doctrine concerning receiving the Spirit, you must turn to the

The only thing consistent in them all is the preaching of the Word of God, the believing of the recipients, and their willingness to do what was required of them, including being baptized.

- ⇨ When Peter reported the conversion of the household of Cornelius, he said that God *“gave them the like gift as He did unto us, “who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ”*(Acts 11:17). The people hearing the report concluded that *“God also hath granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life”*(Acts 11:18).
- ⇨ Results of the preaching of Barnabas, and *“much people was added unto the Lord.”* There is no mention of them being baptized or receiving the Spirit (Acts 11:24).
- ⇨ The deputy of the Isle of Pathos, who *“believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”* There is no mention of him being baptized or receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:6-12).
- ⇨ Those who believed in Iconium, where *“a great multitude of Jews and*

Lord preached, and “was baptized the same hour of the night.” There is no mention of him receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:30-34).

- ⇨ In a synagogue of Thessalonica, “some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, including a *“great multitude”* of *“devout Greeks,”* and *“of the chief women not a few.”* There is no record of them believing or being baptized (Acts 17:4).
- ⇨ In a Berean synagogue, the people were “more noble than those of Thessalonica,” receiving the word “with all readiness of mind,” and searching the Scriptures *“daily, whether those things were so.”* Many of them *“believed: also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, nor a few.”* There is no record of them being baptized or receiving the

apostolic doctrine. There, with remarkable consistency, HOW to receive the Spirit is not the point. The teaching is that those in Christ HAVE the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9,15,23; 1 Cor 2:12; 6:19; Gal 3:14; Heb 6:4), and that they have Him because He was “given” to them (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; 1 Thess 4:8; 1 John 3:24; 4:13). The emphasis is then placed on His function within the individual believer, and the body of Christ as well (Rom 8:13-14, 26-27; 1 Cor 6:11; 12:7; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal 5:5,18,22; 6:8; Eph 2:22; 4:3; 5:9; 6:17; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2,22).

SOMETHING WE MUST LEARN

It is imperative that the people of God learn to put their faith in God, who works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph 1:11). We know from revelation that the Lord does nothing without a

Sometimes, when it serves His purpose, that cause is expounded. Other times, we are not provided such details. Precisely why the apostles prayed that these believers might receive the Holy Spirit simply narrows down to the fact that they had not yet received the Spirit.

cause (Ezek 14:23). Sometimes, when it serves His purpose, that cause is expounded. Other times, we are not provided such details. Precisely why the apostles prayed that these believers might receive the Holy Spirit simply narrows down to the fact that they had not yet received the Spirit. We are **not** told why this circumstance existed, and

for that reason we must walk softly through the text, gleaning what it is obvious is intended for us to learn.

If you can be content with this kind of approach, you will gain much from the text. If you are not content with it, you will come away with a lot of questions.

HE OFFERED THEM MONEY

^{18b} . . . *he offered them money,*
¹⁹ *Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.”*

We are now introduced to a new Satanic initiative. In this, not only is the corruption of an individual seen, but there is also an attempt of the wicked one to corrupt the apostles themselves. He will hold before Peter and John the opportunity to gain wealth, which we already know they did not possess. It was at the Gate Beautiful that Peter plainly said to a man who was seeking alms, “*Silver and gold have I none*” (Acts 3:6). Now, some time has passed, and Peter and John are away from Jerusalem. We do not know what resources they had, or if they had any at all. Here, however, is a bold initiative by the wicked one to set the opportunity for wealth before them. The response will reveal who they are, as well as who Simon was.

HE OFFERED THEM MONEY

^{18b} . . . *he offered them money* . . . Other versions read, “*made them an offering of money,*”^{BBE} “*he offered them money to buy the power,*”^{NLT} “*brought before them money,*”^{YLT} “*he brought money and offered it to them,*”^{AMPLIFIED}

and “*he brought money.*”^{CEV}

Now Simon turns his attention from Philip, whom he had been following, to Peter and John. All three of these men – Peter, John, and Philip – represented and preached the same Christ. Simon, however, does not have Christ on his mind at this time. He has seen something that he wants, and he is willing to pay for it. He has also incorrectly assessed both the character and the motives of Peter and John.

The wording of the text indicates that he had money with him, and set it before Peter and John, strongly appealing to the lust he surmised they had. The word “*offered*” is translated from the Greek word προσήνεγκεν (prosa-neg-ken), which lexically means, “*to bring to,*”^{THAYER} “*hand something to someone,*”^{FRIEBERG} and “*to bring something into the presence of someone.*”^{LOUW-NIDA} Simon did not simply say, “*I will give you*” this or that. Rather, he held the gift out before the faces of Peter and John, appealing to the covetousness he assumed they had.

This was the kind of offer Gehazi, the servant of Elijah could not resist. When Elijah refused a gift from Naaman

the Syrian, Gehazi ran eagerly after it (2 Kgs 5:22-24). Likewise, Balaam chose to prophesy for wages, being eager to gain money for his services (Num 22:5-7; 2 Pet 2:15). Judas also “*covenanted*” with the enemies of Jesus to betray Him into their hands for “*thirty pieces of silver*” (Matt 26:15) – an agreement which he lived to sorely regret.

During the latter part of his life, Peter himself solemnly admonished elders to fulfill their ministry “*not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind,*” or with eagerness (1 Pet 5:2).

But Simon assumes that Peter and John are much like himself, and he approaches them as though that was true. In this, his own ignorance of the ways of God are made known, for he who employs improper means does because of an improper understanding.

GIVE ME THIS POWER

¹⁹ *Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.”* Other versions read, “*Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit,*”^{NASB} “*give me also this ability,*”^{NIV} “*so that*

anyone."^{NRSV} "when I put my hands on anyone he may get the Holy Spirit."^{BBE} "whoever I place my hands on,"^{CJB} and "so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit."^{LIVING}

Here is the first revelation of the sin of emulation, which is one of "the works of the flesh" (Gal 5:22). By definition, "emulation" is "an envious of contentious rivalry, jealousy,"^{THAYER} "set one's heart on" – in this case, what is possessed by someone else, ^{FRIBERG} "have or show a great interest in . . . covet,"^{UBS} and "eager rivalry, zealous imitation."^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

It is interesting to note that Simon does not ask the apostles to lay

Note also, that what is sought is to obtain the power to cause men to receive the Holy Spirit, not for men receive gifts conferred by the Holy Spirit. I do understand that men assume that is what Simon meant, but that is not what he is reported to have said – and we must confine the basis of our reasoning to the text itself.

Let me remind you once again, that this is the only account in all of Scripture where any of the twelve apostles prayed that men might receive the Holy Spirit, laying their hands on them to that end. The only other instance of the Holy Spirit being given to any persons in any sense is when Paul laid

gifts are not always the same. Those dispensed in the church in Rome were not identical with those dispensed in Corinth (Rom 12:1-6 and 1 Cor 12 and 14). The ones mentioned in Ephesus were not the same as those mentioned in Rome (Rom 12:1-6 and Eph 4:8-11). The ones in Galatia were not the same as the ones in Ephesus (Eph 4:8-11 and Gal 3:1-3). Peter's approach to such gifts stands in a category by itself (1 Pet 4:10-11). These observations should free men from the tendency to codify the working of the Lord.

Suffice it to say, the Lord is the Head of the church, and the Holy Spirit is the Administrator of the gifts Jesus determines for it. We are not to associate the Holy Spirit only with particular aptitudes, but with the One who gives Him, and the basic reason for Him dwelling within us. When we allow our minds to be diverted from these fundamental considerations, we become more liable to error and distraction.

The manner in which Peter responds to the offer of Simon should contribute significantly to how we think about this subject. It should be obvious that speculation and human opinion concerning the working of the Holy Spirit is extremely dangerous ground.

The room of supposition is a place where men can be excluded from the benefits of the Lord. Care must be taken not to occupy such a place. This will be clearly confirmed in Peter's inspired and instant response to Simon.

We are not to associate the Holy Spirit only with particular aptitudes, but with the One who gives Him, and the basic reason for Him dwelling within us. When we allow our minds to be diverted from these fundamental considerations, we become more liable to error and distraction.

their hands on him, that he might receive the Holy Spirit. **Thus, the holy and Divinely directed deeds of the apostles brought out the avarice, or covetousness, that was in Simon.** What was a blessing to others, proved to be the means of discovering the corruption that was in this man.

his hands on the Ephesians disciples, and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-6). That is hardly enough Scriptural substance to formulate an elaborate doctrine concerning the conferment of miraculous gifts. We are categorically told that the Spirit confers gifts according to His own will (1 Cor 12:6-11). These

A DISCERNMENT OF THE MANNER OF THE KINGDOM

"²⁰ But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

Some things are wrong simply because they conflict with the manner of the Kingdom. There does not need to be any other reason. If anything is not according to the ways of the Lord, that makes the thing wrong. Thus God pronounced judgment upon Israel simply

because their thoughts and ways were not like His (Isa 55:8-9). In our day, this way of thinking is foreign within the professed church. Ordinarily, wrong thinking is associated with the violation of a specific word or commandment from the Lord. There is, however, a manner, or approach, that is unlike that of God, and for that reason alone, the manner is wrong. This is why we are admonished to be "followers of God as dear children"(Eph 5:2). This involves more

than being obedient to commandments. It also involves the putting on of "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Col 3:10), as well as putting off "the old man," which is thoroughly corrupt.

This also includes loving righteousness and hating iniquity, as well as keeping and obeying the commandments and fulfilling the righteousness of the Law.

THY MONEY PERISH WITH THEE!

“But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee . . .” Other versions read, *“May your silver perish with you,”*^{NASB} *“May your money come to destruction with you,”*^{BBE} *“Your silver go to ruin – and you with it,”*^{CJB} *“Keep thy money to thyself, to perish with thee,”*^{DOUAY} *“Thy money go with thee to perdition,”*^{MRD} *“May your silver be lost forever, and you with it,”*^{NJB} *“Thy silver with thee – may it be to destruction,”*^{YLT} *“You and your money should both be destroyed,”*^{IE} *“Your money go to perdition with you,”*^{WILLIAMS} *“Destruction overtake your money and you,”*^{AMPLIFIED} *“To hell with you and your money!”*^{PHILLIPS} *“May your silver be with you in perdition,”*^{ALT} *“You and your money will both end up in hell,”*^{CEV} and *“May you and your money both go to hell.”*^{GNB}

This is one of the strong responses of the Spirit to people with ignoble motives. Peter’s response is instant, straight to the point, and without any ambiguity. He does not separate the sin from the sinner, or the material from the immaterial, but consigns both the man and his money to perish – or to perdition. The word “perish” is translated from a word meaning “utter destruction,”^{THAYER} “utter ruin, complete loss,”^{FRIEBERG} “hell,”^{UBS} “annihilation,”^{LEH} and “eternal destruction.”^{GINGRICH} It employed several times in Scripture.

- ⇒ Matthew 7:13 – The “broad” way that leads “to **destruction.**”
- ⇒ Romans 9:22 – Vessels of wrath “fitted to **destruction.**”
- ⇒ 1 Timothy 6:9 – The rich who fall into many “foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in **perdition.**”
- ⇒ Hebrews 10:39 – Drawing back to “**perdition.**”
- ⇒ 2 Peter 2:1 – False prophets who deny the Lord, bringing upon themselves “swift **destruction.**”
- ⇒ 2 Peter 3:16 – Those who are unstable, wresting the Scriptures “unto their own **destruction.**”
- ⇒ Revelation 17:8,11 – A foe of the Christ described as “the beast,” who is destined to “go into **perdition.**”

There can be no doubt that Peter’s words are referring to a state of condemnation, not merely one of temporal judgment or chastisement.

Knowing nothing of the imagination that sin is separated from the sinner, Peter joins Simon’s vice with his person. Both his silver and his person would be consigned to destruction, unless he repented of his wickedness. Being filled with the Spirit, Peter responds instantly and without any question about the transgression that Simon has committed. His aim at this point was not to recover Simon, but to soundly rebuke him. If he was to be recovered, his sin cannot be addressed incorrectly, but with words that can be employed by the Holy Spirit.

There are some sins that are so serious they cannot be addressed gently. Not only do they reveal the depths into which the transgressor has sunk, they are also especially contaminating. There can be no doubt concerning their seriousness. In them the truth has been maligned, and God Himself has been reproached. Such sins are not innocent, and must not be treated as though they

toward those who are driven by base motives. This is something that has been greatly obscured by the preoccupation of the modern church with lesser things.

- ⇒ **JESUS TO THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.** *“Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”* (Matt 23:33).
- ⇒ **PAUL, CONCERNING THOSE WHO MISREPRESENTED HIM.** *“And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just”* (Rom 3:8).
- ⇒ **CONCERNING THOSE WHO FORSOOK CHRIST FOR PERSONAL GRATIFICATION.** *“Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith”* (1 Tim 5:12).
- ⇒ **RELIGIOUS CHARLATANS.** *“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their*

Such sins are not innocent, and must not be treated as though they were nothing more than a hasty word or thoughtless deed. They represent the flesh in an aggressive stance, and reveal that the individual is in the grip of the wicked one.

were nothing more than a hasty word or thoughtless deed. They represent the flesh in an aggressive stance, and reveal that the individual is in the grip of the wicked one. Furthermore, those who deal with such transgressions must have spiritual insight. They cannot come against such Satanic initiatives with some form of procedures or lifeless methodology.

Other Examples

This is not the only place where such harsh denunciations have been recorded. There are several of them in Scripture, Perhaps recalling a few of them will confirm the Divine nature

damnation slumbereth not” (2 Pet 2:3).

- ⇒ **TO THOSE WHO REJECTED AND BLASPHEMED AGAINST THE GOSPEL.** *“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles”* (Acts 13:46).
- ⇒ **TO PROFESSING BELIEVERS WHO WERE IN LOVE WITH THE WORLD.** *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is*

enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

From the text with which we are dealing (Acts 8:20), together with the other texts I have cited, several things are confirmed.

- ⇨ It is serious beyond description to be driven by the flesh.

whom ye have crucified” (2:36); “His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go” (3:13); “But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the prince of life” (Acts 3:14-15); “Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified” (4:10); “ye slew and hanged on a tree” (5:30).

and independent of thought. Before a sin can be committed, some thought must be devoted to what is to be done. The thought is not necessarily an extended one, but what is done is first, in some way, brought to mind. This is done to justify the deed before it is committed – whether it is Eve considering the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6), or Uzzah putting forth his hand to stop the ark of the covenant from falling to the ground (2 Sam 6:6).

Therefore, Peter goes to the root of the sin of Simon. **It was not what he said that is first rebuked, but what he thought.**

THE ROLE OF THOUGHTS

The thought process of men must be sanctified with the truth, else they will tend in the wrong direction. Thoughts accounted for the condition of humanity during the days of Noah, when God determined to destroy all flesh, except for Noah and those who were with him. *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of **the thoughts** of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5).* David also traced the unacceptability of the wicked to their thoughts: *“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his **thoughts**” (Psa 10:4).* When God denounced Israel for their waywardness, he brought up the matter of their thoughts. *“For my thoughts are not **your thoughts**, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD” (Isa 55:8).*

This is involved in the Solomonic expression, *“Commit thy works unto the LORD, and **thy thoughts shall be established**” (Prov 16:3).* This is why David prayed, *“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my Strength, and my Redeemer” (Psa 19:14).*

When the professing church “turns away their ears from the truth” (2 Tim 4:4), there is no way to avoid corrupt and degenerate thinking. This is precisely what has given rise to the groundswell of iniquity within the Christian community. We do not need a battery of counselors, motivators, and

The thought process of men must be sanctified with the truth, else they will tend in the wrong direction.

- ⇨ Sin in any form has the potential of damning the soul.
- ⇨ Within the body of Christ, there is to be zero-tolerance of sin.
- ⇨ Transgression must always be approached in a state of utmost sobriety.
- ⇨ When dealing with sinners who have made a profession of faith, the approach must be accompanied by an absolute hatred of sin – *“hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:23).*
- ⇨ There is no satisfactory explanation for sin, and therefore no accounting for it is to be sought.

How Sin Has Been Dealt With Thusfar

Thus far in the book of Acts, a certain approach to sin has been made known. It reflects a Kingdom manner than is worthy of note. Notice how specifically sin has been identified.

- ⇨ **JUDAS:** *“Guide to them that took Jesus” (1:16); “by transgression fell that he might go to his own place” (1:25).*
- ⇨ **CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS:** *“ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (2:23); “this same Jesus*

- ⇨ **THE REJECTION OF JESUS BY THE LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE:** *“This is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders” (4:11); “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together” (4:27).*
- ⇨ **THE SIN OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA:** *“Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost” (5:3); “thou hast not lied unto men but unto God” (5:4); “How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” (5:9).*
- ⇨ **THE JEWISH COUNCIL FOR REJECTING THE GOSPEL:** *“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost” (7:51).*

Now, Peter will again speak with unquestionable specificity concerning the sin of Simon.

BECAUSE

“... because thou hast thought . . .” Other versions read, *“you thought,”* NIV *“you had the idea,”* BBE *“for thinking,”* CJB *“hast supposed,”* MRD *“you have imagined,”* WEYMOUTH and *“for even dreaming.”* WILLIAMS

Sin is not committed out of a mere impulse – something that is irrational

psychological diagnosticians to correct this condition. In fact, such an approach will only exacerbate the situation. The truth must be made to shine upon the situation. In so doing, it will be properly defined, and a godly manner of thinking will be promoted. That is what we are seeing lived out in this text.

THE GIFT OF GOD MAY BE PURCHASED

“. . . that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” Other versions read, “could obtain,”^{NASB} “could buy,”^{NIV} “got for a price,”^{BBE} “can be bought,”^{CJB} “could acquire,”^{NET} “to possess,”^{YLT} and “to get.”^{LITV}

Here “the gift of God” is the Spirit Himself, and not the ability to bring down the Spirit upon an individual by means of the laying on of hands. Peter was rebuking the thinking of Simon in two ways. First, the Spirit came upon the Samaritans because the apostles laid their hands upon them. The Spirit came from God, not from their hands. They were, in a sense, intermediaries in the matter, but **the cause** could not be traced to them, and Peter knew it. Simon had sought to purchase the power that would cause **anyone** on whom he laid his hands would receive the Holy Spirit. I do not think this is even the kind of power the apostles themselves had – that **anyone** on whom they placed their hands would receive the Holy Spirit. The authority given to them did not extend that far. Jesus was the Head, not them. Their will was subject to His will.

Nowhere is the cause for the gift of the Spirit traced to the apostles. The

When once it is recognized that the gift itself came from God, the means through which it was given becomes incidental. In this case, Peter and John were simply in accord with the Divine agenda and manner of working.

household of Cornelius received the Holy Spirit **without** the imposition of apostolic hands. That case alone confirms what I have said. It was not received from apostolic hands, but from God. The Spirit is categorically said to be “from God” (1 Cor 2:12). He is the One who “sent” the Spirit into our hearts (Gal 4:6). He is the One who has “given unto us His Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 4:8). The Spirit is described as He whom God “hath given us” (1 John 3:24; 4:13; Acts 5:32; 2 Cor 5:5).

Even if we direct our thinking to the matter of spiritual gifts (which is not the subject of our text), their source is Deity, not humanity – not even empowered humanity (1 Cor 12:4-11,18,28).

In their zeal to establish that the uniqueness of what took place in Samaria, and in Aphasis (Acts 19), some have introduced a foreign mode of reasoning. By tracing the source of the of these unusual occurrences to the hands of the apostles, they have actually led men into a wrong way of thinking. Whatever they may conceive to have been

conferred on the Samaritans, they have exalted the means above the Source and cause. **When once it is recognized that the gift itself came from God, the means through which it was given becomes incidental.** In this case, Peter and John were simply in accord with the Divine agenda and manner of working. They did not decide to do this on their own. It was rather the result of where Jesus had placed them in the body, and what He was doing in Samaria. Although it may be difficult for some to let the matter rest there, it seems to me that we are obliged to do so for the sake of God’s glory.

Now, Simon has attempted to wedge “the flesh” into the working of the Lord. Peter knew this was altogether wrong, and was actually nothing more than an expression of wickedness. It was not simply an error in judgment, but was rather the result of being at variance with the Lord.

Here is a classic example of someone whose thoughts and ways were not those of the Lord (Isa 55:8-9). This accounts for the unusual strength with which Peter now speaks.

THE EXCLUSION OF SIMON

“^{21a} ***Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter***”

Remember, these words are being said to a person who has believed and been baptized. Nothing thus far has suggested that Simon was not sincere at the time. If it is true that the report of Simon obeying the Gospel was genuine, then Peter will address him as someone

who has fallen, rather than one who never was identified with Christ. The fact that Peter has told Simon to pray to God concerning what he has done confirms that this is, in fact, the case. There is no record of anyone outside of Christ being counseled to pray for forgiveness.

HAVING NO PART NOR LOT

“Thou hast neither part nor lot. .

.” Other versions read, “no part,”^{NASB} and “any share.”^{GWN}

This is the language of Divine distribution – as when Canaan was divided “*b y lot*.” Each of the twelve tribes were given a portion of the land. As it is written, “*Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers*

they shall inherit" (Num 26:55). This corresponds with the kind of spiritual allotments that take place within the body of Christ. Concerning the various roles that are found in the church, the allotment is described in these words: "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor 12:18). Viewed from the standpoint of HOW this ministry is carried out, it is described in these words: "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office" (Rom 12:3-4). If we consider this distribution from the standpoint of responsibility, the members are said to be "stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet 4:10).

What Peter is saying is that

(Matt 20:23).

THIS MATTER

" . . . in this matter" Other versions read, "this ministry," NIV "in this," NRSV "this business," BBE "this faith," MRD "this thing," YLT "in this work," IE and "in this word." EMTV

In the "matter" of being used as an intermediary for the conference of the Holy Spirit, no place had been made for Simon. One might ask how it was that Simon did not know this. We know from Simon's request that it was not driven by an honest quest to be used by God. He was driven by the unlawful spirit of emulation, and was seeking to intrude into an area from which he had been excluded. His request would be on the same par as asking for authority to be an

SOMETHING TO PONDER

"And yet there are many who seek to 'purchase' the favor of God. Some do it by alms and prayers; some by penance and fasting; some by attempting to make their own hearts better, and by self-righteousness; and some by penitence and tears. All these will not 'purchase' his favor." ALBERT BARNES: NOTES ON THE BIBLE

What Peter is saying is that Simon is asking for something that does not belong to him. Christ, the Head of the body, has made no provision for him to function in the capacity it imagines he can purchase with money.

Simon is asking for something that does not belong to him. Christ, the Head of the body, has made no provision for him to function in the capacity it imagines he can purchase with money. Simon has done the very thing Paul warned against: "not to think of himself **more highly than he ought to think**; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom 12:3).

Simon has sought to occupy a place in the body of Christ for which he is not qualified. His thinking has extended into an area not intended for him. Heaven has made no provision for him to even think in this manner. Various ministries or offices within the body of Christ are not available to all people, and they are not to be approached as though they were. When asked to position some of His disciples at His right and left hand, Jesus Himself once told His disciples, "to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father"

apostle – number thirteen, so to speak. This simply could not be, for such positions could only be occupied by those who were chosen and ordained by Jesus for those offices.

Professional Religion

Since the dawn of "The Age of Enlightenment" (1793), and with the consequent inordinate exaltation of human reason, the church itself was inundated with a flood of carnal reasoning. Textual Criticism was dignified in this new environment, and approaches to various ministries were modified. They were now linked more with education than with Divine placement, and with training as opposed to being a steward of the manifold grace of God. Commensurate with this religious shift, the knowledge of Scripture itself began to wane, being displaced by a form of thinking that was in consonance with worldly patterns of thought. As one might expect, it was not long until the idea of religious careers gained a foothold

in the professing church. All manner of ministries were developed that conformed to this new way of thinking. Instead of considering these professional activities within the context of the revealed purpose of God, they were placed within the setting of man-made agendas. Now, in distinction to ministering to the "body" of Christ, specialized ministries became prominent. In our time, men have become accustomed to hearing about "Youth Ministers," "Singles' Ministry," "Senior's Minister," "Family Life Minister," "Worship Minister," and a host of others. Thus men have developed *ministries* that are not "for the profit of all," as ALL of the ministries that Jesus has placed in His church (1 Cor 12:7). Most, if not all, of these functions are not intended to perfect the saints "for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

The sin of Simon has been duplicated in our day – people are pressing to do a work for which no Divine allotment has been made.

Is this a serious matter, or has provision been made in the Divine economy for men to conceive and develop positions and activities within the body of Christ for which there are no revealed provision? While this is not something worthy of much contention, it seems to me that the fruit that has been produced by this initiative is reason enough to suspect it is antithetical to what the Lord is revealed to be doing in His church. I do not know that any person, however astute their powers of reason, can justify an activity that consistently tends downward, leaving in its wake an ignorance of both the Lord and His purpose. The condition of the modern church certainly justifies some serious thought on these matters. To be it very mildly, things are not ideal.

If it is countered that conditions have never been ideal, then the question must be asked if there is anything at all about salvation that tends downward, or allows for perpetual deficiency in those who are walking by faith. Is there anything about the redemption that is in

Christ Jesus that tends downward, or is not fundamentally toward?

Is it possible that a departure from the faith has, in fact, occurred, and that men are really giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons

(1 Tim 4:1)? Has a form of godliness replaced godliness itself? I mean, have such things taken place in those who once embraced the faith, only to later depart from it? The nature of spiritual life demand that we consider such possibilities.

A HEART THAT WAS NOT RIGHT

^{21b} . . . *for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.*"

Peter gets straight to the heart of the matter, so to speak. Simon's request has revealed a fundamental flaw – one that was at the very core of his being. He was not right in the very area where regeneration does its primary work – in the heart. Moses foresaw that this was the area where God would especially work: *"And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live"* (Deut 30:6). Ezekiel was given to see the heart as a place where significant change would take place. *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh"* (Ezek 36:26). Simon had been baptized, and baptism involves the heart. *"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you"* (Rom 6:17). Simon had also believed, and believing involves the heart: *"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness"* (Rom 10:10).

If the statement made concerning Simon's response to the preaching of Christ is to be taken as it stands – "Simon himself believed also and he was baptized" – then what is said of such people must also be true of him. *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently"* (1 Pet 1:22). If what is said of Simon is intended to only refer to an outward and simulated response, then it casts a shadow of doubt on the statements

concerning others believing and being baptized. This includes the rest of the Samaritans who are said to have believed and been baptized (8:12). These are also the two responses that will be found in the Ethiopian eunuch (8:37-38). These are the two responses attributed to the Philippian jailer (16:31-34). The same things are said of the Corinthians (18:8). Additionally, it would also mean that the words of Jesus Himself mean something other than what they affirm: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mk 16:16).

It seems to me, therefore, that to say Luke's report concerning Simon believing and being baptized meant nothing more than what he did was pretentious, cannot be supported. It

This would mean that he quenched the Spirit, hardened his heart, and did not resist the devil. He yielded to temptation after making a place for the devil to work. He did what Romans six commands the believers not to do. *"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God . . . I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness"* (Rom 6:13,19).

It seems to me, therefore, that to say Luke's report concerning Simon believing and being baptized meant nothing more than what he did was pretentious, cannot be supported. It would mean that Simon was said to believe when he really did not believe.

would mean that Simon was said to believe when he really did not believe.

Because I am not able to receive such an assessment, I will proceed under the assumption that Simon really did believe, and that his baptism was valid.

Something to be Seen

Considering that the report of Simon exactly represents his response to Philip's preaching, the seriousness of the charge leveled at Simon is accentuated.

Notice the detailed admonition to those who have been baptized into Christ.

- ⇨ Do not yield your capacities as instruments of unrighteousness.
- ⇨ Yield yourself unto God.
- ⇨ Yield your capacities to righteousness.

In Simon we have a sterling

example of someone who failed in these areas. **This is important to note, because Peter is providing us an assessment of the condition.** It is not necessary to say that such a person was never converted in the first place. Peter did not say that, but rather judged the circumstance at hand. He accounted for the sin by pointing out Simon's present condition. This is precisely how sin is to be assessed – in view of what took place. I will tell that such an approach would significantly alter how sin is being addressed in our time.

WHEN THE HEART IS NOT RIGHT

“... for thy heart is not right . . .” Other versions read, “your heart *is crooked*,”^{CJB} “heart is *not upright*,”^{DARBY} “*twisted in your thinking*,”^{GWN} “your heart is *warped*,”^{NJB} “your heart is *not sincere*,”^{WILLIAMS} “your heart is *all wrong* . . . [it is *not straightforward or right or true*,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “your heart *is not honest*.”^{PHILLIPS}

Solomon wisely said, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov 4:23). In Simon we have an example of someone who failed to do this. As a result, there was a decline in Simon's character. Because life is not lived in a vacuum, and there are opposing forces at work all around us, no one can afford to neglect keep their heart – keeping it in focus, and strengthening it with the good word of the Lord and prayer. The best of men need Divine assistance in this regard. David said it well when he prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts” (Psa 139:23).

The Complexity of Spiritual Life

At this point, come of the complexities of spiritual life surface. One might reason that because we receive a new heart, and the stony heart is removed, that the condition here described can only be said of someone who is not born again. However, the matter is not that simple. Consider the following, that was addressed to those who were in Christ.

⇒ Some who were among the brethren in Rome were warned about having an unrepentant heart. “But after thy **hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath**

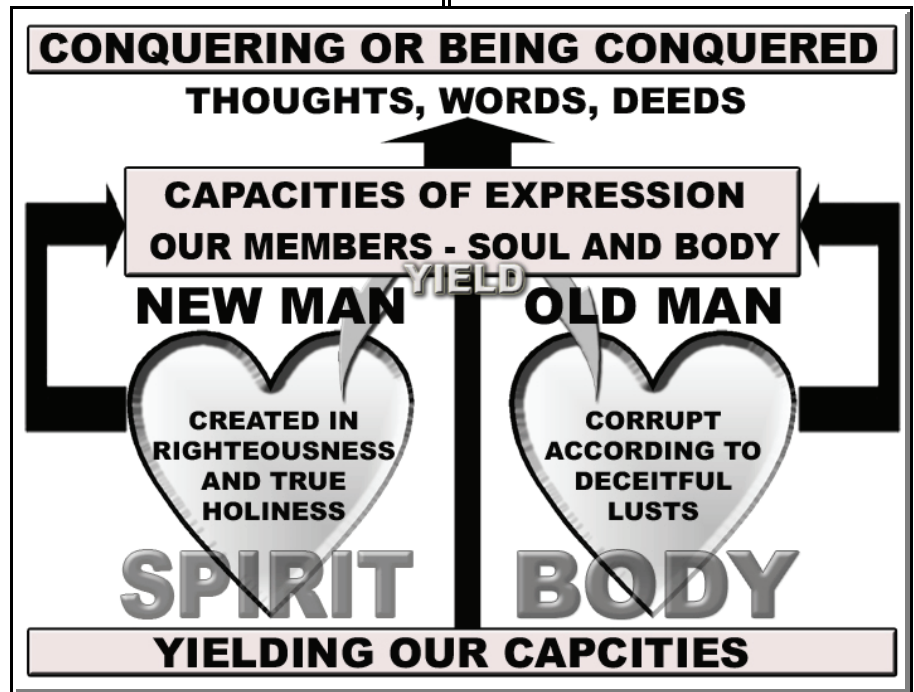
against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom 2:5).

⇒ Members of the body of Christ were admonished, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief**, in departing from

Himself is resident (2 Cor 5:18; Eph 3:17).

The New Creation

The “new creation” is a whole person in purpose, though while we are in this world, he is only partial. The fact that the body has not yet been redeemed



the living God” (Heb 3:12).

With an awareness of the danger of either over-simplifying or over-complicating the nature of spiritual life, I will endeavor to account for the possibility of falling away, as well as the necessity of keeping the faith.

A New Principle of Life

When we are born again, there is a very real newness of life that is introduced into our persons. This is a new principle of life, referred to as “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:2). Considered from the standpoint of the human personality, it is “the new man, which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24). This nature is incapable of sin (1 John 3:9, and the wicked one has no access to it (1 John 5:18). This is the part of the person that is “in Christ,” and in which Christ

is what makes the creation partial. When it is written that “old things have passed away” (2 Cor 5:17), it is evident that it does not mean that our bodies have passed away. It does mean that “the new man” places no value on the former things, nor does he desire them. It also means that the guilt for sins has passed away, and the conscience has been purged from dead works to serve the living God (Heb 9:14). The fact that believers are told the blood of Christ purged the conscience from dead works confirms that the conscience can still be polluted with the – even in those who have been born again. This pollution emits from “the old man,” who is very real, though not a part of the believer's essential nature.

The Stony Heart

Similarly, when God is said to remove the “stony heart,” He does not mean there is no longer any liability of

such a heart being found in us. Believers are solemnly warned, *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”* (Heb 3:13). This liability is fostered by the presence of *“the old man”* which is very much active, even though he is crucified (Rom 6:6). Like the impenitent thief, he cries out from the cross, asking to be delivered from the restriction of the cross, which is intended to be the place where he dies (Lk 23:39). Simon let *“the old man”* off the cross, and he immediately went to work.

A Treasure In An Earthen Vessel

It is in this sense that we are said to have the *“treasure”* of the Divine nature in an *“earthen vessel”* (2 Cor 4:7). This is all by design, in order that to confirm that the *“excellency of the power”* is really of God.

We Remain in a Vile Body

The fact that we remain in a *“vile body”* (Phil 3:21), also referred to as *“the body of this dead”* (Rom 7:24), is what complicates our situation. There is also a mind and a heart that go with the body, and they are, in every sense, corrupt in the eyes of God. We are saddled with the presence of these degenerate parts of our makeup until we are liberated from the body. This circumstance is what produces the disconcerted inward war that is described in Romans 7:14-25.

An Evil Heart of Unbelief

It is precisely this condition that makes it possible for an *“evil heart of unbelief”* to enter into the a person who has believed and obeyed the Gospel (Heb 3:12). When the individual yields to the cries of *“the law of sin and death”* that is in his human constitution, an evil heart of unbelief is, as it were, loosed to enter and dominate the person so yielding.

The Solemn Exhortation

If the individual takes the warnings of the Spirit seriously, and does not quench or grieve that spirit, he will be able to resist these encroachments. This the admonition will be fulfilled, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world”* (1 Pet 5:8-9).

In the case of Simon, he failed to yield his members to righteousness, quenched the Spirit, and therefore did not resist the devil. As a result, his heart was not right, but became corrupt because he gave heed to the wrong voice.

It was not even a matter of if he could fall or not. That is never really the issue, and men do greatly err in speaking as though it was. As long as we dwell in an unregenerate body, and possess within our human constitution the

presence of weakness removes any question about whether or not the believer is vulnerable. Admittedly, the vulnerability is not in *“the new man,”* or in the faith. However, it is in the part of our makeup that is united with our bodies – and that part remains with us as long as we are *“in the body”* (Heb 13:3).

An Absurdity to be Shunned

In view of this circumstance, it ought to be very clear to all of us how absurd it is to embrace a religion that places the emphasis upon the body – which is the very point of our vulnerability. When health, wealth, feelings, and appearances become the fundamental things, we are standing in the enemy’s camp, surrounded with foes we cannot possibly overcome. There simply is no weaponry available to us to do battle in such an arena.

IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

“ . . . in the sight of God.” Other versions read, *“before God,”* ^{NASB} *“in the eyes of God,”* ^{CJB} *“God can see,”* ^{GWN} and *“with God.”* ^{NLT}

The phrase *“in the sight of God”* is a synonym for the way things really are. This is not a way of comparing what men think versus what God thinks. Rather, this is the way of arriving at the truthful conclusion. A heart, therefore, that is not right *“in the sight of God”* is a heart that is not right – period. It is a heart that is wrong in every sense of the word, and there is no chance that it is proper or will escape the judgment of God.

Peter knows Simon’s heart is not right in the sight of God because He knows God and has the mind of Christ. Peter himself has yielded properly, and therefore he thinks properly.

IS FALLING AWAY NECESSARILY PRECEDED BY A LONG PERIOD OF TIME?

Perhaps without intended to do so, men have thought that falling away, or departing from the faith, is preceded by a lengthy period of time. However this is not necessarily the case. In His parable concerning the sower, Jesus spoke of some seed that immediately sprouted, and broke through the soil. Yet, it did not bring forth the intended fruit. There were two different descriptions of such seed.

The solemn commission given to every believer is to yield their “members,” or means of expression, to righteousness, and not to iniquity

Yield Your Members

The solemn commission given to every believer is to yield their *“members,”* or means of expression, to righteousness, and not to iniquity (Rom 6:13.16.19). In this case, both righteousness and iniquity have a voice that calls for our attention, and seeks the dominance. We can only yield to one of them at a time, and when we yield, they rule, compelling us to act in accordance with their nature.

inveterate capacity to sin, it is insane to wonder whether or not we can fall. The very presence of an enemy or of an inimical nature confirms the possibility of such a thing. This is accented all the more when we perceive that faith is the only means by which we overcome the world, or are enabled to resist the devil (1 John 5:45; 1 Pet 2:9).

It should be so clear that no explanation is required, that **the very**

Here is how he described it. *“And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it”* (Luke 8:6-7). Unlike the seed that fell on the wayside, this seed actually sprouted, with genuine life showing itself. However, it was short-lived, because the conditions required for growth were not present. In His explanation of this parable, Jesus accounted for what happened. *“They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection”* (Luke 8:14).

Unlike the tares, who had no capacity to bring forth fruit, these people had a genuine beginning. Yet, because of a lack of depth, and the presence of competitive desires to which they yielded, they were not brought to a state of maturity, in which fruit could be produced for God (Rom 7:4).

Simon was in this category of people – particularly those who *“in the time of temptation fall away.”* Both the parable of Jesus and the incident of Simon confirm that newborn babes are not guaranteed protection from the wicked one. They are expected to grow, gaining spiritual depth, and resisting the temptations that they encounter. Simon failed in this regard.

One of the reasons for Simon’s failure was the extent of his former involvements with the wicked one. He was a sorcerer, who engaged in what might be called *“the depths of Satan”* (Rev 2:14). Because of this, he should have given all the more attentiveness to advancing in the faith, and growing up into Christ in all things. This was owing to the depth of his former involvement in sin. Instead, he was taken up in a quest for the miraculous, and a desire to emulate those who had been given a higher place in the Kingdom. These propensities actually allowed *“the old man”* to be removed from the cross, so to speak. It loosed the part of him that we intended to be controlled.

Those in Christ are to yield

themselves to the Lord in the same measure as they formerly yielded themselves to the wicked one. Here is how it is stated in Scripture. *“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness”* (Rom 6:19). A person who came from a life of moral depravity cannot enter into Christ casually. One who gave himself wholeheartedly to sin cannot give himself halfheartedly to the Lord.

If one’s religion is less demanding than sin, there is no hope that a person can survive. That is why it is imperative that people live by faith, walking in the Spirit and in fellowship with Christ. If they allow the entrance of competitive desires, however noble they may appear, the devil will gain a foothold in their lives. This can take place early in the life of the believer, as it did with Simon. For him, however, it was not being involved in a weak religion. Rather, it was obtaining a carnal view of true religion.

WHAT TO DO WHEN WICKED SURFACES

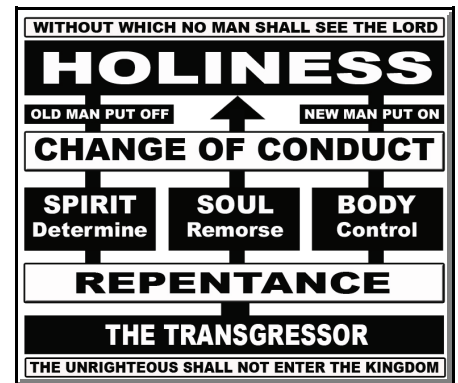
“²² Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”

When unusual wickedness surfaces in a believer, how is it to be addressed? Paul says, *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”* (Gal 6:1). Jude gives a similar warning. *“And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh”* (Jude 1:23). The *“fear”* of reference is found in the one pulling the transgressor out of the fire. The point is that this is not a work for novices and the naive. There is a certain liability attached to the rescue of those who are especially deep in sin. This will be

detected in the manner in which Peter speaks, as well as the words he employs. He will place the responsibility for recovery squarely upon the shoulders of the transgressor. There will be grace to do what is said, to be sure. However, a hearty effort will be required from those who did not think enough of Jesus to abide in him.

REPENTING OF WICKEDNESS

“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness . . .” Other versions read, *“Let your heart be changed,”*^{BBE} *“Do penance,”*^{DOUAY} *“change your wicked thoughts,”*^{GWN} *“reform,”*^{YLT} *“turn from this,”*^{LIVING} *“change your heart,”*^{IE} *“Repent of this depravity and wickedness,”*^{AMPLIFIED} and *“get rid of these evil thoughts.”*^{CEV}



The word *“repent”* is very strong. It speaks of something that must be achieved. Grace will be required to do it, but it must be done. Coming from the Greek word *Μετανόησον* (meta-no-a-son), the word has this meaning: *“to change one’s mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence”*

of one's past sins," THAYER "change one's mind, be converted," FRIBERG "have a change of heart, turn from one's sins, change one's ways," UBS "to change one's way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness," LOUA-NIDA and "to change one's mind or purpose." LIDDELL-SCOTT

Repentance is something that **must** be done. It is not an option that can be ignored with impunity. Two times Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all, likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5).

Here is the situation. The

longer be described as such.

Secondly, holiness is an unalterable requirement. As it is written, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, **without which no man shall see the Lord**" (Heb 12:14). Holiness is a quality or trait that must permeate the whole of life. Again it is written, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so **be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy: for I am holy**" (1 Pet 1:15-16). Again, this is not a suggestion, or a goal toward which we are to work. I

faith.

- ⇒ This salvation is made available to all men.
- ⇒ Grace effectively teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, so that we can avoid being unrighteous.
- ⇒ Grace also effectively instructs us how to love in a state of spiritual alertness, being righteous in our manner of life, and godlike in our persons.
- ⇒ All of this enables us to please God while we are in this present world.
- ⇒ Grace also teaches us to maintain a posture of life in which we are constantly anticipating the coming of the Lord.
- ⇒ The Lord for whom grace teaches us to look, is the One who redeemed us from all iniquity, purifying us for Himself, in order that He might have a people for Himself who are zealous to do good works. In other words, they are no longer unrighteous, but are holy.

There is no room for opinion here, and there is absolutely no leniency in the matter. This is the reason for the new birth, or new creation, or being made new. It is to remove one from the category of people for whom there is no hope.

unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God. The people of God are to be made aware of this unalterable circumstance. As it is written, "Know ye not that **the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God**" (1 Cor 6:9-10). Lest there be any doubt about this, it is stated that those who continue to engage in such activities will, in fact, be finally excluded from the Kingdom of God. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: **for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience**" (Col 3:5-6). There is no room for opinion here, and there is absolutely no leniency in the matter. This is the reason for the new birth, or new creation, or being made new. It is to remove one from the category of people for whom there is no hope. That is the first circumstance of which all men are to be made aware: the unrighteous are altogether excluded, whoever they are. They must be removed from that category so that they can no

do not believe this has registered upon the conscience of the modern church. This is largely owing to the absence of solid teaching on this subject. These days, sin is too easily excused, and a sort of carnal sympathy is being generated for those who have offended God, transgressed His Law, and chosen their own way over His.

By the grace of God, provision has been made for these requirements to be fully met by those who believe. The grace of God tutors us in both of these areas – no longer being unrighteous, and being holy. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:11-14).

There is a grand overview of God's "so great salvation" (Heb 2:3).

- ⇒ The grace of God brings salvation to us, putting it within the reach of

These blessed provisions are what sin among the people of God so serious. In His loving mercy, the Lord has provided a way to "sin not" (1 John 2:1). After all of the explanations have been given for committing sin, a sense of remorse must grip the heart. This is because the individual has trampled over Jesus to sin, and despised the blood of the covenant. He has resisted the Holy Spirit who devoted to enabling us to mortify the deeds of the body as He leads us into holiness (Rom 8:13-14).

Peter will now address Simon in strict keeping with the nature of his sin, as well as the provisions that were made available to him when he believed and was baptized. He has called upon him to repent of his "wickedness" – to see it for what it is, and to have a sense of deep remorse and regret that he has ever made such a request. But that is just a beginning. He must then petition God for forgiveness.

PRAY TO GOD

" . . . and pray God . . ." Other

versions read, “pray God,”^{NKJV} “pray the Lord,”^{NASB} “pray to the Lord,”^{NIV} “make prayer to God,”^{BBE} “supplicate the Lord,”^{DARBY} “pray God,”^{GENEVA} “ask the Lord,”^{GWN} “entreat of God,”^{MRD} “beseech God,”^{YLT} “pray earnestly to God,”^{PHILLIPS} “implore God,”^{ALT} “ask God,”^{CEV} and “make petition to God.”^{EMTV}

There are several different words from which the word “pray” is translated in Scripture.

- ⇨ Colossians 1:9 (προσευχόμενοι— pro-sux-omen-oi). The lexical meaning of this word is “to offer prayers,”^{THAYER} or “speak to God.”^{FRIBERG} This is used for general petitions – like seeking benefits for others, of the giving of thanks.
- ⇨ 2 Corinthians 13:7 (Εὐχόμενοι— eux-omai). Its lexical meaning is to “desire” something from God that is strongly desired.^{THAYER/FRIBERG}
- ⇨ 1 John 5:16 (ἐρωτήσῃ— ero-taa-saa). The lexical meaning of this word is to “request, entreat, beg, of beseech.”^{THAYER} “ask, inquire, question.”^{FRIBERG}

Here the word is different. The Greek word is δεήθηρι (dea-tha-ti). Its lexical meaning is especially strong: “to want, or lack something that is strongly desired; to ask, bed,”^{THAYER} “to ask urgently, seek . . . plead, ask in prayer,”^{FRIBERG} “implore,”^{UBS} “to ask with urgency, with the implication of presumed need.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

As used in this text, “pray” means to earnestly seek for something that is not presently possessed, yet which the petitioner knows **must** be owned. In other words, sin has ruptured the individuals relationship to God, and they are fervently seeking to restore that relationship. This can only be accomplished if offended party, the Living God, remits the sin, and the offending party, Simon, is made conscious of that forgiveness.

An example of this kind of prayer is found in the fifty-first Psalm. This is David’s prayer following his sin with Bathsheba – a transgression that greatly displeased the Lord. As it is written, “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” (2 Sam 11:27). When David was made aware of his, his heart smote

him, and he prayed the words contained in the fifty-first Psalm. They provide a sort of index into what is involved in seeking forgiveness from the Lord.

- ⇨ **A plea for the Lord to have mercy:** “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness” (51:1a).
- ⇨ **Remove the sin:** “According to Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions” (51:1b).
- ⇨ **A complete cleaning:** “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (51:2).
- ⇨ **An acknowledgment of the offence:** “For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me” (Psa 51:3).
- ⇨ **An admission that the sin was**

- ⇨ **A restoration to Divine favor:** “Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice” (51:8).
- ⇨ **A third petition for thorough cleansing:** “Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities” (51:9).
- ⇨ **That God would create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit in him:** “Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me” (51:10).
- ⇨ **That God would not cast him away:** “Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me” (51:11).
- ⇨ **That God would restore joy to him, and hold him up:** “Restore unto me

In other words, sin has ruptured the individuals relationship to God, and they are fervently seeking to restore that relationship.

against God Himself: “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight” (51:4a).

- ⇨ **A confession that God would, in fact, be vindicated:** “that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest” (51:4b).
- ⇨ **An admission of a natural bent to sin:** “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa 51:5).
- ⇨ **The confession that God desires truth to be found in the inner part of men:** “Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom” (51:6).
- ⇨ **Another petition to be made completely clean:** “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (51:7).

the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit” (51:12).

- ⇨ **A promise to teach transgressors when forgiveness is obtained:** “Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee” (Psa 51:13).
- ⇨ **A fourth petition for cleansing:** “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness” (51:14).
- ⇨ **A petition for God to open his mouth so he could praise Him:** “O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise” (Psa 51:15).
- ⇨ **A confession that God values a broken and contrite heart:** “For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a

broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (51:16-17).

⇒ **A petition for God to do good to His people:** *“Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem” (51:18).*

I have taken the time to detail the prayer of the patriarch David because it confirms the seriousness of sin. In our time a sense of the enormity of transgression is exceedingly rare. Even profoundly deep moral transgressions like that of David are treated as though they were only a mistake, or a case of wrong judgment, or the expression of some troublesome trait with which one has grappled for a long time. Such views are not only unwise, they are damaging to the soul, contributing to a seared conscience, and the development of hostility toward the Lord.

The reason for the presence of these loose views is the prominence of a professional approach to moral weakness – i.e. counseling and psychiatry. As ordinarily practiced, both of these approach sin with God in mind, and the offense that sin is against Him. They also consider acceptable behavior to be the goal rather than reconciliation to God.

Peter’s words will underscore the seriousness of Simon’s transgression. **As difficult as it may seem for some to receive, he will not be able to guarantee God will forgive Simon.** He is not speaking of Divine ability, but of Divine character, and of the immensity of the transgression Simon committed.

PERHAPS

“ . . . *if perhaps . . .*” Other versions read, *“if possible,”* ^{NASB} *“if indeed,”* ^{DARBY} *“if He will,”* ^{GWN} *“in the hope,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“to see if,”* ^{WILLIAMS} and *“if consequently.”* ^{INTERLINEAR}

Peter does not say, “God can forgive anyone at anytime.” Or, “If you can repent, forgiveness is guaranteed.” Whatever arguments may be presented in favor of such views, they were not delivered by Peter. This is a man full of the Holy Spirit and in possession of the keys of the Kingdom. We do well to give due heed to what he says.

The expression “if perhaps” is translated from two small Greek words: *ei ara* (ei ara). The first word is a conditional particle meaning “if.” The second word is an inferential participle that describes a consequence; i.e. perhaps, it may be, or it may be possible. In other words, Peter is saying, “It is possible that, as a consequence of your prayer, you just might be forgiven.” He does not shut the door of hope, but he leaves only a crack there, in order that Simon’s prayer might be all the more instant and fervent.

There are some transgressions that put forgiveness in the “perhaps,” or “if” category. It is possible that Simon’s sin was bordering on the blasphemy of the Spirit, which sin Jesus said *“hath never forgiveness”* (Mk 3:29). He said **that** sin *“shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come”* (Matt 12:32).

The matter of is to be taken seriously, as evidenced by Peter’s response. That is not to mention the enormous price that was paid because of sin – transgressions that ranged from eating a piece of fruit and stopping the ark of the covenant from falling, to offering children to the idol Molech and crucifying the Lord of glory.



THE THOUGHT OF THINE HEART

“ . . . the thought of thine heart...” Other versions read, *“the intention of your heart,”* ^{NASB} *“having such a thought in your heart,”* ^{NIV} *“the intent of your heart,”* ^{NRSV} *“for thinking like this,”* ^{GWN} *“the guile of thy heart,”* ^{MRD} *“this scheme of yours,”* ^{NJB} *“your evil thoughts,”* ^{NLT} *“the purpose of thy heart,”* ^{YLT} *“this contriving*

thought and purpose of your heart.” ^{AMPLIFIED} *“evil intention of your heart,”* ^{PHILLIPS} and *“the on-mind of the heart.”* ^{INTERLINEAR}

Peter does not tell Simon to pray the Lord will forgive him for what he said, but for the “thought,” or intention of his heart. An evil heart of unbelief had entered into Simon’s thought processes, and he had welcomed it. Rather than casting down imaginations, he entertained them, and did what they suggested. His “thoughts” were not God’s thoughts (Isa 55:8-9), but like the evil tongue were *“set on fire of hell”* (James 3:6). Men may glibly say, “You cannot go to hell for what you are thinking.” But Peter plainly said Simon was on his way to hell if he did not repent. He had jumped off the strait way that leads to life, and willingly landed on the broad road that leads to destruction.

There Are Thoughts That Do Not Have to Be Forgiven

There are thoughts – evil thoughts – that do not have to be forgiven. They are thoughts that are not wanted – intrusions hurled by the devil like poisoned arrows into the mind. These may take for form of *“worldly lusts,”* that, by the grace of God, are denied entrance into the heart (Tit 2:11). They are thoughts that are contrary to the thinking of those who are *“strangers and pilgrims”* in the world, and consequently they *“abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul”* (1 Pet 2:11). These are imaginations that are cast down with the spiritual weaponry God has given us, and thoughts that are taken captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:4-5). When they come to the person who is living by faith, bidding entrance into their into the heart and mind, they are recognized as issuing from *“the law of sin”* that is in our members” (Rom 7:23). In Christ we have been liberated from *“the law of sin and death,”* and are not debtors to it, to obey its lusts (Rom 8:2,12). This is the heritage of everyone who believes and is baptized!

My Own Experience

I well remember my own awakening to the warfare within, and the necessity of tracing thoughts to their source – then denying or embracing them. I was made painfully aware of how very little was being said about this

within the professed church, and how I desired that I could have known it earlier. Every sincere believer has learned by bitter experience the impairing effects of flawed and in complete teaching.

Simon ‘s Deed Involved His Will

But Simon paid no heed to the Spirit lusting against the flesh, and to the cries of the new man, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity. Instead, he made a place for the devil, and the devil threw him down, causing him to speak and act foolishly. His will was influenced from the wrong source, and thus it compelled him to do the wrong thing. This same thing happens to everyone who falls into sin, refusing to deny worldly lusts and yield their members as instruments of righteousness.

Noting the Reaction of Peter

Notice that Peter does not take up Simon’s case, and wrestle for him against the devil’s devices. **Here is a case where it would have been out of order to bear one another’s burden.** The Scriptures do say, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). But that is not all they say! Three verses later they also say, “For every man shall bear his own burden” (Gal 6:5). This was such a case.

There is a sense in which the person who sins against God must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. He must pray, seeking forgiveness, and not attempt to have others do his work for him. I realize that this might sound cruel and heartless, but we are dealing with a text that lives our this truth. No person has a right to attempt to diminish the seriousness of

sin, or the obligations that it places on those who commit it.

The possibility that Peter hold’s out to Simon, is that the wicked thought and intention of his heart might be forgiven. **Recovery was not the point, but**

Peter does not promise that the thought of Simon’s heart will be forgiven, but he hold out the possibility, and that should be enough to compel Simon to seek forgiveness with great fervor.

Notice that the forgiveness that is

The possibility that Peter hold’s out to Simon, is that the wicked thought and intention of his heart might be forgiven. Recovery was not the point, but forgiveness. Once a person is forgiven, recovery can take place, and appropriate amends made – but first things must be first!

forgiveness. Once a person is forgiven, recovery can take place, and appropriate amends made – but first things must be first!

MAY BE FORGIVEN

“ . . . may be forgiven thee.” Other versions read, “will forgive you,”^{NIV} “that you may have forgiveness,”^{BBE} “will yet be forgiven,”^{CJB} and “may be removed and disregarded and forgiven you.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Think of sin as being logged in the heavenly record books, with a corresponding debt to God incurred for robbing Him of His glory. Forgiveness is removing the sin from the record book, and liquidating the debt that it created. But that is not all. It also involves the purging of the conscience, so that the one who has sinned comes to know he is forgiven. Forgiveness really has no personal value if it is not known.

held out as a possibility has to do with the root of sin, and not only the fruit of it. Simon has to be forgiven for thinking wrongly. Involved in that forgiveness would be the stabilizing of his heart, so that it would not be inclined to such folly again. This is involved in the statement of John concerning the confession of sin. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). The cleansing from all unrighteousness involves being freed from the propensity to the sin, as well as being forgiven for committing it. Those who have “*the knowledge of salvation . . . by the remission of their sins*” know very well what I mean (Lk 1:77). There is a certain strength that is imparted in the forgiveness of sins that enables a person to go their way and “sin no more” (John 5:14; 8:11). That is the sort of thing Peter says might “*perhaps*” happen when Simon prays.

DISCERNING THE INDIVIDUAL

“ 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

Peter is not conducting himself as a fleshly professional, approaching Simon with a kind of indifference to his

situation. When men, in the name of Jesus, render help for payment, it is all the more difficult for them to be truly concerned about the one with whom they are dealing. I am aware that some few noble souls can overcome this circumstance, but they are few and far

between.

I PERCEIVE

“For I perceive that . . .” Other versions read, “I see,”^{NKJV} “it is plain to me,”^{NJB} and “I see inside you.”^{PHILLIPS}

The word perceive speaks of an understanding that extends beyond the surface. Perception is not second-hand knowledge – like memorizing a set of mathematical tables. Here, the word “perceive” means “to see with the mind, to perceive, know absolutely,” THAYER “understand, recognize,” UBS and “mentally and spiritually see, perceive, look at.” GINGRICH

This is a special kind of understanding. It does not come by comparing what is seen with a code of conduct, or a manual of definition. It rather results from being able to identify the source of the word or activity. In a sense, Peter looked inside the heart and mind of Simon, seeing the root of the tree instead of its leaves. There is no doubt that he did this in the power of the Holy Spirit. This was by no means the result of developing a natural aptitude. Peter perceives what made Simon offer money to purchase the ability to confer the Holy Spirit on anyone of his choice by the laying on of his hands.

THE GALL OF BITTERNESS

“ . . . thou art in the gall of bitterness . . . ” Other versions read, “poisoned by bitterness,” NKJB “full of bitterness,” NIV “prisoned in bitter envy,” BBE “extremely bitter,” CJB “bitter with jealousy,” GWN “in the bitter gall,” MRD “bitterly envious,” NET “full of bitter jealousy,” NLT “turning into bitter poison,” ISV and “a bitter weed.” WILLIAMS

Gall

The word “gall” is translated from the Greek word χολήν (khol-aan), which has the following lexical meaning: “a yellowish-green substance called bile,” THAYER “(1) as a bitter digestive fluid stored in the gall bladder in the body gall, bile; (2) as a bitter substance made from wormwood, a plant yielding a bitter-tasting dark-green oil that is alcoholic in its effect gall,” FRIBERG “something bitter,” UBS and “the bitter yellowish liquid secreted by the liver and stored in the gall bladder.” LOUW-NIDA In the English language, and as used in our text, the word “gall” means, “brazen boldness coupled with impudent assurance and insolence.” MERRIAM-WEBSTER

In the Scriptures, the word is used to denote being “full of bitter poison, be very jealous, be bitterly envious,” FRIBERG and “bitter anger, wrath.” LIDDELL-SCOTT This is the only place in Scripture that the word is used in this way. The same word is used in

Matthew 27:34 to describe what was given Jesus to drink – “vinegar mingled with gall.”

Bitterness

Bitterness is translated from the Greek word πικρίας (pik-ree-ahs). The lexical meaning of this word is “bitterness,” THAYER “inedible or poisonous.” FRIBERG As used in our text, the word means “extreme wickedness,” THAYER “particularly envious or resentful of someone,” LOUW-NIDA and “animosity and anger.” GINGRICH In English, the word means “marked by intensity or severity.” MERRIAM-WEBSTER

What Is Peter Saying?

Peter is saying that what Simon has offered is like the emission of a bitter poison from within him, and that it is extremely distasteful to Peter himself. Not only was the thought like a noxious and bitter substance, it was also poisonous – lethal in its effects upon the soul. We might liken this verbal eruption to an appendicitis that resulted in the rupturing of the organ. Poison is thus spewed out into the vital parts of the body, transmitting its effects throughout the entire physiological makeup of the individual. Unless some way is found to get the poison out of the body, the person will die from its effects.



Because of the dichotomy of natures found in the believer, he must contend with variant influences from within. Boiled down to its essence, these

influences are the flesh and the Spirit. This it is written, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal 5:17). These competitive desires are bidding for expression – to be taken into the heart and mind and then expressed in willing thoughts, as well as words and deeds. Both the Spirit and the flesh are aggressive in their attempts. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, James wrote, “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?”, or “The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love?” AMPLIFIED (James 4:5).

When a believer gives heed to the desires of the flesh, welcoming them into his mind for contemplation, it is like turning on a picket which begins dumping all of the desires of the flesh, or corruption of “the old man” into our soul – the part of us that is the appointed means of expression. What happens when a believer commits sin is this. Satan has hurled a fiery dart into the thought processes, as vividly described in Romans 7:14-25. Rather than throwing the thought down with the spiritual weaponry that is provided in Christ Jesus, the thought is entertained like a welcomed guest. The thought then draws upon all of the corruption of “the old man, which is “corrupt according to deceitful lusts” (Eph 4:22). The result is that the “old man” gains control of the individual, spreading his venom throughout the unseen human makeup. Sin then erupts – a process James referred to as “the superfluity of naughtiness,” or “overflow of wickedness” NKJV (James 1:21).

This is what happened in Simon, and it filled with moral poison. He was like a man swimming in a cesspool of iniquity – “in the gall of bitterness.”

THE BOND OF INIQUITY

“ . . . and in the bond of iniquity.” Other versions read, “bondage of iniquity,” NASB “captive to sin,” NIV “the chains of wickedness,” NRSV “under the control of sin,” CJB “bound by iniquity,” CSB “bonds of iniquity,” DOUAY “wrapped up in your evil ways,” GWN “chains of sin,” NJB “bond of unrighteousness,” YLT “bound by

sin,"^{IE} "chained by wickedness,"^{ISV} "a bundle of crookedness,"^{WILLIAMS} "a bond forged by iniquity [to fetter souls],"^{AMPLIFIED} "bound with his own sin,"^{PHILLIPS} and "prisoner of sin."^{GNB}

Simon had become a slave to sin – just by uttering a foolish word. It was a word that had been fostered by carnality, because he did not take his thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. He was not in a position where he could not simply back away from the situation. He was chained to his sin, like Samson was bound with fetters of brass to a grinding mill (Judges 16:21).

Sin Has Enslaving Power

The fact that sin is treated so lightly in our time is confirmation that the people are not aware of the enslaving power of sin. It is too late to for a back to walk away from iniquity when it has been committed. Now repentance and remission is required, for the person has been chained to his sin.

in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom 6:12). Paul also declares the same thing as Jesus regarding enslavement to sin resulting from the committing of it. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom 6:16). When speaking of certain false teachers who were exploiting the people of God, Peter said it this way in his second epistle to scattered believers: "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2 Pet 2:19).

Thus, Peter has clearly declareds Simon's condition. He has been captured by sin, and is bound with the chains of iniquity. His inner person has been filled with filled with bitter poison, and he is in a condition where the best that can be promises is that if he repents and prays God, "perhaps the thought of thine heart

First, let it be clear that Jesus did come "to **preach DELIVERANCE** to the captives" (Lk 4:18). He also taught us to pray that God would "DELIVER us from evil" (Lk 11:4). That the sum total of the Savior's use of the word deliver.

There are some other statements concerning deliverance.

- ⇒ Zechariah prophesied that the effect of the Savior would be the people being "DELIVERED out of the land of their enemies" (Lk 1:74).
- ⇒ In Christ, we are "DELIVERED from the Law" (Rom 7:6).
- ⇒ Paul spoke for all who are aware of the struggle against the flesh when he said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall DELIVER me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24).
- ⇒ The "DELIVERER will come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom 11:26).
- ⇒ Paul asked for prayer that he might be "DELIVERED from them that do not believe in Judea" (Rom 15:31), and "from unreasonable and wicked men" (2 Thess 3:2).
- ⇒ Paul said God had DELIVERED him from a great death, was delivering him, and would yet deliver him (2 Cor 1:10).
- ⇒ Jesus died to "DELIVER us from this present evil world" (Gal 1:4).
- ⇒ God "DELIVERED us from this present evil world" (Col 1:13).
- ⇒ Jesus "DELIVERED us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:10).
- ⇒ Paul said he was "DELIVERED out of the mouth of the lion" (2 Tim 4:17).
- ⇒ Paul said the Lord would DELIVER him "out of every evil work" (2 Tim 4:18).
- ⇒ In Jesus' death He "destroyed the devil," and DELIVERED "them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb 2:15).

In our time, there is a certain approach to, what is called ministry, that specializes in deliverance. They refer to their work as a deliverance ministry, and affirm that they are able to free men from enslavement to all manner of sin.

Jesus taught this little known fact, and did so with characteristic certitude. He word is preceded by a declaration of that certitude: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34). Now, that is a precise statement of the case. Paul developed this in his exposition of baptism into Christ and its effects. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom 6:6). That is, if the "old man" is not kept on the cross, being crucified, we will, in fact, "serve sin," for that is the nature of the sinful nature, or the "natural man." Sin has the power to "reign in our mortal bodies" after we have been baptized into Christ. Therefore, believers are admonished, "Let not sin therefore reign

may be forgiven" him (Acts 8:22).

SOMETHING TO CONSIDER

Peter does not lay hands on Simon and deliver him from the bond of iniquity. He offers no assistance, other than the instruction to repent and pray. Now, this is real case of dealing with real sin, and there is no chance that it is in some way flawed.

In our time, there is a certain approach to, what is called *ministry*, that specializes in deliverance. They refer to their work as a deliverance ministry, and affirm that they are able to free men from enslavement to all manner of sin. Meetings of significant size are held for purposes of deliverance, and the work is spoken of as though it was founded on revelation.

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⇨ God knows *“how to DELIVER the godly out of temptation”* (2 Pet 2:9).

Now, I am wandering about in the field of speculation, or pummeling a straw man. I am questioning the validity of, what is purported to be a deliverance ministry, and I am doing so upon the basis of this text. Here was a man who was in bondage – *“the bond of iniquity.”* He was standing before a man who was filled with the Spirit, had the keys to the Kingdom of heaven, and had wrought all manner of mighty works. If the way for a believer to overcome sin is to be delivered from it by some godly person, surely this will be the occasion for that to happen. If the only way to recover from sin is for a second party to knowingly enter into the matter with you, then this is an excellent time for that to happen.

I understand that there is such a thing as an effective through which life can be given to those who do not sin a sin unto death. Thus it is written, *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death”* (1 John 5:16). In this case, spiritual life is given to a sinner upon the basis of someone who is in favor with God. This is similar to James’ word concerning the same type of situation. *“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”* (James 5:20). These are not words delivered to especially gifted people, but to those who are walking in the light, and therefore can be employed in restoring fallen souls to the

fold. But that is quite different from the case that is before us.

There are sins from which there is no simple means of recovery. These are

There are sins from which there is no simple means of recovery. These are sins that are of an intrusive nature, causing men to become enslaved to iniquity. When this occurs, the person himself must engage in an earnest quest of forgiveness – like David did

sins that are of an intrusive nature, causing men to become enslaved to iniquity. When this occurs, the person himself must engage in an earnest quest of forgiveness – like David did (Psa 51). In order for such sins to be committed, a number of things must first be done.

- ⇨ A place must be made for Satan.
- ⇨ The warning conscience must be ignored.
- ⇨ The striving Spirit must be resisted, quenched, and grieved.
- ⇨ The word of God must be thrust from the mind.
- ⇨ Life in this world must become prominent.
- ⇨ Time must outweigh eternity.

⇨ Self must be exalted to the place of preeminence.

⇨ The body must be considered more

important than the soul.

⇨ This world must be seen as more important than the world to come.

⇨ The inevitability of death, the coming of the Lord, the end of the world, and the day of judgment must be thrust from the mind.

These are just a few of the conditions that must precede the committing of sin. I give them to confirm how serious it is when men sin – particularly when sins like that of Simon are committed. They involve a wrong assessment of God, Christ, their purpose, and the nature of salvation. In my judgment it is time for the professing church to fervently seek a sensitivity to God and His will that will direct a more acceptable manner of life. Spiritual obtuseness is never right.

A REQUEST THAT WAS NOT APPARENTLY ANSWERED

“ 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.”

There was nothing about Peter’s words that were not perfectly clear. Simon himself was to repent, changing his mind and ceasing his wicked ways. If it appears as though that was impossible, there is something made known in Christ’s ministry that must be seen. In a

number of His wonderful works He told people to do something they were not personally able to do. Here are some of His commands.

- ⇨ To a man with a withered hand: *“stretch forth thy hand”* (Lk 6:10).
- ⇨ To a paralyzed man: *“Arise, take up thy bed and walk”* (Matt 9:6).
- ⇨ To an impotent man lying on the

porch of a pool: *“Rise, take up thy bed and walk”* (John 5:8).

⇨ To a man who requested to come to Jesus, walking on the water: *“Come”* (Matt 14:28).

In each of these cases, there was no outward indication that what was commanded was even remotely possible. The people obvious were not able in themselves to do what Jesus said.

Because a place was made for the devil, the flesh surfaces, and is dealt with in no uncertain terms — by Given O. Blakely

COMMENTS FROM EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORIANS ABOUT SIMON

Early Church historians depict him as the pertinacious foe of the apostle Peter, whose movements he followed for the purpose of seeking encounters, in which he was signally defeated. In his journeys he was accompanied by a female named Helena, who had previously been a prostitute at Tyre, but who was now elevated to the position of his ἔννοια, or divine intelligence (Justin Mart. *Apol.* 1, 26; Euseb. *H.E.* 2, 13). In the ἔννοια, as embodied in Helena's person, we recognize the dualistic element of Gnosticism derived from the Manichaean system. The Gnostics appear to have recognized the δυνάμις and the ἔννοια as the two original principles from whose junction all beings emanated. Simon and Helena were the incarnations in which these principles resided. Simon's first encounter with Peter took place at Caesarea Stratonis (according to the *Const. Apost.* 6, 8), whence he followed the apostle to Rome. Eusebius makes no mention of this first encounter, but represents Simon's journey to Rome as following immediately after the interview recorded in Scripture (*H.E.* 2, 14); but his chronological statements are evidently confused, for in the very same chapter he states that the meeting between the two at Rome took place in the reign of Claudius, some ten years after the events in Samaria. Justin Martyr, with greater consistency, represents Simon as having visited Rome in the reign of Claudius, and omits all notice of an encounter with Peter. His success there was so great that he was deified, and a statue was erected in his honor with the inscription "Simoni Deo Sancto" (*Apol.* 1, 26, 56). Justin's authority has been impugned in respect to this statement on the ground that a tablet was discovered in 1574 on the *Tiberina insula*, which answers to the locality described by Justin (ἐν τῷ Τίβερτι ποταμῷ μεταξύ τῶν δύο γεφυρῶν), and bearing an inscription, the first words of which are "Semoni Sanco Deo Fidio." This inscription, which really applies to the Sabine Hercules (*Sancus Semo*), is generally supposed to have been mistaken by Justin in his ignorance of Latin, for one in honor of Simon. Yet the inscription goes on to state the name of the giver and other particulars. "Semoni Sanco Deo Fidio sacrum Sex. Pompeius, Sp. F. Col. Mussianus Quinquennalis decus Bidentalis donum dedit." That Justin, a man of literary acquirements, should be unable to translate such an inscription that he should misquote it in an *Apology* duly prepared at Rome for the eye of a Roman emperor and that the mistake should be repeated by other early writers whose knowledge of Latin is unquestioned (*Irenaeus, Adv. Haeres.* 1, 20; Tertullian, *Apol.* 13) — these assumptions form a series of difficulties in the way of the theory (Salmasius, *Ad Spartianum*, p. 38; Van Dale, *De Oraculis*, p. 579; Burton, *Heresies of the Apostolic Age*, p. 374, etc.). The above statements can be reconciled only by assuming that Simon made two expeditions to Rome the first in the reign of Claudius; the second, in which he encountered Peter, in the reign of Nero about the year 68 (Burton, *Lectures*, 1, 233, 318); and even this takes for granted the disputed fact of Peter's visit to Rome. *SEE PETER.* This latter date is to a certain extent confirmed by the account of Simon's death preserved by Hippolytus (*Adv. Haeres.* 6, 20); for the event is stated to have occurred while Peter and Paul (the term ἀποστόλοις evidently implying the presence of the latter) were together at Rome. Simon's death is associated with the meeting in question. According to Hippolytus, the earliest authority on the subject, Simon was buried alive at his own request, in the confident assurance that he would rise again on the third day (*ibid.* 6, 20). According to another account, he attempted to fly, in proof of his supernatural power, in answer to the prayers of Peter, he fell and sustained a fracture of his thigh and ankle bones (*Const. Apost.* 2, 14; 6, 9); overcome with vexation, he committed suicide (Arnob. *Adv. Gent.* 2, 7). Whether this statement is confirmed, or, on the other hand, weakened, by the account of a similar attempt to fly recorded by heathen writers (Sueton. *Nero*, 12; Juven. *Sat.* 3, 79), is uncertain. Simon's attempt may have supplied the basis for this report, or this report may have been erroneously placed to his credit. Burton (*Lectures*, 1, 295) rather favors the former alternative. Simon is generally pronounced by early writers to have been the founder of heresy. It is difficult to understand how he was guilty of heresy in the proper sense of the term, inasmuch as he was not a Christian. Perhaps it refers to his attempt to combine Christianity with Gnosticism. He is also reported to have forged works professing to emanate from Christ and his disciples (*Const. Apost.* 6, 16). See Tillemont *Memoires*, 1, 158 sq.; Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, vol. 1; Ittigius, *Hist. Eccles. Selecta Capita*, 5, 16, etc.; Mosheim, *History of the Church*, cent. 2, 5, 12; *De Rebus Christianorum*, etc., p. 190 sq.; Burton, *Heresies of the Apostolic Age*, lect. 4; Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, 2, 96 sq., etc.
TAKEN FROM McCLINTOK and STRONGS CYCLOPEDIA

However, more was involved in those cases than the ability of the people. There was also the element of faith. **It is as the people., my faith, made a hearty effort to do what Jesus said, that grace and strength was imparted to them to do it.**

That is still the manner of the Kingdom. Believers are not to look at their own aptitude in order to assess whether or not they are able to do the will of the Lord. Instead, they are to step out upon the circumstance believing that the Lord will support their effort to do His will. This is, in fact, what it means to *"live by faith"* (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38).

On a personal note, if there are areas of life in which you appear to be especially lacking in spiritual aptitude, extend yourself to have faith in God. You may recall that when Jesus cursed the fig tree, His disciples were astounded at how rapidly it died. Jesus responded to the expression of their surprise, *"Have faith in God!"* (Mk 11:21-22). That is still His answer to many of the responses and attitudes of His people.

Now we will behold unbelief in action. What Peter has said was clear, and Simon understood him. Yet, his next words are not addressed to God, but to Peter. They may appear to be quite innocent, but they are not.

PRAY FOR ME

"Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me . . ." Other versions read, *"Pray to the Lord for me,"* NKJV *"pray for me to the Lord,"* RSV *"Make prayer for me to the Lord,"* BBE *"Please pray to the Lord for me,"* CSB *"Supplicate ye for me to the Lord,"* DARBY *"Intercede ye with God for me,"* MRD *"You pray to the Lord for me,"* NET *"Pray for me to the Lord yourselves,"* NJB *"Beseech ye for me unto the Lord,"* YLT *"Both of you pray to the Lord for me,"* IE *"Pray, both of you, to the Lord for me,"* WEYMOUTH *"Both of you beg the Lord for me,"* WILLIAMS *"Pray for me [beseech the Lord, both of you],"* AMPLIFIED *"Implore to the Lord on my behalf,"* ALT and *"You petition to the Lord for me,"* LITV

Does this appear to be an honest appear — one of a poor sinner who is weighed down with guilt? Not at all! This a disobedient man expressing his unbelief. Peter told him to pray, and the man, in effect, responded, "No, you do the praying!"

Simon is obviously frightened by what Peter has said, but it is not a fright caused by the fear of the Lord. This is a carnal fear which caused Simon to cower in a corner, unconvinced that he could repent and seek forgiveness from the Lord for the thought of his heart.

In a lot of respects, Simon's

request was similar to several requests that Pharaoh made of Moses. *"Entreat the Lord for me . . . entreat for me . . . Entreat the Lord for me . . . Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only"* (Exodus 8:8, 28; 9:28; 10:16, 17). The complicating factor with Simon is that he had believed and been baptized. That made his sin worse than the sin of Pharaoh,

NONE OF THESE THINGS

" . . . that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." Others version read, *"that nothing of what you have said may happen to me,"* NIV *"so that these things which you have said may not come on me,"* BBE *"that these terrible things won't happen to me,"* LIVING *"that nothing of what you have said may befall me!,"* AMPLIFIED and *"that none of these things which ye have spoke fall on me."* BISHOPS

"The things" of reference was his money perishing with him in perdition, or he perishing with his money, however you want to view it. It is interesting that he did not think in terms of being forgiven by God — that is the possibility that Peter held out to him: *"if perhaps the thought of thing heart may be forgiven thee."* But, alas, someone who is *"in the bond of iniquity"* finds it

exceedingly difficult to think in such a manner. That is why recovery from sin is not a simplistic or easy matter. As soon as a person is made aware of their, and convicted of it, they must immediately seek the remedy by confessing their sin to God (1 John 1:7). The reason for this is that sin has a hardening effect upon the transgressor. That is why we are warned, *“But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”* (Heb

God and our Father”(Gal 1:4), we cannot afford to look back to the world like Lot’s wife looked back on Sodom. That is precisely why the Lord said, *“Remember Lot’s wife!”*(Lk 17:32).

This is another reason why it is so dangerous for the church to adopt the manners and customs of the world, bring its music and manners of presentation and motivation among believers. Such things are like an open door to the devil,

There are some situations in which it simply is not wise to become involved. Of course, there must be godly wisdom in deciphering such cases, lest weak believer be wounded and cause to fall. Flagrant sins like that of Simon, are themselves evidence of hardness and rebellion. There are some sins that cannot be committed unless the callousness of sin has already enveloped the soul. In such a case, straightforward and insight responses and exhortations are in order. However, to be sucked into involvement with such people is not wise.

The record of Simon is a case in point. Here, the curtain falls on the incident of Simon, and we hard of him no more. We do not know if he ever repented and prayed for himself, or if he died in the gall of bitterness. Of course, the purpose of the record is not to provide us with firm answers for every situation. Like all Scripture, they have been *“written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come”* (1 Cor 10:11). Thus, the record precisely matches the counsel Peter delivered to Simon. **He did not know if Simon could be forgiven, and now, neither do we.** That confirms that God does not desire His people to speculate about the possibilities of being forgiven. They are rather to seek grace to *“sin not.”*

The record of Simon is a case in point. Here, the curtain falls on the incident of Simon, and we hard of him no more. We do not know if he ever repented and prayed for himself, or if he died in the gall of bitterness.

3:13). It is also why those who dabble in the world, making no association of life with God, tend to become more and more dull of hearing. Oh, that professing believers were made more aware of this. There is a type of *Christianity* in the land that courts the favor and things of this world, attempting to sanctify its manners. But this cannot be done. If Jesus died to deliver us from *“this present evil world according to the will of*

as has been confirmed in so many instances of immorality and indiscretion among *Christians*. Not only were such people living apart from the awareness faith brings to the heart, their religion actually set them up for a fall by making them comfortable with worldly manners and appearances.

SOME THINGS DO NOT MERIT YOUR INVOLVEMENT

THE APOSTLES TESTIFY AND PREACH

“²⁵ And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.”

So far as the record is concerned, Simon is now forgotten, and we return to the work of the apostles. What a solemn warning for us to be sober and vigilant is found in this account.

THEY TESTIFIED AND PREACHED THE WORD

“And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, . . .” Other versions read, *“when they had solemnly testified and spoken,”* NASB *“testified and proclaimed,”* NIV *“given their witness and made clear,”* BBE *“giving*

a thorough witness and speaking,” CJB *“having testified and preached,”* DARBY *“boldly spoken . . . they spread the Good News,”* GWN *“Testified and had taught,”* MRD *“testifying and preaching,”* NLT *“having testified fully and spoken,”* YLT *“told the people the things which they had seen . . . preached the message,”* IE *“borne their testimony and preached the message,”* AMPLIFIED and *given their clear witness and spoken.”* PHILLIPS

The preaching of Peter and John fortified what had been declared by Philip, for these brethren were united in the faith. I do not doubt that they had a fuller knowledge of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, which things Philip had also declared.

They Testified

The word *“testified”* carries the idea of confirming something by testimony, this causing it to be believed. When Peter stood before the Jewish council, he said they could not help but speak the things they had *“seen and heard”* (Acts 4:20). I gather that this is the type of word that was delivered in Samaria. The extent of that testimony was also confirmed in the qualification for the filling of the bishopric vacated by Judas. It had to be a person who *“Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection”* (Acts

Because a place was made for the devil, the flesh surfaces, and is dealt with in no uncertain terms — by Given O. Blakely

1:21-22).

Add to this the ministry of the Holy Spirit who *"brought all things"* to their remembrance, whatsoever Jesus had said unto them (John 16:26). Also, consider how He must have shed light on the many words of Jesus, guiding them into all truth, illuminating the implications of the death, burial, resurrection, and enthronement of Christ Jesus. In the earlier chapters of Acts, you have a sampling of the expertise with which Peter handled the prophecies of Scripture, integrating them with the facts of the Gospel.

- ⇨ Joel's prophecy of the pouring forth of the Spirit (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32).
- ⇨ The association of the death of Christ with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23),
- ⇨ The opening of prophecies of Jesus' resurrection in the Psalms (Acts 2:24-28; Psa 16:8-11; 49:15; 86:13).
- ⇨ The exposition of the promise God made to David concerning a king to sit on his throne (Acts 2:29-33; 2 Sam 7:16; Psa 89:35-36).
- ⇨ The opening of the 110th Psalm (Acts 2:34-36; Psa 110:1; 2:8-9).
- ⇨ The glorification of Jesus (Acts 3:13).
- ⇨ The exposition of the suffering of Christ as declared by the prophets (Acts 3:18).
- ⇨ Defining the duration of Christ remaining in heaven (Acts 3:21).
- ⇨ Expounding Moses' promise of the coming Prophet, who was Jesus (Acts 3:22-23; Deut 18:15,18).
- ⇨ Expounding the promise made to Abraham (Acts 3:25-26; Gen 22:18).
- ⇨ The exposition of the 118th Psalm regarding the rejection of the Corner Stone (Acts 4:11; Psa 118:22,23; Isa 28:16).

All of these things involved eye witness accounts of the Christ, His words, miracles, death, burial,

resurrection, and ascension. This is not doubt the type of things concerning which they testified. One can only imagine what a rich table of rich things they spread for the Samaritans, and how it must have compared with bewitching work of Simon under which they had been deluded for so long.

They Preached the Word

The testimony of Peter and John was integrated with Scriptural proclamations, as confirmed in former accounts of Peter's preaching. By preaching the Word, a proclamation of it is meant, as compared with what is commonly called an application. They were anchoring the faith of the Samaritans in solid declarations by the Almighty God, like affirmations concerning the Lord Jesus, and the exceeding great and precious promises through which believers become *"partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust"* (2 Pet 1:4).

These days, there is altogether too little of the preaching of the Word, apprising the people of the rich promises and commitments of the Lord to those who believe.

These days, there is altogether too little of the preaching of the Word, apprising the people of the rich promises and commitments of the Lord to those who believe. More and more I am seeing that a significant number of professing preachers and teachers really have no message, but spend their time attempting to resolve surface problems.

THEY RETURNED TO JERUSALEM

"... returned to Jerusalem..."
Other versions read, *"Started back to Jerusalem,"* ^{NASB} *"went back to Jerusalem,"* ^{BBE} *"traveled back to Jerusalem,"* ^{CSB} *"on their way back to Jerusalem,"* ^{GWN} and *"returned toward Jerusalem."* ^{PNT}

Having completed their mission, and anchoring the Samaritans more firmly in the Word, Peter and John

return to their home base. That was the center out of which they would operate, and was the place to which those with serious issues would resort. After this verse, there are forty-five references to Jerusalem in the book of Acts. It remained the hub of Kingdom activity to which inquirers resorted, and from which holy men were dispatched.

THEY PREACHED IN SAMARITAN VILLAGES

"... and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." Other versions read, *"proclaiming the good news in many Samaritan villages,"* ^{NRSV} *"in a number of small towns in Samaria,"* ^{BBE} *"evangelizing many villages of the Samaritans,"* ^{CSB} *"announced the glad tidings,"* ^{DARBY} *"to many countries of the Samaritans,"* ^{DOUAY} *"proclaiming the good news to many Samaritan villages as they went,"* ^{NET} *"they stopped in many Samaritan villages along the way to preach the Good News,"* ^{NLT} and *"proclaiming the glad tidings (Gospel) to*

many villages of the Samaritans [on the way]." ^{AMPLIFIED}

On the day of Pentecost, Peter had announced that the promise was not only to the Jews and their children, but to those who were afar off as well (Acts 2:39). While the Samaritans were geographically near, they spiritually afar off, and now they were privileged to hear the Gospel that first promised to Abraham.

The incident with Simon the spirits of Peter and John, confirming that a day in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand elsewhere (Psa 84:10). The reception of the Gospel by the faithful offset experiences like that of Simon. That is why it is not wise to get caught up in the trying to resolve difficulties that spring from hardness.

CONCLUSION

This passage of Scripture confirms two vital points. First, the role of Apostle doctrine, with its unique and foundational knowledge. Second, it provides a sterling example of the seriousness of misconceptions of the nature of the Kingdom of God. These are lessons all men do well to take in, digesting and adapting them to their own labors in the Kingdom. These are accounts of genuine Kingdom labors, and are worthy of special notation.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 9/28/2007. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Thirty-ninth lesson will cover verses 26 through 31 of the eighth chapter: "PHILIP IS SENT TO THE DESERT." After reaping a great harvest of souls in Samaria, the Lord sends Philip into a desert, an environment quite different from the one in which he had been laboring. We get a glimpse here of the nature of Kingdom work. A devastating blow is also dealt to humanly developed approaches to specialized ministries. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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