

- A Study in Acts -

**Chapter Eight – Spread of the Church and the Gospel**

**ACTS 8:18-25:**

Previously, we were shown Philip's work in Samaria, sharing, and demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We had many who obeyed the Gospel (**Vs. 12**), to include a known sorcerer from among them, named Simon (**Vs. 13**).

This was an important demonstration between the practice of deceiving and the true miracles that accompanied the truth of the Gospel for its confirmation.

After these conversions, the Apostles of Jesus, having heard that the Samaritans had obeyed the truth, came down to them in order to bestow the gifts of the Spirit, which we learned in our last lesson, were necessary for the continued edification, exhortation, and comfort (**1 Corinthians 14:3**).

In this lesson, we will be introduced to the fact that not all would receive these gifts; that if the character of an individual prevented him from mutual profit (such as the elevated desires of Simon), they would have no portion in this gift.

**Text #1:**

**Acts 8:18-21** “And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> saying, “Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>20</sup> But Peter said to him, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! <sup>21</sup> You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.”

One quick note before we engage in this portion of the text; I didn't mention it in the last lesson, but it should be noted here; the phrase “**Come down**” in **verse 15**, describes elevation, not direction. Everywhere up or down is used in this letter, it is not describing north or south, but literally up or down in elevation. Sir William Mitchell Ramsay diligently measured all of these statements from this letter and found them all to be accurate.

**Offered Them Money:** It should be noted here for the sake of clarity, that Simon, although having understood and obeyed the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, has yet to develop the complete understanding of the necessity to put off the old man and put on the new man (**Colossians 3:5-17**). As this is the case, he reverts back to what he was before he obeyed the Gospel of Christ (see: **verse nine**), and thus sees this ability to bestow and have these gifts as a means to prosper.

So, we learn two, easy to see, traits from Simon:

**First**, these gifts were not his to bestow (only the Apostles of Christ).

**Second**, He didn't understand their true purpose. The miraculous portions of the gifts were not the vital components. If we look at the list of these gifts as described by Paul, we see that wisdom and knowledge precede the others (**1 Corinthians 12:8**). They had to be used for mutual profit in order to edify, exhort, and comfort. The miraculous portions of these gifts simply gave confirmation to the true purpose of the gifts.

**Your Money Perish with You:** As with all the benefits of the relationship established with God through Christ by obedience to the Gospel, they are not for the benefit of worldly gain; thus cannot be purchased or traded for. We are called out of darkness into light, from Satan to God, to receive the forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among the saints (sanctified in Christ) – **Acts 26:18; 1 Peter 2:9**.

**Part nor Portion:** As Peter continues his rebuke of Simon for his carnal thoughts; he also retorts that which Simon does not understand about these gifts. **“Part”** (bestow) indicates that he was not included with those who had been chosen to bestow these gifts. **“Portion”** (receive) indicates that he was not able to receive any of the gifts, as his heart had betrayed him in the sight of God.

**Text #2:**

**Acts 8:22-24 “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”**

**<sup>24</sup> Then Simon answered and said, “Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.””**

**Repent:** It is very important to note the instruction of Peter to Simon as to the need to be made right in the sight of God for this infraction. The pre-Gospel instructions for conversion were to repent and be baptized (**Acts 2:38, 8:12-13**), which he has done. Post-conversion instruction has been given by Peter to Simon who is now the recipient of the benefits of being **“IN”** Christ (**Ephesians 1:3-14**).

Being in such a new state of service to God through Christ, Simon has not learned enough **“not to sin”** by putting off his old man; and likewise, does not know what should be done to restore himself. This instruction of Peter is both rebuke and edification for the purpose of making Simon right (restored).

The benefit of restoration exists for all who have entered the **“Body of Christ”** through repentance and baptism (**Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-29; Colossians 2:11-13**). The condition in repentance demands that we purge ourselves from the sin which divides us from God, confess our sin before Him, and once again walk in light as He is in light (**1 John 1:5-10**). It is then that the grace of Christ, that so many enjoy talking about today, is rendered on our behalf –

**1 John 2:1-2** “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. <sup>2</sup> And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

The obedience to the Gospel of Christ creates a relationship by which the grace of God through Christ is enacted, and the maintenance of the relationship demands that we do our part and remove darkness continually, in order for the grace of God through Christ to continually be demonstrated and offered.

**Pray to the Lord for Me:** It is obvious by the consternation of Simon that he understands the instruction of Peter and his dire state. He is demonstrating the “**godly sorrow**” necessary to begin the process of true repentance. It should be noted that godly sorrow, in and of itself, is not repentance. It does; however, lead to repentance, note:

**2 Corinthians 7:8-12** “For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. <sup>9</sup> Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. <sup>10</sup> For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. <sup>11</sup> For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, *what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!* In all *things* you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, although I wrote to you, *I did not do it* for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you.”

**Text #3:**

**Acts 8:25** “So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.”

Luke does not record a detailed happy ending; but suffices in his writing to Theophilus, the instruction of Peter, and the clear understanding of Simon, in regard to this sin and the need to repair it.

Luke then records that Peter and John (last nouns used to describe the pronoun “**they**” used in this last verse), preached in many more villages of the Samaritans on their return back to Jerusalem. We know that Philip is not with them, as his work with the Gospel of Jesus Christ; as Luke will continue to emphasize his labors, is not done!