

PERIL OF PRETENDERS

TEXT: **Acts 8:18-19:**
18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,
19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.

No one has a right to want the Holy Spirit whose heart is NOT right with God. The sinner does not have anything to do with the Holy Spirit until his heart is separated from worldly pleasures and all personal, selfish interests. Until we want God, until we hunger and thirst after righteousness — not for a good feeling, or to demonstrate, or show out — we have no right to want the Holy Spirit. There is peril and misery in being superficial in our motives.

The background to this Scripture presents a great Holy Ghost revival at Jerusalem. The followers of Jesus are going everywhere, preaching the Gospel of Christ. I call your attention to this, because no Social Gospel can ever change the lives of the lost. Philip had one message and one Person to present to the people: the message of Redemption through Christ.



These poor, despised Samaritans here where Philip preached were largely prepared for the Gospel through the ministry of the Samaritan woman as recorded in **John 4**, crying out, “**Come see a Man.**”

John 4:29: Come, see a Man, Who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

Jesus was real to many, and when these missionaries came to them and told them that this same Christ had died for the sins of all the world, that God had raised Him from the dead, and that He is now living and has all power in Heaven and on Earth, then the Lord confirmed this kind of preaching through miracles and signs. Mighty demonstrations of unclean spirits crying with loud

voices came out of them that heard. Many were healed. There was great joy in the city.

When the devil's power was broken, many turned to the Lord Jesus. They repented and believed in the Christ. They were baptized. Satan was stirred and began to work to curb this spiritual movement in which multitudes had been brought into the Kingdom of God by the power of the Gospel of Christ. The devil had been in the saddle for too long a time to give up without a fight.



One of Satan's chief deceivers saw the multitudes turn away from him, Simon the sorcerer, an agent of the devil. He had the people believing in him, giving heed to him from the least to the greatest. But when they had received the true Gospel, they naturally turned away from the counterfeit.

Every real has its counterfeit. The devil will see to that. The multitudes Simon had bewitched by lying wonders were being so carried away that they had no sense left but to follow him.

But now, Simon is losing his followers fast. And by losing the crowd, he was losing his influence and his chief source of income. In desperation, he decided he had better join this new movement. Simon believes, is baptized, and continues with Philip, greatly wondering and beholding the miracles and signs which he did.



Is it true that all you have to do is believe? This is the common tone of preaching in this deceitful world by false preachers. How are the multitudes in our world today any better? They are bewitched by the deceitfulness of these modernistic doctrines, the deceitfulness of riches, the excitement of gambling, the love of leisure, the allurements of the movies and TV, besides the natural deceitfulness of the non-regenerated heart.

Wicked hearts must repent and get right with God by turning to Christ in Godly sorrow. Otherwise, just believing that Jesus is the Son of God will only make you a miserable Simon the sorcerer.

There is a believing that comes from the heart which is given to the penitent, as a gift of God as stated in **Ephesians 2:8**:

Ephesians 2:8: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the Gift of God:

This faith results in salvation, a changed life, and a changed nature.

Baptism does not save either, without the new birth. Simon was also baptized, but this did not change his nature. You can go thru every form, even sing in the choir, but without Jesus you are lost. And in much more peril than the outsider is the ungodly man who knows nothing of the Gospel of Grace. I am afraid that many people in professing religions today have been baptized and have given intellectual assent to the Word of God, but as Peter declares to Simon:



Acts 8:21-23:

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.

I would like to get into every church and preach the old time Gospel on behalf of the unconverted people in the Church. If I could, I would preach to all those who believe and are baptized, but have not yet known the cleansing power of the Blood of Jesus, are not out of the sinning business, and do not rely on Jesus to save and keep them clean.

Simon was a great pretender. Until the coming of Philip preaching Christ and not philosophy or history or morality or sectism, Simon had the whole city at his feet. And the pretending goes on until Peter and John are sent to Samaria. Theirs is a ministry to the deeper things of God.

The devil was riding in Simon the sorcerer. Though a strong man armed seemed to have complete possession of the situation thus far, there is a test soon coming with power to expose his heart's real condition. This ministry of the Spirit is most needed in the churches. I believe that the Holy Spirit will reveal a lot of things in this ungodly world which are operating under the guise of religion and spirituality that are nothing more than a counterfeit and are fake.

The next message would be on the great Baptism of the Holy Spirit. For it was at the time of this ministering of Peter and John that the pretender, Simon, was exposed. This exposing seems to scare many folks skinny, but I would rather know where I am now and have a chance to be saved than to pretend and land in Hell, taking many along who might follow me.

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Matthew 7:21:

Not every one that saith unto Me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the Will of My Father Who is in Heaven.

Ephesians 5:18:

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

This passage is introduced by:

Ephesians 5:17: Be not ignorant, but understanding, what the Will of the Lord is.

The Holy Spirit is received by believers, not by sinners.

Acts 19:2a:

Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?

Paul believes the Holy Spirit comes after believing, for this is the import of his question. He senses there is something lacking or missing in the service. He knows where the sore spot is.

The early Church felt the importance of the Holy Spirit Baptism. They sent their best ministers to Samaria with one ministry and for one purpose. To Peter and John, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was as definite a blessing as the receiving of the forgiveness of sins, for now they had God's Holy Spirit with them.



Acts 11:16-17:

16 Then remembered I the Word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

17a: Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ;

Notice: The Spirit is given to those who believed. This is borne out in:

John 7:38-39:

38 He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of Living Water.

39 (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Simon was greatly amazed. He was quick to notice that by the laying on of hands by the Apostles, the Holy Spirit miracle took place in the lives of believers. This laying on of hands came after a prayer meeting.



Notice in **Acts 8:15:**

Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit:

When Simon saw that the miraculous gift of the

Holy Spirit was given, he thought within himself of all he could accomplish if he had this power, as possessed by Peter and John. His covetous heart bursts forth with:

Acts 8:18-19:

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19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.***

The baptism of Philip's ministry fails to initiate Simon into the secret of power he covets. Now he will extract the secret from Peter and John. He will even make it worth their while for them to give him power. With this world's money he would buy Heaven's power.



If Peter had been deceived about Simon's profession, or if he had sought after money like so many so-called preachers are today, he would have done as Simon asked. But the terrific exposure and reproof came witheringly from his lips, as recorded in **Acts 8:20**:

Acts 8:20: But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the Gift of God may be purchased with money.



The picture is solemn. Simon stands there unmasked, condemned, presenting a disturbing warning to all professors of the discipleship to Christ.

Here is the natural heart. It shows itself as a surface spectator, judging, believing on outward appearance. He reckons people by what he sees them to be. But the man

filled with the Holy Spirit can discern spirits. He sees into the very heart condition.

You cannot purchase the Holy Spirit. This is God's most precious gift to His children. What a crude blundering about the sacredness of God's free Grace. Men may stoop to commercializing in forms of religion, but when it comes to the realities of the Holy Spirit, the experience is neither to be purchasable nor bribed. It comes from God and is given to a clean heart.

The heart of Simon was laid wide open by Peter. What was true of Simon is true of every unsaved person in this world “ . . . ***in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity***” (***Acts 8:23***).

When the Light of God's Word and the Presence of the Spirit of God is near, we will feel the guilt of the abominable sins of our heart which God hates. We will be convinced of the insufficiency of our own self-righteousness and of our past justifications to deliver us from the bondage of iniquity.

Every sincere soul will be led to justify God and to condemn itself by accepting the punishment of one's sins as just, and will thereby be led to take Christ as his only Deliverer and all-sufficient Saviour. The sincere soul will be willing to submit — unreservedly — in surrendering all his life and abilities to Jesus' service.

Instead of repenting, Simon asks Peter to pray for him that he be exempted from the judgment about which Peter had just warned him, as recorded in **Acts 8:24**:

Acts 8:24: Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the LORD for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

Now, there are many who are conscious of the fact that they have never experienced any such change. Therefore, they know they are still in the Kingdom of satan. Some have tried to pacify themselves by joining some church or getting involved with a religious organization. But let no man deceive himself with the idea that he is saved without a change being necessary to salvation, or that he be saved by his infant baptism or by his or his parents' membership in some church.

We must be born again, changed — become a new creature in Christ. It can be in the interest of no one to be deceived in a matter of such momentous importance. This great and tragic deception may make one

feel at ease, but the awful truth must be realized sooner or later. Don't wait until it will be too late to seek Christ Who is the only Door into Heaven. This will enhance the misery of your soul in Hell — having known your condemnation from the Word of God, and then having invented your own way of escape.

John 3:18: He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only Begotten Son of God.

John 8:24: I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.

John 3:36: He that believeth on the Son hath Everlasting Life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Romans 3:23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

I remember when I got a traffic ticket. Oh, how bad I felt to be condemned at a man's court. But this is nothing to be compared with the sentence at the Almighty Judgment. Here, it is a temporal punishment, but there, one will face the never-ending agonies of the Second Death.



Oh, unsaved soul, you are living daily under the sentence of condemnation which, if you understood and felt its weight, would surely destroy all your cheerfulness. It would sour you on all your worldly pursuits and pleasures. Satan, who is the god of this Age, has blinded you as you daily treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

The way of the transgressor is hard. Your misery shows itself in your want for something to drown out your sense of guilt. Many of you fear what is coming, and it adds to your misery. The dread of death and judgment cannot make anyone feel comfortable outside of salvation thru the Lord Jesus Christ.

The bible clearly tells us that there is no peace or rest for the wicked. We learn this from the following scriptures:

Isaiah 48:22: There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

Psalms 9:17: The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.

Psalms 11:6: Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

Psalms 92:7: When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever:

Ecclesiastes 8:13: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

Isaiah 3:11: Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

So many have labored under the devil-inspired idea that earthly pleasures will satisfy. Exciting amusements and living in fleshly pleasure can banish the thoughts of eternity from your mind, but this cannot last forever. You cannot cheat death. You cannot hang around in this world forever. You are going to leave your friends, pleasures, and treasures behind — for we brought nothing into the world and it is certain we carry nothing out.

Oh, unprepared soul — there is an appointment for everyone to come before the Judgment Seat of Christ. What about your unconfessed sins? Don't be ignorant of the only way of salvation and hope of Heaven.

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If you knew that life would soon leave you unless a skilled physician were to operate on you, you would welcome him to do the surgery in order to live. So, likewise, a minister who is faithful must

not think of your feelings. It is far better for you to suffer the pains of conviction now, and turn to Christ, than to suffer the pains of Hell forever.

Is your heart right with Almighty God?

Mark 7:21-23:

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

When you confess your sins and turn to Christ, God will give you a 'new heart', turning your stoney heart into a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26: 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.



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