

Simon the Sorcerer's Repentance - Acts 8:9-24
01-31-21

The story of Simon is usually one of a Christian in error. He believed he could purchase a gift of God. We are told that his heart was not right with God. Early church writers go on to suggest he founded the gnostic movements, blending occult with the Gospel to create new false doctrines. Indeed, the term "Simony" is the word for someone who tries to buy something spiritual, holy or sacred. All of this is only speculation. Perhaps there is something more to this man in the Scriptures to consider?

First, it is true that Simon was accused of sin. He was told that his heart was not right with God, and that it was full of bitterness and bound with iniquity. Consider that bitterness is something all believers are warned against in Hebrews 12:15. Consider too that perhaps more of us are guilty of trying to buy God's gifts than we suspect. Sometimes we try to negotiate with God to get what we pray for; is that much different?

But how did Simon respond when he was accused of sin? He could have denied it, and stated it was untrue. He might have tried to blame others. He might have turned this into accusation against the Apostles. He could have accused them of racism, of being power hungry, or of ignorance and a lack of understanding. Instead, Simon begs for forgiveness. However Simon may have later acted, in this moment he offers an important example of how to be chastised.

How do you react when someone suggests you have sinned against them or against God? Anger, accusation, denial, defensiveness are typical emotional worldly replies. But we ought to be people who accept (1) the possibility that we are in sin and (2) are willing to investigate that accusation. The right responses to being accused of sin are humility (anyone can sin, including you – 1 John 1:8/Romans 3:23), self-examination (a honest examination – 2 Corinthians 13:5), and if you have sinned, an acceptance of error (confession of sin – 1 John 1:9-10).

Someone suggests that you have offended them? Many times people lash out and point to offenses that have been made against them, but is that right? When someone says you have offended them, it is a matter of fact. Jesus said not to make a sacrifice if you know your brother has something against you; you must first reconcile (Matthew 5:23-24). You need to consider if you offended them, or if they were offended by Christ.

Someone suggests that you could improve your faith? Sometimes our vanity causes us to believe we are more than we are. When someone says that we have an opportunity to grow, that damage to our ego can cause us to be resentful, or even belligerent. Are we hard headed when someone says to let go and let God handle this? To trust God and not worry? The right response reflects a love of truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10) and a love of one another (1 Peter 1:22, 1 Corinthians 13:7).

Someone suggests that you may be on a dangerous path? We are commanded to warn each other of the dangers ahead. Yet too often when someone points to our path and warns us, we won't look, but instead seek a self-justification for our actions. Why? Perhaps we don't want to change. Perhaps we are simply too vain to admit error.

Simon's heart clearly had some problems. But perhaps there is something worth considering as a good thing to learn from his error.