

“Poisoned by Bitterness & Bound by Iniquity”?

by Wayne Goff

“For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (Acts 8:23 NKJV)

“Poisoned By Bitterness”

In reading of the sin of Simon in Acts 8 and Peter’s treatment of him, I always thought that Peter might have been a bit harsh on this new convert. Then I realized that Peter was speaking by inspiration so that it was actually God who was saying this about Simon. God knows the hearts of all men (Psalm 44:21; 139:23; Lk. 16:15) and He certainly knew what was wrong with Simon. So if God said that Simon was *“poisoned by bitterness,”* then I believe it!

Was Simon *bitterly jealous* because Philip and the apostles had the **true power** to work miracles? He was honest enough to know the truth when he saw and heard it, even to the point of obeying the gospel himself (v. 13). But perhaps there was a *twinge of jealousy* in him as he watched Philip perform true *“miracles and signs”* (v. 13).

Perhaps it was difficult for Simon to give up the power and influence he once wielded as he deceived men and women who thought he was *“the great power of God”* (v. 10). It’s not easy, you know, to give up such control. I know that he longed to have what Philip and the apostles had because he offered to **pay for the gift himself** (vv. 18-19)!

It was not wrong to *“earnestly desire the best gifts”* (see 1 Cor. 12:31), but it was wrong to use such Divine power for one’s own personal advancement and profit! Undoubtedly Simon had the wrong motive behind his offer to purchase the gift of God with money. Peter declared to him, *“You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God”* (v. 21). **Simon’s heart was poisoned.** How quickly the new convert fell into disfavor with God! (Consider 1 Peter 2:1).

“Bound By Iniquity”

On the other hand, I understand fully the second part of Peter’s declaration when he says that Simon is *“bound by iniquity.”* **Sin enslaves people** — every time, all the time, and even after just one sin! Simon was a new convert, and needed to drink richly of the sincere milk of the Word in order to grow (1 Peter 2:1-2). But before he could do that, he was overcome by sinful desire once again and *“thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!”* (v. 20). Imagine that — **buying the power of God to use it for one’s own selfish, self-serving purposes!** Oh, but men and women still do it today, and some of them are Christians too!

So Simon was **bound** — **enslaved** — by lawlessness, sin, iniquity. He thought that he could make up his own set of rules and live as he had done so long before becoming a Christian. Though he had been baptized to wash away his sins, the old man of corruption had risen up again. He had enslaved Simon again, and Peter called him on it.

In order to be impressed with **the slavery of sin**, I suggest everyone read Romans 6. The entire chapter discusses this very point, and the apostle Paul instructs us to *“not let sin reign in your mortal body”* (v. 12), to *“reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin”* (v. 11), and to not *“present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin”* (v. 13). Paul points out that the *choice* to serve sin or righteousness is **ours** (v. 16)! Christians must choose to obey from the heart the gospel which was delivered to them (v. 17).

Dear readers, and especially my brethren, be aware that sin and its enslavement will fill your heart with bitterness and possess your heart, mind and soul with sinful addiction! Do not give in to these things. But if you already have, seek the *repentance* and *forgiveness* that can free you again (Acts 8:22). **323703**