



# THE EXHORTER

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*“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40*

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July 17, 2016

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***Acts 8:18-19 "Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.'"***

Simon, Simon, he just didn't understand things. He was a new Christian and he seemed to be up to his old ways. Simon was showman. He seemed to love attention. Pride seemed to motivate him. He had been one who astonished audiences with black magic. The use of potions and spells made crowds declare that he had the power of God. It was all deception. He was well known. He claimed to be someone great. He wasn't doing anything great. His life, as his work, was all illusions. It was pretense. It was fake.

Philip was preaching in Samaria with great results. Simon heard Philip and he too was baptized. He became a follower of Jesus. Two of the apostles, Peter and John, came to Samaria to extend spiritual gifts to some of the Christians. Philip wasn't an apostle. He couldn't do this. This work came only through the apostles. They had to lay their hands on a Christian in order to pass on spiritual gifts. Simon saw this. He was impressed. He didn't want the spiritual gifts, he wanted what the apostles had. He wanted the power to lay his hands and pass on that gift to others. He wanted others to come to him. He wanted to be great among the Christians.

Simon was in trouble. Peter rebuked him. He was told that he was not right with God. He was told to repent and pray for forgiveness.

Consider some lessons:

Conversion to Christ doesn't immediately change all of our thinking. Simon was still powered by pride. He wanted what the apostles had. He wanted people to want him. Rewiring our thinking takes time. It takes learning. Simon didn't understand the role of the apostles. He didn't understand the nature of the kingdom. God isn't for sale. One doesn't buy their way into the kingdom nor the favor of God. Although baptized, Simon had much to learn. This is true of all who come to Christ.

**(OVER)**

We bring baggage, issues and a past with us. We have ideas and thoughts that are just not right. We have heard things and assumed that they were right, but they were not. All of this shows us that baptism isn't the end of the journey. There is much to learn about the church and how God operates. We must learn to become the people that God wants. This necessitates more studies and more teaching that must be done.

Peter was quick to stop Simon from getting into more trouble. Peter put the brakes on Simon. We are not having anymore of this, Simon. It's not going to happen. Tolerance is not always the acceptable choice. Simon's pride was taking him away from God. His desire to remain someone great was killing his soul. Greatness in the kingdom of God is measured by service. It cannot be bought. One must be willing to sacrifice. Peter's words are harsh. He tells Simon that the intention of his heart is not right. He was told that he was in iniquity and what he wanted to do was wickedness. There is no missing where Peter stood with this. There is a time for plain speech. There is a time to make things clear. If something is wrong, then people need to be told that. Simon got the message. He understood. He immediately dropped his idea. He was in trouble and he knew it.

God provides a way toward forgiveness even when His people sin. If Simon was already saved and it didn't matter, then why all this uproar? If once a person is saved, they are always saved, then why the call to repent and pray for forgiveness? Obviously, a Christian can fall from grace. A Christian, once saved, can lose his soul. This is just one of many verses that identify that. God doesn't give us just one chance with Him. He doesn't say, "It's now or never." He doesn't close the door if we sin. He doesn't walk away from us and leave us on our own. God's not like that. There has been many believers who have made wrong choices. There has been many who put self before Christ. There has been many who never completely denied themselves. Did God toss these folks out? No. Simon was told to repent and pray. God allows us back. God allows us a way to forgiveness.

The pride of Simon is something that trips many of us as well. Pride keeps us from admitting that we were wrong. Pride keeps us from changing. Pride is more interested in how the outside looks rather than how the inside looks. Pride hides behind excuses. Pride points the finger at others. Pride makes light of the wrongs that were done. Pride keeps us from becoming what God wants. Simon's pride tripped him. Our pride will do the same.

Simon started off on the wrong foot. He had the wrong idea. He wanted something that he couldn't have. Even if he could, his pride would have misused it and ruined it. The story of Simon ends with him begging Peter to pray for him. The words of Peter were not what he expected. Simon's tone seemed to change. Maybe he got it.

Maybe, someday, we'll get it.

Roger Shouse

