

# POWER BROKERS / Sunday School- October 21, 2012

## Unifying Topic: SIMON WANTS TO BUY POWER

### Lesson Text

**I. Magic vs. Miracle (Acts 8:9-13)**

**II. The True Conversion (Acts 8:14-24)**

**The Main Thought:** And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money. (Acts 8:18, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** Some people try to buy power. What are the consequences of inappropriately seeking power? When Simon the magician tried to buy the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter plainly laid out the fatal consequences for those who think the Spirit can be bought or sold.

**Lesson Aim:** To help learners gain an understanding of Simon's motivation to receive the Holy Spirit.

**Life Aim:** To encourage learners to nurture an authentic desire for the Holy Spirit's power in their lives and in the lives of others.

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8:9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

8:10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

8:11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

8:13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

8:15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

8:17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

8:19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

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.

8:21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

8:23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

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.

### **HISTORY:**

The death of Stephen was the signal for an outbreak of persecution which compelled the Christians to scatter and to seek safety in Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth. However, the apostles stood fast. They braved whatever perils that might come. Although the persecution was deadly, nevertheless it accomplished the direct will of God. Certain devout men gave Stephen the burial that was due this first Christian martyr. With papers of permission from the authority of the Sanhedrim and high priest, Saul harassed the church, smashing down doors and arresting men and women in their homes, sending them to prison. This caused the church to be scattered. And this means that the Word was scattered. They preached the Word abroad wherever they went (8:1-4).

Because of the witness and death of Stephen, Philip, one of the first deacons (Acts 6:5) went down to Samaria and preached Christ to them. A great revival came about. The people were on one accord; of one mind and took heed to the message and the miracles they had seen. The evidence of the revival was that people with evil spirits were changed, cast out, people with crippled bodies were healed, and the power of God was clearly witnessed. Great joy was experienced (8:5-7).

### **Acts 8:9-13 Magic vs. Miracle**

8:9 **But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:** The people had been enslaved by a false prophet, a religious imposter, Simon. Simon had claimed to have divine powers.

- He used sorcery: magical arts, witchcraft, spirit mediums, astrology, charms, spells, divination or fortune telling.

Simon's sorcery was energized by Satan and was used to magnify himself.

- He bewitched (astounded, confounded) people: amazed, astonished, and secured their following.
- He claimed that he was "*some great one*."

**8:10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.** The people had been enslaved by a false religion: all gave heed; all followed his leadership and teaching; all from the least to the greatest confessed this man is the great power of God.

**8:11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.** The people had been enslaved for a long time. They had been held in bondage to the false prophet and false religion for a long time. In the days of the early church, sorcerers and magicians were numerous and influential. They worked wonders. Simon was one of them, that the people even thought he was the Messiah.

**8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.** But when it came to Philip, the people believed his preaching.

- He preached the kingdom of God.
- He preached the name of Jesus Christ.

When the people heard the message, both men and women believed and were water baptized. All authority and power was the result from the belief that God is its author.

**8:13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.** Even Simon believed and he received baptism too. There seems to be some little doubt about the legitimacy of Simon's conversion. There is no sign of repentance. There is no confession of sin. But there is the statement that "*he continued with Philip wondering and beholding the miracles and signs that were done*." Apparently, Simon wanted the secret of Philip's power. His only concern was not for his own soul but for the ability to get close to Philip and learn the secret of his ability to heal the sick and perform miracles. Simon's ability came from Satan. Philip's ability came from God. There was the counterfeit; verses the real deal.

## Acts 8:14-24 The True Conversion

**8:14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:** When the news of Philip's preaching and the subsequent conversion of the Samaritans reached Jerusalem, it was necessary for the Jewish church there to send their two key representatives in order to investigate these conversions. The church at Jerusalem had been all Jewish; this assembly was all Samaritans. Thus, Peter and John were sent.

**8:15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:** Unleashed in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost was a power that brought the most far-reaching changes in history. This power was given for a specific purpose. Jesus said, "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*" Acts 1:8. If the purpose of the Holy Spirit's outpouring is to help believers be effective in building the kingdom, it is vital that we understand that this power is needed for the body of Christ. This was a crucial moment in the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church and the apostles. Therefore, Peter and John had come down from Jerusalem and prayed that the Samaritan believers receive the Holy Ghost.

**8:16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)—** The Samaritan believers had been water baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but as yet the Holy Spirit had fallen on none of them. Water baptism is the outward sign of new birth, Holy Spirit baptism is the inward sign of new birth; water baptism immerses a person completely in water, the Holy Spirit baptism immerses a person spiritually in the body of Christ. The first instance of the Holy Spirit's coming upon a group of individuals was in the Upper Room with the one hundred and twenty. In this instance, they were Jews; these Samaritans were not present. Thus Peter and John bring the power of Pentecost to another group of people. They were to go beyond the Upper Room. This will occur twice again in this transition period of Acts: at the household of Cornelius when Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 10) and when the disciples of John the Baptist receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19).

**8:17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.** Peter and John after praying laid hands upon the Samaritan believers to receive the Spirit's Baptism. This does not mean that this is the only way to receive, for no hands were laid on those at Pentecost or at the house of Cornelius. However, in the case of Saul, Ananias (an ordinary believer) laid hands upon Saul and his natural and his spiritual eyes were opened, and he was *"filled with the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 9:17); *"...he received sight... and arose and was baptized"* Acts 9:18. His water baptism came after the infilling. These new Samaritan believers did receive the Spirit's power for service.

**8:18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,—** Simon is a sorcerer observing all that's being done; he was fascinated as he viewed all that the apostles had done. He found something so extraordinary in this gift of the Spirit that he immediately wanted the authority to impart the gift himself. He had already witnessed demon expulsions and healings, but this was markedly different. He saw something different that He now offers money; he wanted to buy this gift; he wanted the apostles to lay hands on him so he could receive this gift of the Holy Ghost.

**8:19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.** Simon wanted to do as the apostles did; he wanted to lay hands on others, and he wanted this recognition! He doesn't say *'lay your hands on me'*, no, but he says *"give me this power that on whomsoever 'I' lay hands..."* He wanted power over people. He wanted people to think that he was important.

**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.** Peter harshly rebukes Simon. Simon only wanted to receive God's power to do what Peter was doing. Peter goes on to tell him that his money would perish because God's gift can't be purchased. Simon surely didn't understand because he still was thinking of the materialistic view; he was still thinking that everything had a price and surely he could buy the gift of the Holy Spirit's power. No amount of money can buy salvation, forgiveness of sin, or God's power. These are only gained by first believing in Christ as Savior and repentance. Every preacher must be extra-careful that money is not made apart of their stumbling block. God has nothing for sale; everything He has is a gift.

**8:21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter:—**<sup>1</sup>Whether it refers to the gospel, or to the impartation of the Spirit, is not altogether certain. In either case, the declaration is true; for it is certain that he had no part in the impartation of the Spirit; and equally certain that he was then under the condemnation of God. And he certainly does not have a part in trying to purchase God's gift. It is a sin. There are many who profess the Christian religion, and yet have no part nor lot in the matter, no part in Christ. They are those whose hearts are not right in the sight of God. Peter seized the situation and immediately diagnosed the problem: **for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.** One act may sometimes bring out the *"whole character"* of a person. We all have to check our motives. Pride, vain glory, and love of money will show up. Simon <sup>2</sup>had become a Christian for the wrong reasons. And he had received baptism for the wrong reasons. He wanted power over people. He wanted people to think that he was important. So, he tried to buy the Spirit's power. His heart was full of himself. <sup>3</sup>Saved men must still deal with sin or it will overtake him in his daily walk; old habits must be put away; his thought process must be transformed by the Word of God. If Simon believed and was a true believer; had a true conversion, he still had a lot to learn.

**8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.** <sup>4</sup>However, there was still hope for Simon. Peter told him to repent. Simon would have to pray to God; would have to change. He could not use God's power for selfish reasons. Peter said, perhaps God will know that even *"the thought of his heart may be forgiven him"*. The thought of the heart, though ever so wicked, shall be forgiven, upon our repentance, and not laid to our charge; if we truly repent. Simon could say 'sorry' to God. But if Simon did not mean it, God would not forgive him. Simon was not even directed to *"pray"* first, but his first indispensable work was to *"repent"*; that is, to exercise proper sorrow for this sin, and to *"abandon"* his plan or principle of action, then pray that this wicked thought may be forgiven by God. God always forgives people if they are sincere.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.studylight.org/com/oca/view.cgi?book=ac&chapter=8&verse=12#Ac8\\_12](http://www.studylight.org/com/oca/view.cgi?book=ac&chapter=8&verse=12#Ac8_12)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/acts-lbw.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/acts/8\\_9-13\\_18-24.htm](http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/acts/8_9-13_18-24.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/acts-lbw.htm>

**8:23 For I perceive** — This refers to the Holy Ghost informing Peter of the exact cause, and not mere symptoms. **...that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.** Peter's perception was that Simon was yet caught up in the bitter gall—root of superstition and his fascination with magic, and sorcery (this was a condition of extreme wickedness), and there was still a bond of iniquity within him (a bondage of greed for money, power and control over other men).

**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 terror-stricken Simon begged Peter to pray for him, but did not pray for himself as he was told to do. If you are rebuked for a serious mistake, it is for your good to admit your error, repent quickly, and ask for prayer. The main thing that Peter wished to impress upon Simon was a sense of his sin. However, it appears that he was more concerned about avoiding judgment than in getting right with God. There is no evidence that he repented and sought forgiveness.

#### NOT APART OF THE LESSON      ACTS 8:25

**8:25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.** The "*they*" here may refer to Peter, and John. They had finished their task in Samaria, they departed for Jerusalem. Philip could be accompanying Peter and John on the way back to Jerusalem. The conclusion of the matter shows that they fully accepted the Samaritans as fellow believers. The apostles are laying their hands on the Samaritans, and they are becoming one with them in the body of Christ. The Samaritan's salvation was a fulfillment of prophecy. Jews from Jerusalem and Samaritans from Samaria were seen as having fellowship as one. God's promises to Israel were being fulfilled.

#### SUMMARY:

<sup>5</sup>In this passage was a sorcerer named Simon. He practiced witchcraft, and because of his ability to exercise control over nature and people through his demonic power, many people thought he was great (**vv.9-11**). When Philip came along preaching Christ it was evident that he was empowered by God, and that Simon started to lose his following. Many of the Samaritans listened to Philip's messages, believed on Jesus Christ, were born again, and as evidence were baptized (**v.12**). Simon seeing this great miracle, and perhaps fearful of losing his following, offered to buy this power, thinking it would enhance his sorcery. In fact he even professed to believe, and was baptized (**v.13**). However, it appears that his faith was not in the Word of God, but in the miracles he saw Philip perform.

When Peter and John arrived on the scene they saw the true state of Simon's heart, and told him in no uncertain terms that he needed to repent of his wickedness (**vv.14-25**). Simon, perhaps fearful of Peter and afraid of the consequences of his own behavior, did ask Peter to pray for him. However, it appears that he was more concerned about avoiding judgment than in getting right with God. There is no evidence that he repented and sought forgiveness. When they had finished their task, they departed for Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel in the Samaritan villages as they journeyed home (**v.25**).

#### APPLICATION:

Simon heard the Gospel, saw the miracles, gave a profession of faith in Christ, and was baptized. Was he saved? "**Power Brokers**"— a person (s) or country that has great influence, especially in politics or commerce, and is able to use this influence to affect the policies and decisions of others. Simon thought if he had this power of influence upon others, no one could touch him. He would be the one others would come to; he would be the agent to arrange deals; for others to buy what he had. They would have to come to him for such power and he would have this power over people. If you always have to go to people to receive what you need from God, you don't have that connection with God that you say you have. God hears you (His child) like He hears the other person. God should be the only one you go to. Yes, there are times God will allow us to go to others for comfort and help and He also has a purpose in doing that. Be sure you are not one of the power brokers but a conduit of power as **He** leads.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/simon-seeks-and-is-denied-the-spiritual-gift-of-healing/>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>