

The Gall of Bitterness...

As Christians, our adversary seeks out ways to cause us to stumble. In his arsenal are ways to tempt us that are very appealing. If they were not appealing, where would the temptation be? In Acts 8:4-24. Philip had gone down to Samaria and “proclaimed to them Christ.” There was a man named Simon who had practiced magic. In verse 13, the scripture informs us that Simon himself converted to Christ and became a Christian. The miraculous demonstrations in verse 17 done by Peter and John outperformed Simon’s old tricks of magic. It appealed to him in his most vulnerable area as a babe in Christ. So, he offered money to buy that power from the apostles. Peter invoked, “Your silver perish with you! Your heart is not right before God.” He was in the “gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

He had sinned grievously and mercy was still available for him. To receive it he must “Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven” (verse 22). It is of great comfort to know that this man humbled himself again, pleading, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

It is also of great comfort to us to know that when we succumb to evil deeds and are in the bond of iniquity, we can also humbly repent and pray with assurance that we will be accepted by God. Peter had told those penitent ones on Pentecost to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins and to receive the gift of the Spirit. However, those are not the instructions Peter gave this man who sinned after first receiving remission of his sins.

The Scriptures here show that a child of God can sin grievously so as to lose his soul if he does not repent of his sin. It is erroneous for those who have different doctrines and have tried to twist this plain truth to fit their doctrine. Some who believe a child of God cannot sin so as to lose his salvation declare that Simon was insincere when he believed and submitted to baptism. However, this is an assumption only, as it is not revealed in Scripture. If that were true, Peter would have given instructions to Simon to repent and be baptized. Instead, Peter told him to repent and pray for forgiveness, an instruction he never gave to an unconverted person.

By Tony Williams
For the elders