

Church of God Sunday School

SIMON THE SORCERER

Acts 8:1-24

Saul was searching for Christians who lived in Jerusalem. He went from house to house, looking for people who believed in Jesus. When Saul found them, he had them thrown in prison. Because of this persecution, Christians began to leave Jerusalem and travel to other cities, "preaching the word" everywhere they went.

A man named Philip was one of the men who left Jerusalem during this time. He was one of the seven deacons chosen to care for the poor, the sick, and the widows of the church (Acts 6:1-5). (A deacon is someone who takes care of the needs of the saints.) Philip traveled to Samaria and preached to the people about Jesus. When the people heard Philip's preaching, saw him heal the sick and cast out devils, "there was great joy in the city."

In this city lived a well-known man whose name was Simon. Simon was a sorcerer (a wizard; someone who practices witchcraft). Simon had amazed and greatly influenced the people of Samaria, causing them to believe that he was "some great one." They were all so deceived that every one of them—"from the least to the greatest"—would say, "This man is the great power of God."

For some time the Samaritans had believed and followed Simon. But now Philip had come to their city, "preaching . . . the kingdom of God." The power of God through Philip's message was so strong that it broke Simon's influence over the people. Many people believed and were baptized. Simon, too, believed what Philip had to say. After being baptized, Simon followed Philip everywhere, amazed at the "miracles and signs which were done."

When the Apostles in Jerusalem heard of the great

work God was doing in Samaria through Philip, they sent Peter and John to help. When the Apostles arrived, they prayed that the people would receive the Holy Spirit. "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

When Simon saw this, he knew he wanted that same power. He wanted to lay hands on people and cause them to receive the Holy Spirit. (Was Simon interested in having the Holy Spirit live in his heart? Or was he thinking of once again having "power" over the people?)

Simon offered the Apostles money for "this power," but Peter rebuked him. He said, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." Gifts of God (1 Corinthians, Chapter 12) are given freely by God, not bought with money.

Peter continued to speak sternly to Simon, telling him that his heart was not right with God and that there was wickedness and bitterness in his heart. Peter told Simon to repent of his wickedness and to pray to God for forgiveness.

At first it must have seemed like Simon was a genuine Christian. He heard the Gospel and saw the miracles, he believed and was baptized, and he followed Philip everywhere. No doubt, when the Christians gathered together for worship, Simon was right there with them. But in time Simon's fruits (words and actions) proved what was in his heart—wickedness!

Instead of praying himself, Simon asked Peter to pray to God for him, "that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." Simon was not sorry for the wickedness and bitterness in his heart. He was only thinking of the consequences (results) of his sins.



That kind of sorrow is often called "worldly sorrow." It is being only sorry because you got caught or because of punishment. True sorrow is called "godly sorrow" (2 Corinthians 7:10). It is being sorry you sinned, sorry that you have hurt God, and determined not to do it again!

The Bible does not tell us anymore about Simon the Sorcerer, so we do not know for sure if Simon ever truly repented. Tradition says he invented a new religion by mixing the teachings of Christ and the teachings of paganism. Some early church history writers have called Simon "The Father of Heresies." (Heresies are religious teachings that are against God's Word.)

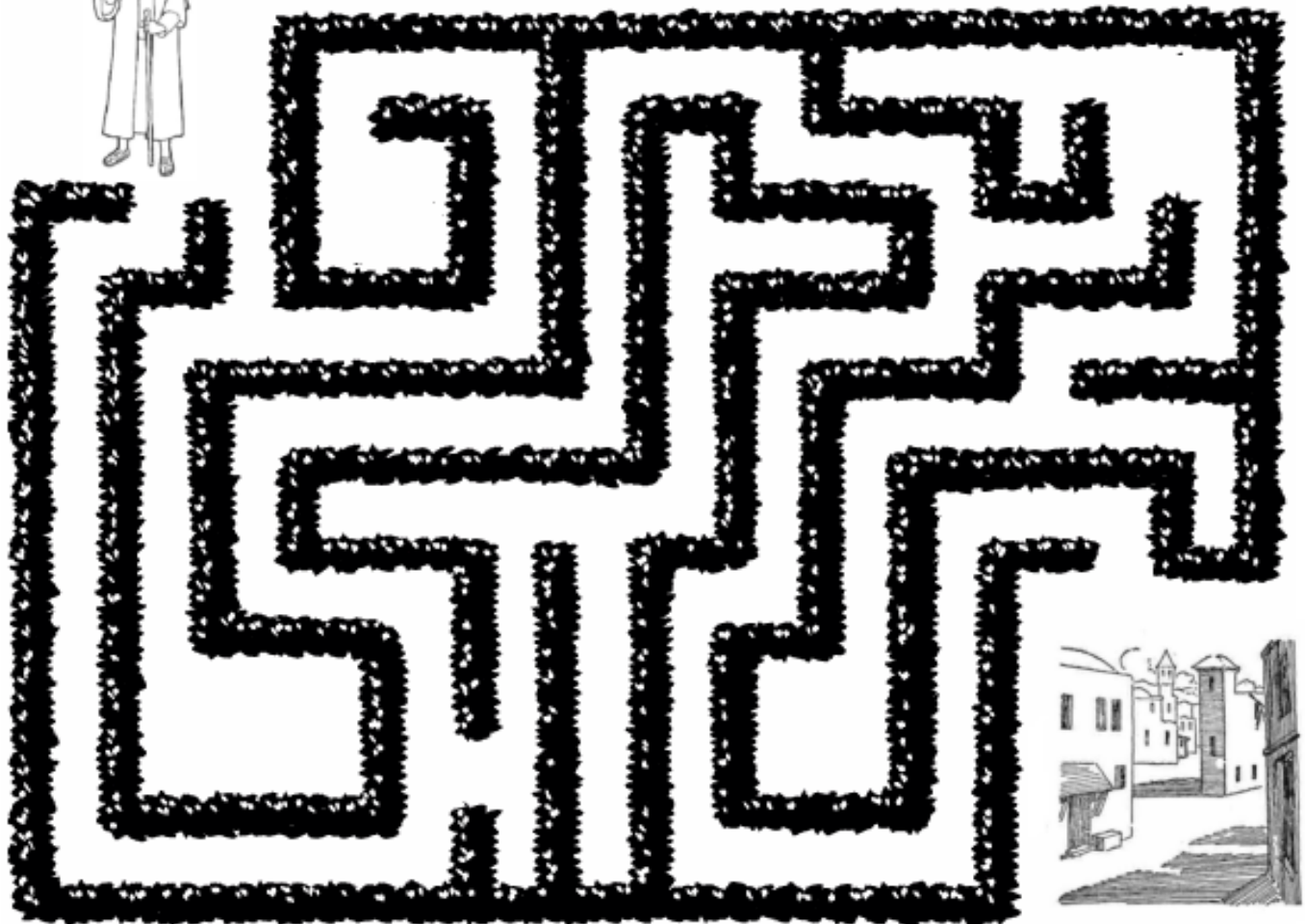
No doubt, Simon remembered the influence and power he had over the people before Philip's arrival.

Perhaps the temptation to once again have this power and influence was too much for Simon to resist. If so, Simon failed to understand that the power of having God's Spirit in his heart, guiding and directing him, was stronger than any power he ever had before. God would have changed him and given him power to do great good for the cause of Christ. Simon could have been remembered as a mighty Christian instead of "The Father of Heresies."

~~~~~  
**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."  
—Acts 8:20*

# Help Philip Find Samaria



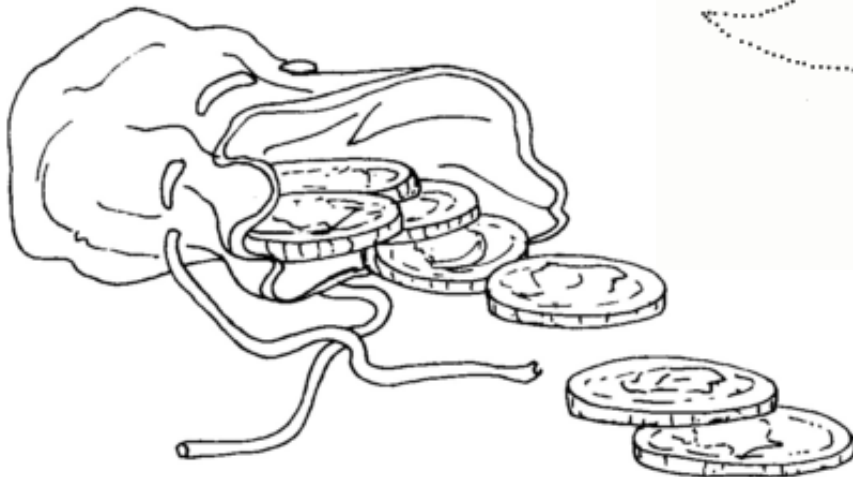
**Philip traveled from**

\_\_\_\_\_

**to**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Circle the two words  
on the map**



**What did Simon offer to give to Peter?**

\_\_\_\_\_