



## BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

**A1718 ~ Simon the Sorcerer.**

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*Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.*

Today's *Bible Adventure* is about a man called Simon who lived in Samaria at the time Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the new church. Saul had some Christians thrown into prison while others like Stephen were killed for their beliefs. This persecution caused many Christians to flee from Jerusalem to find places they could live in peace. One of the seven appointed deacons, Philip, moved to the city of Samaria to teach the people about the Lord Jesus. The Lord Himself had spent two days teaching the people there before returning to Jerusalem to be killed on a cross outside the city.

The word 'sorcerer' means 'using witchcraft or magic' to deceive people. Simon was a sorcerer and tricked many people into believing that he possessed some kind of divine power. He claimed that he was someone great and many people were deceived into really believing that Simon had great power from God. Simon's deception had gone on for quite some time before Philip started preaching in Samaria. Philip healed many disabled and lame people as well as casting out demons from those who were possessed by them.

The people of Samaria believed Philip's teaching about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus. Very many of them became disciples and were baptised. Simon also believed, but deep within his heart, his motive to do so may have been for his own self-interest.

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DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound.](#)

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This account of Simon the Sorcerer is listed in Acts, Chapter 8, and is a warning to all people who say they're Christians that they must really be so; they cannot just be pretenders.

The power that Philip had was greater than Simon's power and Simon quickly realised this. So Simon believed and was baptised, hoping that he too could get some of Philip's power for himself. To what extent Simon believed in the Lord Jesus we cannot say, but it certainly wasn't a deep faith. Simon believed because he saw the great signs and miracles that Philip performed but lasting true faith must be deeper in the heart than just that.

Jesus Himself didn't have much confidence in faith that was based mainly on miracles. In John, Chapter 2, Jesus wouldn't trust Himself to the people at the Passover Festival because He knew what they were thinking in their hearts.

When news of Philip's work in Samaria reached the apostles in Jerusalem, Peter and John went to Samaria to see for themselves what was happening. They found that the Samaritans had indeed become believers and had been baptised, but that the Holy Spirit hadn't yet come upon any of them in power. The Spirit hadn't come yet to Samaria the way He had on the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. When Peter and John laid their hands on these new Samaritan believers, the Spirit came on them with great power and miraculous signs.

Simon saw the power Peter and John had was even greater than Philip's. He thought that Peter and John could give other people the Holy Spirit just by laying hands on them. Simon wanted this power too and he was prepared to pay for it. He was thinking only about his own glory and fame. He didn't understand that people cannot control the Holy Spirit for their own benefit. And he wasn't thinking of using the Holy Spirit's power to serve and glorify God either.

The Apostle Peter told Simon that his heart was full of bitterness and jealousy because these men had more power than he had. He'd fallen into the sin of envy because he wanted only his own glory and not God's. Peter told him what he must do to repent, but whether he did so or not, the Bible doesn't tell us. Only if Simon truly repented of his sins would he be forgiven.

When Simon heard Peter's words, he was filled with fear. He was afraid Peter's words would come true, so he asked Peter to pray for him so that God's judgment wouldn't fall on him.

What are the unmistakable signs of a person completely changed by the grace and kindness of God? If we trust in the Lord Jesus, what should our hearts be like? It's possible to do morally excellent things when we're filled with fear or pride or a desire for power. The Apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthian church, told the people to be finished with pride and boasting. Humility like Christ is the character trait all Christians should be striving for.

Up until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, most traditional churches around the world believed that people who thought too highly of themselves were the ones who caused all the evil in the world. But now in western culture, the belief that is rooted in everything from laws to counselling troubled people is that people misbehave because they lack self-esteem and they have a too low of a view of themselves. Can this be true?

In the past few years, there have been some studies on self-esteem. There's no evidence that low self-esteem is a big problem in society. The studies came to the conclusion that 'the people with high self-esteem pose a greater threat to those around them than people with low self-esteem'.

Using the low self-esteem theory for misbehaviour is an excuse for not having to deal with society's problems. No moral judgments have to be made. A criminal is considered to be the way that he is because he can't help himself. In centuries past, such people were dragged into line, dealt with by the law and society called them bad.

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians, Chapters 3 and 4, gives a third approach to self-regard and a way of seeing ourselves that is quite different from both traditional and modern cultures. The Corinthian church had split into divisions related to which past leader they had been taught by. Some claimed that as students taught by the Apostle Paul, they were superior over those who had been trained by Apollos. As such, they should be given the more important places in ministry.

Such divisions were being caused by human ego and needed to be dealt with. The Greek word Paul used meant 'overinflated or swollen internally beyond its proper size'. The human heart, when not renewed by God's grace, tries to build its identity around anything besides God as it searches for a sense of worth, specialness and purpose. Of course, any substitute for God in a person's life doesn't bring lasting satisfaction, but has the human ego left empty.

Have you ever kicked your toe? It hurts and makes you conscious that your foot has a problem. Normally you wouldn't think about how well your feet are walking. They just get on with the job without drawing attention to themselves. You need only think about them when they have something wrong with them.

The human ego is always drawing attention to itself and this indicates that there is something very wrong with it. It's always assessing how we look and how we are being treated. When someone criticizes us, our sense of identity and self-worth are attacked and our ego is hurt. Our ego or pride wants to live in a competitive world where it can be constantly assessing our rating against other people. If we think that we are better than the other person in some way, our ego gives us a boost and we may even boast about ourselves. But if the assessment is negative, our ego will look for something or someone else to start the comparison game all over again.

This eagerness to be better or more successful than others drives us on to do many more things. Pride is the pleasure of having more than the next person. However, despite this, our ego or pride is very fragile because anything overinflated can quickly be deflated. A superiority complex and an inferiority complex are basically the same. They both result from being overinflated in self-opinion. In every age of time, there have been men like Simon the sorcerer, who have led people astray by deceiving them. Such false teachers are usually motivated by pride and a great love of money. They then try to gather around them as many followers as possible. Simon isn't mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament.

Paul tried to explain to the Corinthian Christians that rather than fight over his relationship with them, they should be thankful that they had known and learnt from him. In those two chapters, Paul showed them how the Gospel had transformed his sense of self-worth and identity. His ego then operated in a completely different way.

Paul had moved past wanting a stamp of approval and the desired verdict that he was a somebody! He didn't care what the Corinthian Christians thought about him. Or anyone else, for that matter! He said he had a clear conscience but that doesn't necessarily mean he is innocent. People who set their own standards to live up to, fall into a trap. The ego will never be satisfied that way.

Paul had reached a place where his ego drew no more attention to itself than any other part of his body. He no longer was thinking about himself but living humbly without pointing it out to anyone. A truly Gospel humble person seems to be totally interested in us because they have the freedom of self-forgetfulness. Such people's ego is not puffed up but filled up with God's Holy Spirit. Things like criticism don't bother them.

How can a person get such a transformed view of themselves? Paul noted that even if his conscience is clear, that doesn't justify him. Each person wants the ultimate verdict that we are important, valuable and right. Other people couldn't justify Paul and neither could he do so himself. It is only the Lord Jesus who judges and it is His opinion alone that counts.

When ego is king in a person's life, then it matters a lot about how each day's performance goes, as an assessment or verdict on one's own performance can raise up or tear down the ego. When the Lord Jesus is king in a person's life, performance and verdict are reversed.

How can this be? God sent His Son Jesus to earth to be our sin bearer. Why? We are very important and valuable to God. Because Jesus loves me and accepts me after I've repented of my sin, I no longer need to do things to make me look good. My motives have changed.

Rather, I can do things for the joy of doing them in Jesus' service. God's verdict about my worth comes before the performance of doing things for Him. The Christian identity of self-forgetfulness that Paul had can be ours today too. If undisciplined ego and selfishness are ruling in your life, you may feel that you are a fake Christian or a frustrated Christian. Pray to God and ask Him for forgiveness and a renewal of His Holy Spirit. Then claim the verse in Romans, Chapter 8, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

*The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.*

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