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a *Grace Notes* course

ACTS 200

## **The Acts of the Apostles**

an expositional study  
by Warren Doud

Lesson 202: **Acts 8:9-25**

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## ACTS, Lesson 202, Acts 8:9-25

### Contents

<b>Acts 8:9-25</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Acts 8:9.....	3
Acts 8:10.....	4
Acts 8:11.....	4
Acts 8:12.....	4
Acts 8:13.....	5
Acts 8:14.....	6
Acts 8:15.....	6
Acts 8:16.....	7
Acts 8:17.....	7
Acts 8:18.....	8
Acts 8:19.....	8
Acts 8:20.....	8
Acts 8:21.....	8
Acts 8:22.....	9
Acts 8:23.....	11
Acts 8:24.....	11
Acts 8:25.....	11
<b>Repentance</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Happiness</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Mental Attitude</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Chastisement</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Lesson 202 Quiz</b> .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

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**Acts 8:9-25****Acts 8:9**

[NASB] Acts 8:9, “Now there was a certain man named Simon, who formerly was **practicing magic** in the city, and **astonishing** the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great.”

**Simon**

This is a common name in Palestine, and it was the name of many men who wanted to be known as messiahs or as healers. There are many legends about Simon of Samaria, but none which have any historical validity. This is the first confrontation of Christianity with superstition and religious fakery, of which the ancient world was at this period full. And Simon was just one of the so-called wizards and false messiahs that were multiplied at this time because of the expectation of a great deliverer and who took advantage of people’s gullibility by conjuring, juggling, and fortune-telling.

**used sorcery**

“Sorcery” is **mageu-**, from which the word “magic.” Thus, Simon used magical arts to fool the people, and he is commonly called Simon Magus.

The English word “sorcerer” comes from the Latin *sors* “a lot.” (French: *sorcier*) The idea is that from the drawing of lots the future can be determined. This is very similar to the analysis of *auspices* and *haruspices*, reading tea leaves, reading Tarot cards, and any other method of trying to answer questions by selecting objects at random and interpreting the arrangement.

The ancient Magi had their rise in Persia, and were at first addicted to the study of philosophy, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, etc. The term “magi” came afterward to refer to those who made use of the knowledge of these arts for the purpose of imposing on mankind, hence the rise of astrologers, soothsayers, necromancers, fortune-tellers, etc. Such persons pretended to predict future events by the positions of the stars, to cure diseases by incantations, etc. It was expressly

forbidden the Jews to consult such persons, on pain of death. <sup>1</sup>

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were “ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers what were in all his [Nebuchadnezzar’s] kingdom.” Dan. 1:20.

**bewitched**

This word is **existanwn** the pres. part. of **existhmi**, which means “to astonish; to amaze” The translation in the NASB is much better, “astonishing the people of Samaria.” The idea of “bewitching” is not in the original.

This is the effect which jugglers, magicians, and spirit mediums have on the minds of common people.

Clarke writes, “The Persian, Arabian, Hindu, and Chinese jugglers are notorious to the present day, and even while I write this (July 1813) three Indian jugglers, lately arrived, are astonishing the people of London; and if such persons can now interest and amaze the people of a city so cultivated and enlightened, what might such do among the people of Sychem or Sebaste, eighteen hundred years ago?” <sup>2</sup>

The strange things that Simon performed were unheard of, and so the people were completely taken in, as we see in the following verses, because they were so amazed by what they saw.

**giving out that himself was some great one**

Simon wanted people to believe that he possessed a powerful force, and that he was directly in contact with some supernatural agency. Verse 10 shows us that he was successful.

The Samaritans expected the Messiah. John 4:25, “The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things.” It may well be that Simon was trying to capitalize on this.

People who don’t know Bible truth are set up to be victims of every con man who comes along. It is

<sup>1</sup> Barnes

<sup>2</sup> Clarke

the purpose of Bible teaching, and the ministry of the local church, to provide information to believers which will protect them against the “wiles of the devil.”

READ Ephesians 4:11-24.

Note: if Simon’s magic was caused or enhanced by demon possession, the demons would have left when he accepted Christ. His body became the temple of the Holy Spirit, and demons cannot possess Christians. If this is the case, it would explain why he was so eager to have the new “power” of laying on of hands, and was willing to pay for it. It also would help explain why Peter’s response was to harsh.

### Acts 8:10

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

**NASB:** “and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, “This man is what is called (**kal ew**)the Great Power of God.”

### To whom they all gave heed

“Give heed” is the aorist indicative of **proecw**, “to bring near; to give heed.”

The people were not only sensitive to the strange things that Simon did, but the fully believed in what he said and did. They thought that what he was doing was real, and they were obedient to him.

### from the least to the greatest

This means that people of every rank and quality, rich and poor, leaders and citizens, paid attention to Simon and applauded him.

### saying, This man is the great power of God.

Some commentators say that the people took Simon to be a deity, but I think this is unwarranted. This phrase could simply mean that they though his power came from God, that there was a supernatural source to his amazing deeds. Barnes says that this statement “means only that they believed that he was invested with the power

of god, not that they supposed that he really was God.”<sup>3</sup>

### Acts 8:11

**And to him they had regard, because for a long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.**

**[NASB] Acts 8:11, “And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magical arts.”**

### And to him they had regard

“This is repeated from the foregoing verse, for the sake of what follows: because that of a long time he had bewitched them with sorceries; or because he had, it may be for many years, astonished them with his magic arts, and the pranks he played in the use of them.”<sup>4</sup>

### he had bewitched them

[same as verse 9, “amazed; confounded”]

### sorceries

[same as verse 9, except plural “sorceries”]

### Acts 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.**

### they believed Philip

“Though they had been carried away so long with this deceiver, and had been so much attached unto him, and held in admiration of him; yet when Philip came and preached Christ unto them, such was the power that attended his ministry, and such the [effect] of divine grace that was exerted, that they not only [immediately] gave heed unto him, but believed what he said.”<sup>5</sup>

It is evident that Philip’s word came with greater power than that of Simon; and that his miracles

<sup>3</sup> Barnes

<sup>4</sup> Gill

<sup>5</sup> Gill

stood the test in such a way as the feats of Simon could not.<sup>6</sup>

**preaching - eujaggel izw**

**the things concerning the kingdom of God**

That is, concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, the church age, the doctrines and principles of the Christian life; and concerning the kingdom of grace, which is spiritual and internal, and which lies not in external things, as meat and drink, but in righteousness, peace, and joy; and concerning the kingdom of glory, the fitness for it, which lies in regenerating grace, and the right unto it, which is the righteousness of Christ. (Gill)

Philip spoke concerning the person of Christ, as the Son of God; and the offices of Christ, as prophet, priest, and King; and the value of His work on the Cross, His righteousness, and His sacrifice, for pardon, justification, and propitiation for sin.

Contrast the positive volition of these Samaritan people, with the negative volition of those who disputed with Stephen (Acts 6). Both groups of people heard the same gospel message. The religious Jews of the Jerusalem synagogues were filled with self-righteousness and loathing for anything that was contrary to their beliefs, so when they responded to Stephen with hatred and violence. The Samaritans were eager for the truth and accepted Christ immediately upon hearing the gospel.

TOPIC: NEGATIVE VOLITION

**and were baptized**

TOPIC: BAPTISM

**Acts 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.**

**Simon believed also**

Did Simon have saving faith in Christ as Savior; or did he only have a historical belief, perhaps, that Jesus was Messiah and that Philip's miracles

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<sup>6</sup> Clarke

were genuine? Many commentators (Gill, Barnes, Robertson) state with confidence that Simon's profession of faith was pretended and hypocritical, and that his motive was to take advantage of the new "power" that he saw in operation. Also, these commentators says that he was able to hide his hypocrisy so well that Philip was duped into allowing him to be baptized.

I differ with these scholars, simply because there is nothing in this verse to indicate that Simon's belief was not genuine or that there was something wrong with his baptism. Robertson states "He was determined to get this new "power" but had no sense of personal need of Jesus as Savior for his sins." But there is no justification for this conclusion; there is no way anyone could judge Simon's heart and mind. The Bible says simply that he believed, and there is no justification to add to or detract from that.

True, he made a horrible mistake in trying to buy his way into some spiritual gifts; but remember that Simon would have been a brand new believer in Christ, no more able to make discerning decisions about what was proper in the Christian life than any other babe in Christ. We know from Eph. 4:17-23 that a believer can have a manner of life that is indistinguishable from that of an unbeliever; and until a Christian has had time to "put on the new man," his natural areas of weakness are likely to be in control much of the time.

**when he was baptized**

**baptizw** – "to be baptized" Simon was baptized by immersion, as were thousands of other believers, beginning with the 3000 on the Day of Pentecost.

**he continued with Philip**

Why did Simon associate himself with Philip? The context shows us that he was just as "amazed" at the miracles and signs that Philip performed as the Samaritan's were at Simon's sorcery. Verses 18 and 19 show that he hoped to master the secret of the apostles' power, so its clear that he was interested in keeping his status as a wonder-worker, and perhaps to maintain his clientele, which had left his false teaching for the truth of the Gospel message.

“Continued” is from the Greek **proskarterew** which means “to be strong towards; to continue steadfastly.” This word is used in Acts 1:14 to describe the disciples who “continued steadfastly” in prayer. Simon was focused and motivated to remain with Philip as long as possible.

#### wondered

The Greek here is **ekisthmi** “to be amazed; to wonder”. This is the same word used in verses 9 and 11 and translated there “bewitched” (in the KJV). This word refers to an “alteration in the normal condition by which a person is thrown into a state of surprise, or fear, or in which a person is so transported out of his natural state that he falls into a trance.”<sup>7</sup>

#### beholding the miracles and signs which were done

“Beholding” is the present participle of **qewrew** “to gaze on; to be a spectator.” The word also implies that the person looking on is paying close attention to detail, thus Simon was concentrating and focusing on these events.

#### Acts 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 apostles which were at Jerusalem heard

The issue here was greater than simply Philip’s proclamation and the Samaritans’ response. It involved the acceptance of new converts by the church in Jerusalem. This is the reason for the arrival of the Jerusalem apostles.<sup>8</sup>

When the news came to Jerusalem, Peter and John were sent by the Apostles, and the same miraculous testimony attended their presence which had been given on the day of Pentecost. The Divine Power in Peter rebuked the power of evil which was working among the Samaritans in the

<sup>7</sup> Vine, W. A., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*

<sup>8</sup> McCalley, Chester, *Commentary and Outline of Acts*.

Person of Simon Magus, as Paul afterwards in Cyprus, on his first preaching to the Gentiles, rebuked Elymas the Sorcerer.<sup>9</sup>

#### Samaria received the word of God

They heard that the Samaritans, who had, up to this time, only received the five books of Moses, now received not only the whole Bible, but the Gospel of Christ, as preached by Philip.

The church at Jerusalem might have heard by a letter, or by messengers sent from Philip to them, to acquaint them with the success of the Gospel; or from some individual travelers who had been in those parts.

Peter and John were not only fellow apostles, but very familiar and intimate companions, who were sent to confirm the doctrine of Philip, and to establish the young converts in it, and to form them into a Christian church and ordain ministers over them.

It was a major event for the apostles for now the gospel was going into Samaria as Jesus had predicted (Acts 1:8). Though the Samaritans were nominally Jews, they were not held so by the people. The sending of Peter and John was no reflection on Philip, but was an appropriate mission since “many Christian Jews would be scandalized by the admission of Samaritans” (Furneaux). If Peter and John sanctioned it, the situation would be improved. It is an interesting sidelight that John had once wanted to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village (Luke 9:51-56), but the Lord Jesus had to rebuke him for his misplaced zeal.<sup>10</sup>

#### Acts 8:15

**Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit:**

The main question here is, what was meant by the Holy Spirit? In Acts 8:20, it is called “the gift of God.”

<sup>9</sup> Conybeare and Howson

<sup>10</sup> Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*

The following remarks may make this plain: <sup>11</sup>

(1) It was not the activity of the Holy Spirit by which “the soul is converted,” for they had this when they believed. Conversion is always accompanied by the Holy Spirit’s working, especially in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

TOPIC: HOLY SPIRIT, BAPTISM

(2) It was not the ordinary influence of the Spirit in sanctification, for sanctification is a progressive work, and this was sudden.

(3) It was something that was discernible by “external effects”; for Simon saw that this was done by the laying on of hands.

(4) The phrase “the gift of the Holy Spirit,” and “the descent of the Holy Spirit,” signified not merely his “ordinary” influences in converting sinners, but those “extraordinary” influences that attended the first preaching of the gospel — the power of speaking with new tongues (Acts 2), the power of working miracles, etc., Acts 19:6.

(5) This is further clear from the fact that Simon wished to “purchase” this power, evidently to keep up his influence among the people, and to retain his ascendancy as a juggler and sorcerer. But surely Simon would not wish to “purchase” the converting and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; it was the power of working miracles that he desired. These things made it clear that by the gift of the Holy Spirit here is meant the power of speaking with new tongues and the power of working miracles.

#### Acts 8:16

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

This expression is several times applied to the Holy Spirit, Acts 10:44; 11:15. It does not differ materially from the common expression, “The Holy Spirit descended.” It means that he came from heaven; and the expression “to fall,” applied to his influences, denotes the “rapidity” and

<sup>11</sup> Barnes

“suddenness” of his coming. Compare Acts 19:2. <sup>12</sup>

Here it does not mean to be baptized by the authority of Jesus Christ, but it means to be baptized for him and his service; to be consecrated by this public profession to him and to his cause. The expression is literally “upon the name of Jesus Christ,” It is with an acknowledgment of him in that act as being what his name imports - the sinner’s only hope, his Redeemer, Lord, Justifier, King.

The profession which they were to make amounted to this: a confession of sins; a hearty purpose to turn from them; a reception of Jesus as the Messiah and as a Savior; and a determination to become his followers and to be devoted to his service. It does not follow that, in administering the ordinance of baptism, they used only the name of Jesus Christ. It is much more probable that they used the form prescribed by the Savior himself (Matthew 28:19); though, as the special mark of a Christian is that he receives and honors Jesus Christ, this name is used here as implying the whole. The same thing occurs in Acts 19:5. <sup>13</sup>

TOPIC: BAPTISM

#### Acts 8:17

**Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.**

Robertson: Laying on of hands did not occur on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4,33) nor in Acts 4:31 or 10:44, nor is it mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:14. It is mentioned in Acts 6:7 about the deacons and in Acts 13:3 when Barnabas and Saul left Antioch. And in Saul’s case it was Ananias who laid his hands on him (Acts 9:17). Hence it cannot be concluded that the Holy Spirit was received only by the laying on of the hands of the apostles or by the hands of anyone. <sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Barnes

<sup>13</sup> Barnes

<sup>14</sup> Robertson

**Acts 8:18**

**And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,**

**Simony** is the ecclesiastical crime and personal sin of paying for offices or positions in the hierarchy of a church, named after Simon Magus. Simon Magus offers the disciples of Christ payment for the power to perform miracles.

The mixing of temporal with spiritual authority in the Middle Ages caused endless problems with simony and accusations of simony. Secular rulers wanted to employ the educated and centrally organized clergy in their administrations, and often treated their spiritual positions as adjuncts to the secular administrative roles.

**Acts 8:19**

**Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.\**

Simon the sorcerer knew that God's power was being demonstrated as the apostles ministered to the new believers in Samaria, and he wanted desperately to have that power and participate in the wonderful happenings, but he was terribly wrong in his thinking, as the next verses show.

This is the whole point with this charlatan. He wants the power to pass on "this power." His notion of "The Holy Spirit" was on this low level. He regarded spiritual functions as a marketable commodity. Money "can buy diamonds, but not wisdom, or sympathy, or faith, or holiness"<sup>15</sup>.

**Acts 8:20**

**But Peter said unto him, Your money perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.**

This is a very serious rebuke. If Simon had not repented of his sin here, he could have died the sin unto death, as Ananias and Sapphira did. If we take it that Simon actually accepted Christ as

Savior, when he believed Philip's preaching, his soul would not go into hell; but he would suffer the final stage of chastisement, physical death.

The phrase "your money perish with you" in Greek, **To arjgurion sou sun soi eiv eiv- apwleian**, is literally "Your silver be along with you for destruction." The verb is in the optative mood, which expresses a wish or desire for the future. This is a wish that is based in reality; men can and do perish who have a non-grace attitude. The natural meaning of Peter's language is that Simon was on a fast road to destruction; but there is still room for repentance, as the following verses show.

The thought is not that Simon was trying to bribe God, but that he is trying to purchase something which by its very nature is free.

Simon has the decidedly wrong idea about the Holy Spirit, His gifts, and about grace. He request contradicts Grace, by contradicting the word "gift," which means "without payment, undeserved." He has no idea about how the spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit; and he does not know that only God the Father has control over what gifts an individual Christian receives at the time of salvation. A person can no more purchase or earn a spiritual gift than he can obtain salvation and eternal life by paying for them.

TOPIC: SPIRITUAL GIFTS

**Acts 8:21**

**You have neither part nor lot in this matter: for your heart is not right in the sight of God.**

**part**

**mero~**, "part; district; region" This word was often used to denote the "portion" of an inheritance which is part of an estate; or, it was used for the "portion" of the spoils of war which would be divided among the conquerors. Since an inheritance often included real estate, there was sometimes the connotation of "region" or "district." Peter tells Simon that he has no right to any share of these spiritual activities.

<sup>15</sup> Furneaux, Wm. Mordaunt, "The Acts of the Apostles; a commentary for the English reader."

**lot**

**kl hro~**, translated “lot; dice; portion.” Of those who were to be partakers in a distribution of some goods, there was quite often a “lot” taken, such as when the soldiers divided the Lord Jesus’ clothing at His crucifixion. Again, Peter is saying that there is not even a random chance that anything of this will accrue to Simon.

**in this matter**

**legon**...= “word” or “thing”...refers to the ministry in which Philip, Peter, and John are involved, the winning of souls and establishing of the believers in their spiritual walk. Simon does not have the apostolic spiritual gifts of apostleship, miracles, healing, etc. Neither does he have any edification or Christian growth; he is a babe in Christ, at best, who has a long ways to go before he can have a productive ministry.

**your heart is not right**

The word “right” is **eupur-**, which means “straight; upright.” This was used in Greek mathematics to refer to “straight” lines in geometric figures. Simon is not thinking straight. He is not motivated by notions of purity, benevolence, a love for lost souls; but he has a great pride, vain glory, and a love for money. He does not have a clean heart or a right spirit; no true principles of Grace have grown in him. His heart was full of covetousness, ambition, and hypocrisy.

**in the sight of God**

Divine viewpoint, versus Simon’s human viewpoint. Simon needs to “put off concerning the former manner of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of the mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. 4:22-24)

God the Father is the searcher of the heart and the trier of the reins of the children of men.

**Acts 8:22**

**Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.**

**Repent**

**metanoew** “to change the mind; to repent”

Obviously, Peter did not suppose his case to be utterly hopeless; though his sin, considered in its motives and objects, was of the worst kind. Compare with the case of Ananias and Sapphira, recorded in the first few verses of Acts 5.

Ananias died immediately upon being confronted with his sin of lying to the Holy Spirit. His egregious sin would have had an extremely bad effect on the Christian community, because it offered a great stumbling block to new believers. Therefore, divine discipline was swift and immediate.

Notice, however, that Sapphira was apparently offered a chance to confess, when Peter asked her whether they had indeed sold the property for what Ananias had claimed. She could have said, “No.” and told Peter the true amount, thus repenting, confessing, and avoiding the sin unto death.

Simon the sorcerer is offered an opportunity to repent, which apparently he accepts (v. 24). At least there is no record of further chastisement for him.

**TOPIC: REPENTANCE****your wickedness**

The word **kakia~**, “wickedness” is an old Greek word that is found in the Septuagint and in Greek literature. Here it is the genitive singular of **kakia**, which means “badness”, from **kako-**, “bad”, and translated “malice” in Ephesians 4:31 of the AV.

**if perhaps the thought of your heart**

“Thought” is **epinoew** “to think upon; to conceive.”

Peter undoubtedly recognized this sin as being worthy of severe divine discipline, yet he does not totally close the door on Simon. Although Simon has given evidence of the sins of pride and greed, it is still possible for him to be restored to fellowship, through repentance and confession. cf. 1 John 1:9.

### Comments on Ephesians 1:19, on the subject of power.

**Eph. 1:19, “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.”**

There are four great words in this verse for the POWER of God. The next time you sing the chorus of that hymn "Power in the Blood", remember these four Greek words. It might be a little hard to sing them with the music, but it's fun to try (quietly, I suppose, lest the parishioners think you're daft).

The Greek words are (**dunami~**), (**ejergeia**), (**krato~**), and (**ijscu~**). Here's the verse again, showing where the different words are used.

**And what is the exceeding greatness of his power (dunami~) toward us who believe, according to the working (ejergeia) of his mighty (krato~) power (ijscu~).**

**and what the exceeding greatness:** pres. act. part. of (**uperbal lw**), used as an adjective, “surpassing; unmeasureable” PLUS the noun (**megeqo~**), “magnitude”. Thus, “what is the unmeasureable magnitude” of His power.

**of His power:** (**dunami~**), “power, strength”

This is a reference to God's inherent power and strength; omnipotence.

**toward us (who) believe:** pres. act. participle (**pisteuw**), used as an adjective in apposition to “us”. An expression of Grace. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

Therefore, “And what is the surpassing magnitude of his inherent power toward us, the believing ones”.

Comment:

- The plan of God depends on the power of God
- The potential of our lives is unlimited because God supplies infinite power to us; the best of lives is available. And of course, when this life is over, we enter the presence of God.

**according to the working:** (**ejergeia**), “operational power, energy, ability to work.”

**of his mighty power:** (**krato~**) and (**ijscu~**)

(**krato~**): power of control, dominion, might.

(**ijscu~**): endowed power, the faculty of power.

Summary of the four words for power:

1. (**dunami~**): inherent power, the omnipotence of God
2. (**ejergeia**): the operational power of God (excludes all human power)
3. (**krato~**): power of control, dominion, might
4. (**ijscu~**): endowed power, the faculty of power.

Eph. 1:19 is a verse of great assurance. All believers are in the plan of God and are maintained by His great power. God has the ability to execute His plan and to make every provision for now and eternity.

Rom. 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

See also Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:7, 20; 1 Chr. 29:12; Psalm 110:1-3; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29; 2 Thess. 1:11,12

**may be forgiven you**

“Forgive” is the future indicative passive **ajfihmi**, “to dismiss; to pardon; to send forth; to discharge” Peter is saying that, with repentance and confession, the Lord will “dismiss the charges” against Simon.

TOPIC: CONFESSION OF SIN

**Acts 8:23**

**For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.**

**gall of bitterness**

This is a Hebrew idiom for excessive bitterness. Gall, wormwood, and such like, were used to express the dreadful effects of sin in the soul; the bitter repentance, bitter regret, bitter sufferings, bitter death, etc., which it produces.

In Deuteronomy 29:18, idolatry and its consequences are expressed, by having among them a root that bears gall and wormwood.

And in Hebrews 12:15, some grievous sin is intended, when the apostle warns them, “lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” <sup>1</sup>

TOPIC: DEPRESSION

**bond of iniquity**

“Bond” is **sundesmo~**, referring to chains or shackles which bind. See Eph. 4:1, in which the Apostle Paul describes himself as a “prisoner” of the Lord, that is “in bondage” to Christ. The word denotes a *close, firm* bond (**sun, together**). It is used of the bond of Christian peace (Eph. 4:3); of the close compacting of the church represented as a body (Col. 2:19); and of love as the *bond* of perfectness (Col. 3:14). <sup>2</sup>

This is an allusion to the mode in which the Romans secured their prisoners, chaining the right hand of the prisoner to the left hand of the soldier who guarded him; as if the apostle had said, Thou art tied and bound by the chain of thy sin; justice

<sup>1</sup> Clarke

<sup>2</sup> Vincent

hath laid hold upon thee, and thou hast only a short respite before thy execution, to see if thou wilt repent. <sup>3</sup> Simon is bound up in his sin, and only God the Father can provide for his release.

**Acts 8:24**

**Then answered Simon, and said, Pray you to the Lord for me, that none of these things which you have spoken come upon me.**

Simon is thoroughly frightened by which Peter has said to him. This is a desperate request to Peter and John for them to pray to God not to bring severe punishment to him.

**Acts 8:25**

**And when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.**

**testified and preached**

**dismarturomai** = “to declare solemnly; to testify; to witness”. This verse show, and this chapter, show how the second phase of the Lord’s commission, in Acts 1:8, was begun. “You shall be witness unto me in ... all Samaria...”

**lalew** = “to speak; to tell” This is a different word from the other ones translated “preach” in this chapter. This is simply a telling of the gospel message, to such interested people as the apostles might have found in various villages, on their slow progress back to Jerusalem. So the NASB has, “when they had testified and spoken the word.”

**returned to Jerusalem**

Peter, John, and perhaps Philip (see v. 26 notes), returned to Jerusalem, preaching as they went in many villages of the Samaritans the Gospel which had been welcomed in the city.

**preached the Gospel**

Here the word “preached” is **eujaggelizw** which means “to evangelize; to proclaim good news.”

<sup>3</sup> Clarke

## Repentance

### Acts 2:38

**Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

This is one of the Bible's most controversial verses; many systems of false religion have been built on it. The most prominent is the concept of baptismal regeneration, the idea that water baptism is required for salvation. Baptismal regeneration is the most widely taught form of salvation legalism, the idea that a person can actually do something (be baptized) to help save himself.

Any ritual involves human activity, human merit, human *works*. And water baptism is a ritual in which someone is *doing* something.

"Works," whatever they are, are not accepted by God as contributing to a person's salvation.

**"For by grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8,9)**

**"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5)**

### "REPENT"

The English word "repent" is from the Latin, *re + poenitere*, meaning "to regret; to be sorry". The Oxford English Dictionary has the following meanings:

1. To affect oneself with contrition as regret for something done or for something inherently wrong, some fault, misconduct, sin, or other offence.
2. To feel contrition, compunction, sorrow, or regret.
3. To change one's mind with regard to past action or conduct through dissatisfaction with it or its results.

You can see that peoples' opinions of what is required for salvation is colored by which of the above definitions they chose. That is, if you choose #1 or #2 you could assume that, in order to properly repent, you must feel great sorrow or regret for your sins.

Now, regret can range from a mild regret to a life-threatening sorrow. A mild regret says, "Oh, I see I've been wrong; I'll do it the other way." A severe regret is a raging sorrow which can destroy one emotionally and physically, as from some unintentional action that harms a loved one.

So, a person may feel a tremendous regret about sin: the offense to God, the effect on others, etc. Or, a person may not know enough about sin, or its consequences, to have much regret at all. For many people, the first they hear about sin is in an evangelistic message or Bible class.

For example, someone who grows up in a permissive family in a permissive society may not know that sex outside of marriage is a sin and has very bad consequences. It take Bible doctrine to know Sin for what it is!

Regret over past sins actually grows as one is edified, as a person gains divine viewpoint and sees real issues in life. If a believer doesn't learn about forgiveness, confession, and restoration to fellowship, he might build up a tremendous guilt complex about his past. This is why it's such a blessing to know that past sins have been forgiven. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Now if "repentance" is "feeling sorry for sin," then how sorry do you have to feel? Mild sorrow or raging sorrow? And how do you demonstrate this sorrow to God? These thoughts lead people into such extremes as asceticism and self-punishment of one kind or another great attempts to impress God, and other people, with the extent of one's contrition.

Another question arises from this, "Will I have to wait until the end of my life, or until I face God, to know whether my sorrow has been enough?"

And, "What about my lack of knowledge of sins? How many sins are there that I don't even know about? How much sorrow must I have about each

type and variety? Must I feel as sorry for gossip as I would for murder?"

The question here, of course, is "works." Can repentance be misconstrued to support a "works" doctrine? Yes it can, *if feeling sorry is made a necessary constituent of salvation*. Just as in all forms of legalism, there is great potential here for bullying by clergy and "informed" laymen.

Definition #3, on the other hand, taken alone, indicates that repentance can be just a mental change that does not necessarily involve emotional sorrow.

To resolve these vocabulary problems, the Greek word must be studied.

The Greek for "repent" is METANOEW, which means "to change the mind; to rethink something." The cognate noun METANOIA, Rom 2:4, means "a change of mind; a conversion; a turning away." Divine viewpoint changes every bit of human viewpoint you've learned.

*There is no emotion or feeling involved in this activity.* Therefore, if we are going to use the English word "repent" to translate METANOEW, we must be certain that the English Definition #3 (above) is meant!

METANOEW, as an active verb, needs to have an object in context. One must change one's mind about something. You might change your mind because of an honest mistake. You bought a Ferrari and now you can't pay for it. Or, you may receive some education, and that changes your thinking about many things.

Repentance is a theological concept we study to explain the mechanics which occur at salvation.

If you have accepted Christ as Savior, at some point you changed your thinking about your sin, your relationship to God, and about the work of Christ for salvation.

Likewise, if you have studied the Bible as a Christian, the Word of God has led you to change your mind about many things.

**That you put off concerning the former manner of life the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,**

**And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;**

**And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:22-24)**

When you decide to commit a sin, you are certainly not thinking divine viewpoint. When you are convicted by the Word of God, and by the Holy Spirit, you have an opportunity to adjust your thinking to God's point of view. This leads to your confession, "expressing the same viewpoint" as God. Before you confess your sin, you first undergo a change of thinking about the sin. METANOEW precedes HOMOLOGEW.

Repentance is *not* a turning away from sin in order to accomplish salvation. A person *is* guilty of sin; he *does* need forgiveness; and he *should* stop sinning. But, victory over sin is a process of the Christian life.

An unbeliever cannot have victory over sin. A person can turn over a new leaf, clean up in a few surface areas, spruce up the facade a little. But who would a person be satisfying. One might fool himself and others that he'd done enough if he didn't have a very good idea of what God's demands actually are.

Sin is too pervasive; there are too many sins. Mental attitude sins, sins of the tongue, open and public sins. You can't turn away from all your sins, even temporarily.

You can see what a vicious circle the legalist is in, the one who thinks he can lose his salvation. If it were possible to lose salvation, assuming someone were successful in earning it in the first place, salvation could never be maintained.

Let's compare Acts 2:38 and Acts 16:31, in which the Philippian jailer is told simply to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

We can see that "believe" (PISTEUW) and "repent" (METANOEW) are virtually synonymous in their application.

Both require focusing one's attention on Christ.

Both require positive volition to the Gospel.

Both require acceptance of divine viewpoint regarding Christ and His work on the Cross.

Both mean that you have information that you did not have before and that you accept a point of view.

Both mental attitudes are non-meritorious, that is, neither involves any sort of works.

The Jew, however, is going to have a more wrenching experience as he turns from his religion to Christ. "Repentance" means that, however much he loves his religion and follows his religious practices, he no longer trusts in the works of his religion to save him. He trusts Christ.

The Philippian jailer has no such hold over his mind. He accepts Christ readily, with no religious reservations. He is simply a man in trouble grasping at a straw which turns out to be a lifeboat.

When witnessing, you only give information, you do not try to get the unbeliever to "repent." That is the function of God the Holy Spirit using the Gospel information you have provided. God the Holy Spirit will encourage people to change their mind about Christ. Whether a person actually does repent depends on that person's volition when hearing the Gospel message.

**Topic: Grace**

**Topic: Legalism**

### REGRET IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There is a Greek word for "regret," METAMELOMAI, which should always be translated "regret," never "repent," because it has an emotional connotation. It means to feel sorry for something you have done.

It is used to express regret for a previous action (Matt. 21:29).

It describes the attitude of Judas Iscariot (Matt. 27:3) He regretted what he had done to our Lord, but he never repented, he never believed in our Lord for salvation.

It is used for God having no regrets about saving people and giving spiritual gifts in the Church Age, (Rom. 11:29).

Likewise, the Father has no regrets regarding the appointment of Jesus Christ as our High Priest, (Heb. 7:21).

### ILLUSTRATIONS OF REPENTANCE

Exo. 13:17. The Jews were not mentally prepared to fight for their freedom. God knew they would change their minds, say that slavery is better, and attempt to go back to Egypt, if they saw war coming. So here repentance means to come up to a new set of facts, be influenced by these facts rationally, and then to retreat.

Jer. 8:3-6, speaking of Judah. When you fail, you don't quit or give up. You get up and move on. When a person doesn't repent with regard to salvation (unbeliever), or Bible doctrine (believer), then your lifestyle is out of control due to evil in your life.

### BELIEVING IN CHRIST: REPENTANCE FOR SALVATION

Salvation repentance is that change of mind which occurs when a person understands and believes the Gospel.

This is the principle of common grace, in which the Holy Spirit takes the message of the witness and makes it a reality in the mind of the unbeliever.

An unbeliever cannot understand spiritual phenomena, 1 Cor. 2:14.

Therefore the Holy Spirit acts to bring about perception of the Gospel, John 16:8-11; 2 Tim. 2:25.

After understanding the issues of the Gospel, a positive volition expresses itself in a change of mental attitude: faith in Christ. Faith in Christ and repentance are two sides of the same coin. A change in mental attitude about the person and work of Christ equals repentance.

Repentance results in faith in Jesus Christ, salvation adjustment to the justice of God. And it is at the moment of repentance that God the Father provides the whole Salvation package to the new believer.

### TOPIC: SALVATION DOCTRINES

Matt. 1:14-15 teaches that first you change your mind about Christ and then you believe. Matt. 12:41; Luke 13:2-3, 5; 15:7,10; Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; Heb. 12:17.

2 Pet. 3:9, God is "not willing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

Growth in the Christian life demands repentance toward human good, Heb 6:1.

Human good is good works produced by any person, Christian or non-Christian, apart from the filling and control of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

An unbeliever, of course, does not have the indwelling Holy Spirit, and cannot be filled with the Spirit. All good produced by an unbeliever is categorized as human good.

A Christian is, at any moment, either filled with the Holy Spirit (spiritual) or not filled with the Spirit (carnal).

The good produced by a spiritual believer is divine good (gold, silver, precious stones). The good produced by a carnal believer is human good (wood, hay, stubble).

Human good is dead to the plan and policy of God, Gen. 2:17.

Human good is linked with arrogance and produces boasting, Eph. 2:9; Rom. 4:2.

Human good is never acceptable to God, Isaiah 64:6.

Human good will not save man, Eph 2:8-9.

An unbeliever's human good will be judged, Rev. 20:12-15.

The believer's human good will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ, 1 Cor. 3:11-16; Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:10.

A change of attitude about sin is taught in Rev. 2:5, 16, 22.

A change of attitude toward Bible truth is the basis for recovery from backsliding, Rom 2:5; Rev 3:19.

### WHEN GOD REPENTS

In the Bible, God is said to "repent" of things. Gen. 6:6; Exo. 32:11-14; 1 Sam. 15:35; Psalm 90:11-13; Jer. 25:3,13.

But God is immutable and does not change. He does not change His mind. Therefore, these passages ascribe to God a human characteristic, in order to explain or describe God's judgment in a

human frame of references. This is an anthropopathism.

An anthropopathism ascribes to God a human characteristic He does not possess, but explains divine policy in terms of human frame of reference.

### Happiness

Philemon 7, "Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints."

This phrase demands some of our attention, for Paul is in prison, he is chained, his physical movements are confined, his recreation is very limited, his pleasures are denied; in these circumstances, how can Paul make the statement that he is not just happy, but that 'he has much happiness?'

Happiness is the situation of well-being or general prosperity of mankind. It encompasses the circumstances of life and relationships. And happiness can run the gamut from tranquility to intense ecstasies, and the term often used in Scripture to describe happiness is "blessedness." Blessedness relates happiness to God and His Plan of grace.

Happiness has many different relative facets:

1. Happiness related to prosperity is described in Psalm 128: 1-4, "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the Lord."
2. I Peter 3:14 declares that believers may be happy even in suffering, "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."
3. Proverbs 3:13 says that true happiness is found through knowing God's Word, "Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding."
4. Proverbs 14:21 states that happiness may be gained from treating others with kindness and

grace, "He who despises his neighbor sins, but blessed is he who is kind to the needy."

5. Romans 14:22 says that a clear conscience produces a type of happiness, "So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves."
6. Proverbs 29:18 states that happiness comes from obeying the laws of the land and that lawlessness and spiritual apostasy accompany each other, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law."
7. Psalm 144:13-15 states that happiness comes from living in a free and prosperous nation.

To fully understand the concept of happiness, we must understand the happiness of God. For God's happiness is unique in the sense that God's happiness is absolute, perfect and unlimited. In other words, because God is perfect He has perfect happiness. And as God is eternal, so is His happiness; God's happiness never ends and has never been diminished in the least and cannot be changed.

And since God is perfect this means that He is perfect Righteousness; thus God's perfect happiness is directly connected to one simple fact: God is never wrong, has never been wrong, and never will be wrong. This makes God happy. Additionally, since God is perfect He is also perfect Justice; this means God is never inequitable, unfair or unjust. This makes God happy. Inasmuch as God is perfect, His love is perfect; this means that God loves the other members of the Godhead with a perfect love and that He loves Himself with a perfect love and that He loves His creatures with a perfect love; this ability to love perfectly, without bounds or mitigation, makes God happy. And because God is Omnipotent, this gives Him an unlimited capacity to be happy. In His Omniscience God's very genius adds comprehension and sharpness to His happiness; in other words, God knows that He is happy.

Finally, in His Sovereignty, in His Reign, in His Supremacy, God has determined that He will share

His perfect happiness with mankind, for Psalm 43:4 says, "Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God." And Psalm 97:12 tells how God shares his happiness with mankind, "Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous [perfect Righteousness given to mankind at the point of salvation], and praise his holy name." And Habakkuk 3:18 states that once the believer has God's perfect Righteousness given to him/her, then the believer may be given anything and everything by God, for God gives to His perfect Righteousness (in the believer) from His perfect Righteousness (in Himself).

The fact that God has determined to give His happiness to mankind and found a way to do it is called grace. And God's instrument of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ; thus true happiness begins at the point of belief in Christ. This is where happiness begins. From there, the more the believer knows about God and Christ, the greater the believer's capacity for happiness becomes. Thus through spiritual growth the believer's happiness may become as the happiness of God: without limit, without dependence on circumstances, or events, or people, or any exterior influence. And John 13:17 declares that once spiritual maturity is attained, the believer shares God's perfect happiness, "Now that you know these things (God's Word), you will be blessed (intense happiness) if you do them."

In other words, God's Word is the source of the believer's happiness, according to John 17:13, "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them."

And sharing God's perfect happiness should be the estate of every believer, according to Philippians 4:4 and I Peter 1:8, which say, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy." And once the believer shares the perfect happiness of God, the believer's happiness cannot be diminished by: circumstances, things, or people, according to Philippians 4:11,12; Hebrews

13:5,6, and Hebrews 12:2,3, which say, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Thus, even though mankind inhabits an imperfect world, mankind can have the perfect happiness of God. And according to I Corinthians 11:24,25, Philippians 1:3, and Song of Songs 3:1, 4:6, and 8:6, the sharing of God's happiness increases the believer's ability to love others and God. Jude 24 asserts that the happiness experienced by the believer in heaven is more intense than that on earth; this degree of intensity is related to the locale, heaven, and not to any limitations on the sharing of God's perfect happiness.

Isaiah 35:1,2 declares that in the future Millennial Reign of Christ happiness will be ubiquitous.

And according to the following verses, II Samuel 1:19,20, Ecclesiastes 9:9, 11:8,9, and Proverbs 23:24,25, the happiness derived from the 'world,' sin, evil, and 'pleasure' is temporary and inadequate. For "the aesthetic age seeks satisfaction through the senses, physical beauty, erotic excitement, through success in any of its guises." And true inner happiness cannot be found through the senses or celebrity.

Ultimately, the truly happy person, the believer who shares the perfect happiness of God, provides happiness for, and is a 'ministry of refreshment to,' other believers and unbelievers. This concept is found in Philippians 2:28,29, Romans 16:32, II Corinthians 7:13, and our verse, Philemon 7, which says, "For I have come to have much happiness and encouragement by your love (for Christ) because the tender affections of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother."

Paul's use of the term "brother," ADELPHOS, indicates that Philemon is not only a fellow-

believer, a member of the royal priest/family of God along with Paul, but that Paul is about to discuss a 'family' matter.

The Greek term for "refreshed" is ANAPAUO; and this concept was briefly discussed in the above dissertation on Happiness. However, the idea commands more attention and more detail, as 'refreshment' is an attribute of those believers that have attained spiritual maturity. Thus we might say that the 'ministry of refreshment' is the realization and function of the spiritually mature.

Paul calls Philemon a 'refreshment.' This means that Philemon is a vivifying and soothing personality to all that interrelate with him. Spiritually and soulishly, Philemon provides refreshment to others. He is a pleasure to be with and around; others seek out his company so that they might be restored by his calm faith in God, by his virtue-love toward others, by his real compassion, and by his doctrinal-perspective toward life.

## Mental Attitude

### INTRODUCTION

As a believer progresses in his Christian life, he experiences many profound changes in his thinking. His standards change gradually but radically; his frame of reference changes; his mental attitude soon becomes very different from what it once was. His previous way of thinking is replaced by the "mind of Christ" - God's viewpoint is becoming his own.

The greatest occupational hazard faced by a Christian is the failure to grow in Christ. Persistent personal sin carried on without repentance and confession keeps the Christian out of fellowship with the Lord and hinders the work of the Holy Spirit in the life.

The normal Christian life is a supernatural life. This life cannot be lived apart from the daily intake of spiritual food, the sustenance which comes with the study of the Bible accompanied by the continuous control and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Inattention to the teaching of the Word of God concerning the mechanics of daily Christian living results in failure to grow in Christ. The

believer who will not overcome these problems will not be able to enjoy the benefits and blessings of the Christian life, and he will certainly not be productive as a child of God.

This article reviews several factors relating to the subject of the believer's mental attitude. First, we note several categories of mental attitude sin which are the result of "not thinking Grace". Then we see the methods by which God arranges for human viewpoint thinking to be replaced with divine viewpoint thinking. This study will also show some of the important results in the life of the Christian who develops a godly mental attitude.

**THE SIN OF NOT THINKING GRACE**

A Christian decides many times every day whether he will follow God's plan for his life. In decisions great or small he expresses either his dependence on the Lord or his desire to be independent of God's direction. A believer has access to the perfect plan of God for his life, a plan which has certain predetermined divine standards by which every situation can be measured, by which every decisive opportunity can be judged. Many promises and blessings are available for use by the person who orders his life according to the patterns laid out in the Bible.

The person who is not positive to the plan of God, and who would apply his own human standards to life situations, does not operate by divine standards. He becomes involved in a variety of mental attitude sin problems stemming from his original decision to be independent of God. His life takes on the characteristics of one who does not "think Grace".

Grace is that characteristic of God which is an extension of His love for the human race and which causes Him to provide for every human need for time and eternity. The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was the Work which made it possible for God to view every person as free from the guilt of sin and as an object of God's Grace provisions.

Failure to order one's thinking according to Grace involves several aspects of mental attitude sin, including the following :

A SPIRIT OF PRIDE -- this is an exalted feeling based on personal success or position, or based on good training or education, on personal appearance, or on some natural gift or ability. Sinful pride is an inner feeling of self-importance which does not take into account God's provision of every resource and quality which goes into one's human traits and capabilities.

LOVE OF, OR DESIRE FOR, HUMAN APPROBATION AND PRAISE -- this is a secret fondness for being noticed and recognized. It is a love of supremacy, or it is the drawing of attention to oneself by various types of exhibitionism or by spiritual one-upmanship.

SELF WILL -- this is the concept of the stubborn or unteachable nature, or implacability. Self will is a disposition to be argumentative, harsh, bitter, which causes one to be a "nit picker" or critical in the extreme, or to mind the business of others, or to fail to recognize the rights and privacy of others.

SINFUL REACTION TO SOCIAL PRESSURES -- these are the sins of anger, impatience, touchiness, or of having a sensitive nature. There is often resentment and retaliation when disapproved or contradicted. This area of sin generates jealousy, sour grapes, envy, and the accompanying bitterness, hatred, carrying of grudges, revenge tactics, and so forth.

Magnifying the faults and failings of others while emphasizing one's own virtues.

NEGATIVE DISPOSITION -- this is peevishness, a fretful disposition, one that loves to be coaxed and honored. It is a dishonest, deceitful attitude. It is a disposition that tends toward discouragement and despondency under pressure along with the attempt to solve one's problems by hysteria and tantrums.

APATHY -- this sin is that of indifference to doctrine and to the Word of God in general. It is indifferences to the lost condition of unbelievers or to the carnal condition of other believers.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF A BELIEVER'S MENTAL ATTITUDE**

The true character of a believer in Jesus Christ is determined by his mental attitude. Prov. 23:7, "As

a man thinks in his heart, so is he". See also 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:1; Heb. 12:3; Col. 3:1,2; 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 10:4,5.

A Christian's mental attitude is not always apparent in his actions, but God always knows perfectly what a person is thinking. Heb. 4:12,13; Prov. 21:2. The following are examples of mental attitude thinking.

Worldliness is a mental attitude. Worldliness is not the doing of something wrong; it is the thinking which takes place independently of God's viewpoint. The remedy to the problem of worldliness is not in turning over a new leaf. It is a change in thinking (repentance) rather than a change in activity. Divine viewpoint must replace human viewpoint before a change in character can be expected. One can have an outward life which appears good, yet be filled with mental attitude sins. Col. 3:2; James 4:4.

Toughness, strength, and determination are mental attitudes. One is not beaten until he gives up mentally.

True Christian inner peace is a mental attitude. It is the relaxed mental state which enables one to enjoy the Christian life regardless of people or outward circumstances. With a good mental attitude, the believer can be joyful, relaxed, and can even enjoy the battle.

Mental stability is the result of thinking from a proper frame of reference, that is, Biblical thinking. The Christian who has mental fear, who is a chronic worrier, who cannot think clearly under pressure, who blames others for his problems, who cannot make correct decisions -- that believer is unstable. His emotions interfere with his thinking. Since emotion always follows thinking, emotional instability will always follow from incorrect (HVP) thinking. But God's Plan of Grace leads to rock-solid mental and emotional stability.

### MAN'S IDEAS VS DIVINE VIEWPOINT

Thinking requires words - vocabulary. Divine thinking requires divine vocabulary. "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Under any kind of spiritual pressure, human vocabulary, or

human thinking, is not adequate. Only God's words can give the ability to think correctly under pressure. The Christian's ability to think correctly is based on how much Bible teaching is resident (applied) in the soul of the believer.

The Christian is commanded to have a new mental attitude. Col. 3:1,2; 2 Cor. 10:4,5; 1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5.

The warfare between two viewpoints in the believer's soul must be fought from within, first by knowledge of doctrine, and then by the application of truth to the life. 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 John 1:9.

Every believer has a mind which is capable of looking at life from God's point of view. Rom. 1:18 ff. Mental attitude divine viewpoint is obtained only through Bible study accompanied by the controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Christian who habitually studies the Word learns to concentrate and to think from God's point of view, and thus he becomes stabilized. The "mind of Christ" (the source of God's viewpoint) is made clear in the Bible.

The Christian can be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" through study, knowledge, and application of Bible truth. By this means his decisions and actions are most likely to be in agreement with Bible principle. And this is the only sure sign of Christian maturity and victorious Christian living.

### THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE

The conscience is located in the mind and is the center for the operating standards of the human soul. Titus 1:15. The conscience convicts the Christian of evil or wrongdoing. John 8:9. The conscience establishes standards for both human and divine relationships. Acts 24:16.

The conscience functions on thinking; and the believer in fellowship has a conscience which functions from resident (applied) divine viewpoint. Rom. 2:15; 9:1, as related to applied Bible teaching. The conscience establishes standards for serving God. 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 9:14. But false operating standards in the conscience produce legalism. 1 Cor. 8:7.

The more the believer uses applied Bible doctrine, the stronger his conscience becomes in using such

thinks as the Law of Liberty and the superseding laws of love and sacrifice. 1 Cor. 10:24-29. Conscience is the basis for enduring mistreatment and misunderstanding without defending oneself. 1 Pet. 2:19; 3:16. The conscience can be damaged or destroyed with false doctrine and with a callused soul. 1 Tim. 4:1,2.

### THE MECHANICS OF REPLACING HUMAN VIEWPOINT WITH DIVINE VIEWPOINT

The Christian life is a supernatural life and cannot be lived without the filling of the Holy Spirit and the daily function of applied Bible teaching. Rom. 8:2; 7:6; Gal. 5:25; Eph. 5:18. All changes must come from within, and the Holy Spirit must originate divine good by applying doctrine to the life.

We begin a change of viewpoint at the moment of salvation. At that time we changed our mental attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 3:19. That was repentance and faith, and it resulted in our regeneration. John 3:16. At that moment many benefits were made available to us, blessings and promises from God which enable us to live in a manner which is both acceptable to the Lord and which also produces great happiness for us. We are given the ability to think those things which will bring honor to the Lord. Eph. 5:18; 4:23; Col. 3:2.

The choice of whether to make use of the divine operating assets is made by the believer every day. The power of our walk with the Lord depends on Bible teaching, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the believer's positive volition. Daily Bible teaching under the controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit builds up divine standards in the human soul and conscience. 1 Tim. 1:5,19; 3:9.

### THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A PROPER MENTAL ATTITUDE

With the proper mental attitude, the Christian will have victory, peace, power, and mental stability. Phil. 2:5; 2 Tim. 1:7. The Christian can experience perfect inner peace, ever during times of difficulty and suffering. Phil. 4:7. Inner peace comes from what we think. Isa. 26:3. Divine viewpoint brings mental stability and eliminates discouragement, anxiety, instability, fearfulness,

and double-mindedness. Stability of mind and character is a mental attitude of strength.

The believer with divine viewpoint has a gracious attitude toward others. He is a mature believer characterized by mental attitude love who is a channel of the Grace of God. Deut. 6:5; 11:13. A mental attitude from DVP produces confidences based on absolute values and standards. 2 Cor. 5:1,6,8.

### MENTAL ATTITUDE AND THE BELIEVER'S MINISTRY

The mature believer "thinks Grace", which is the "mind of Christ". Therefore, the Christian's life and personality are characterized by many of the qualities of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 5:22 ff. In every one of these characteristics the Christian has one basic ingredient - correct thinking according to divine viewpoint. 1 Pet. 3:8

Therefore, the mature believer is gentle, compassionate, caring, and has a gracious attitude toward others. These are essential life qualities in any believer who is a good witness for Christ. With these qualities, and with the knowledge of the Word of God being acquired on the way to maturity, the believer cannot help but be an outstanding witness for Christ and a skilful practitioner in the use of his spiritual gifts.

### Chastisement

#### INTRODUCTION

Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, whether it is an individual, a city or community, or a nation. Because God loves the whole world, there has always been a lot of chastening going on. The history of the Jews as a nation is, in part, a story of the cycles of discipline and recovery they experienced throughout all their generations. There are many parallel lessons to be learned by individual believers regarding the way the Lord handles the individual and nation in Grace when either is disobedient.

### CHASTISEMENT (DIVINE DISCIPLINE) OF THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER

Chastisement of individuals is for believers only (HEB. 12:5). God's discipline is based on love, and when a believer is out of fellowship, discipline is aimed at only one thing, to get the believer to acknowledge his sin to God, to confess in order to be restored to fellowship (HEB. 12:6).

Discipline never means a loss of salvation (GAL. 3:26; HEB. 12:6). Divine discipline is chastisement for sins of the believer in the immediate context of the sin that was committed. And discipline is removed by Biblical confession of sin (1 JOHN 1:9; 1 COR. 11:31), "...if we judge ourselves...".

Suffering may well be part of the chastisement, and confession does not remove the suffering. However, when suffering continues after the believer has been restored to fellowship, the cursing is turned to blessing; that is, the suffering is for a positive purpose.

If a believer continues in sin and refuses to repent and confess, the chastisement will become more and more severe. Certain sins bring compounded discipline, particularly those in which the believer is acting as a stumbling block to others (MATT. 7:1-12). In extreme cases, the believer could suffer the Sin Unto Death. However, all chastisement is confined to time; there will be no discipline for believers in eternity (REV. 21:4)

The believer can avoid divine discipline through a consistent exercise of the principles of Christian living outlined in the Word of God, as illustrated by the passage in HEB. 12:1-6.

Confession is equivalent to "laying aside the weight" of HEB. 12:1. The result is production and the fruit of the Spirit. The phrase "...let us run with patience" refers to the Faith-Rest life. This is Faith-Patience, also spoken of in JAMES 1.

The next recovery principle is Occupation with Christ, the "looking unto Jesus..." of HEB. 12:2. Then, avoid sins of the mind; avoid becoming "wearied", a reference to mental depression resulting from sin in HEB. 12:3. If any of the following are harbored continually, mental illness can result: A guilt complex; bitterness or hatred

toward others; jealousy or envy; fear about the present or future; anxiety or worry about little things; desire for revenge; arrogance; judging another or running him down to others.

HEB. 12:4 refers to having victory over the Sin Nature. Confess, keep moving, separate from the sin, grow up in Christ, stand on Grace principles, exercise Faith-Rest, rely on positional truth.

Live in the Word, HEB. 12:5.

Divine discipline is designed to restrain us from sin and to teach us lessons which will result in growth (HEB. 12:11).

### DIVINE DISCIPLINE FOR A NATION

The Bible has many examples of divine discipline being brought against communities or nations. The most dramatic discipline of a city occurred at Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed the cities and their inhabitants at one stroke. There had not been even a remnant of faithful people there in order to preserve the cities from final judgment. Even Lot and his family protested against having to leave.

Another example is the destruction of heathen Jericho in which all inhabitants were killed except for Rahab and her family. Rahab obviously had positive volition toward the Gospel, and her family enjoyed blessing by association in their narrow escape.

As the individual goes, so goes the nation. In order for a nation to avoid divine discipline, there must be at least some of its citizens who live in fellowship with the Lord. A question arises as to how many positive believers constitute a remnant, a "quorum". The answer is that at least some of the citizenry and some of the political leadership of a nation must be faithful believers and have enough influence to maintain the Divine Institutions in that nation. It's possible that the remnant could be very small if it is composed of the most influential and powerful citizens, such as kings, presidents, or other top political and business leaders. In a democracy, the remnant would probably have to be fairly large in order to have divine viewpoint influence in elections.

The key is this: in order for a nation to survive there must be freedom and morality. These are

vital for the preservation of national integrity and for the maintaining of the Divine Institutions of volition, marriage, family, and nationalism.

There must be freedom so that the Word of God can be taught clearly and every citizen be given a chance to decide on issues of salvation and Christian living. People need freedom so that, under positive volition to the Word of God, they can keep their marriages and their families together. Families and nations are a part of God's plan for the human race. Satan's program is immorality, family breakup, and internationalism. The Divine Institutions were given to preserve the human race after the Fall and to protect the nations from the inroads of Satan's program.

There must be morality in order to protect people from criminality, disease, and the other consequences of unchecked sinfulness. In particular, the institutions of marriage and the family are very much dependent on a high level of morality in the community so that parents can maintain positive momentum for long periods of time while they are training and nurturing their children. It is the breakdown of morality which is the first and most obvious indication that both the individual and the nation are in trouble.

**THE FIVE CYCLES OF DISCIPLINE - LEVITICUS 26**

The five "cycles" of discipline refer to the five levels, or increments, of chastisement which God brings on a nation which steadfastly refuses to repent of its immorality and live according to God's plan. When a nation at first very subtly begins to drift away from the Lord, indicated by a laxness in morality in many of its citizens and an indifference to the Word of God, the Lord begins the discipline with relatively gentle reminders in the form of a loss of peace, a reduction in prosperity, and so forth. At the other end of the scale, God allows the complete destruction of a nation which has defiantly ignored all levels of discipline. This destruction is analogous to the Sin Unto Death suffered by an individual who is intractable in his defiance of God (Nadab and Abihu, Saul, Ananias and Sapphira).

At this point you should read LEVITICUS 26:14-29. That chapter provides a concise outline of

God's warnings about the levels of punishment He will bring on the nation of Israel if they will not turn from their sinful rebellion. Discipline of the nation begins with relatively mild problems, including people's loss of inner peace and mental depression. There will be great fear and paranoia among the people, accompanied by lack of success in business and agriculture, poverty, sickness, and defeat in battle.

Verses 18 to 20 show the second stage of discipline which is characterized by a continued lack of fellowship with the Lord, loss of national prestige and honor, a cessation of God's grace provision for the nation, and a great barrenness in the land.

The third cycle, verses 21 and 22, includes great plagues, no control over natural enemies, a general inability to subdue the earth, the death of children, and the beginnings of great desolation among the people.

In verses 23-26 chastisement becomes severe, with increased attacks by enemies, invasions by foreign powers. There is extreme economic adversity and poor productivity, even in the production of necessities, resulting in famine. Some national sovereignty remains, but invaders have ever-widening influence in all areas of life. There are increases in plagues and disease.

The fifth cycle of discipline involves complete loss of personal and national sovereignty, the destruction of the family and the nation. Offerings to God are unacceptable. Nations which have undergone this destruction have experienced slavery, cannibalism, and the assimilation of its surviving citizens into other cultures.

**SEEDS OF NATIONAL DESTRUCTION, GENESIS 11**

The people of Babel, in defiance of God, thought they could construct a better society, a more secure, more compatible, more idealistic community. Their volitional defiance of God began at the grass roots level, "They said to one another..."; then they united in an effort to organize their society under agreed-upon principles. They had a complete disregard for God; there was no communication between God

<b>The Acts of the Apostles</b>	Page <b>23</b>
<b>ACTS 200, Lesson 202, Acts 8:9-25</b>	a Grace Notes study

and man. They refused divine viewpoint and the commandment to go throughout the world and multiply.

During the Age of the Jews there were many examples of national discipline. HOSEA 4:1-7 gives an example of the nation rejecting Bible teaching and building for chastisement. They were engaged in false business practices (4:2); there was no application of grace, "no truth...nor mercy" (4:1); they were in a miserable state "languish" (4:3); there was false prosperity "they are increased" (4:7); they followed their religious leaders to destruction.

The whole book of Isaiah, notably chapter 28, was directed at the nation which had rejected the authority of God.

National destruction came on every nation that rejected the Word of God, not just the nation of Israel. Canaan was destroyed by the Jews under Joshua. There was divine discipline on Egypt for refusing to let the Jews leave. Assyria was

destroyed (2 KINGS 19:35; 2 CHRON. 32:21). Babylon, in turn, faded quickly as a nation (DANIEL 5).

And discipline is related to cities as well as to nations, as the following examples indicate:

Sodom and Gomorrah, GEN. 18:20

Jericho, JOSHUA 6

Jerusalem, LUKE 21:24; JER. 5:1

Damascus, ISAIAH 17:1

Nineveh, NAHUM 3:5-8

Babylon, ISAIAH 13:19-21

Tyre, EZEKIEL 26,27; ISAIAH 23:1

Rome, REV. 17:11; 18:1ff

Chorazin and Bethsaida, MATT. 11:21

Sidon, EZEKIEL 28:20,22