**Bible stories of hope**

**Simon – Acts 8:9-24**

Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptised. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money and said, “Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.”

Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.”

*Notes*

Simon was fascinated. This was the real thing! He had been performing conjuring tricks for many years, enjoying the attention, laughing inwardly at those who thought he had special powers, and amazed at how lucrative a little quackery could be. And now Philip had turned up, speaking of a man who claimed to be God and came back from the dead to prove it, and who offered healing and forgiveness freely to all who would accept it. He had seen with his own eyes crippled friends throw away their crutches and walk, others freed of epilepsy and life-dominating fears.

It was a no-brainer. He had seen, he had believed, he had been baptised. He had followed Philip around, eager to learn more. The miracles, manifestations of divine power, had kept on coming. It put his own business in the shade, and no-one bothered following him any more.

One day, Philip’s bosses turned up. They said this was what God had promised, and invited new believers to come forward for prayer to receive the Holy Spirit. What was this Holy Spirit? Simon stayed on the edge to watch.

Wham! Those who had gone forward were all flattened, and rose up speaking praises to God in every language under the sun. Ordinary people. This could turn the world upside down!

Simon could help. He had experience of managing the crowds. He had accumulated plenty of funds. He moved forward and spoke to the boss, offering his help. It was thrown back in his face, with the threat that this amazing power would be turned against him. He backed down quickly, apologised, and asked for prayer.

John prayed for him. He felt an overwhelming sense of peace, dropped to his knees, and cried out, “Jesus is Lord!”

*Prayer*

Lord, help me to see afresh that you are the source of peace, love and hope, that you offer me a fresh start and the power to live a new life. Forgive me for my arrogance, and use my weakness to draw others to you. Amen