

Samaria & Simon the Sorcerer

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[0 : 00] Acts chapter 8, and we'll be reading verses 1 through 25.! Acts chapter 8, verses 1 through 25.!

He dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there.

When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.

And so there was great joy in that city. 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 the divine power known as the great power.

[1 : 18] They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Simon himself believed and was baptized, 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 them.

When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them. They had simply been baptized into 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.

[2 : 35] Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will 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. When they had testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

Well, the Lord Jesus loves to beat the devil with his own weapon. And the devil stirred up a great persecution in Jerusalem against the church that caused the church to be scattered.

The Lord used that scattering to take his gospel further than just Jerusalem. And so wherever they went, into all Judea and into Samaria, wherever they went, they preached, they bore witness to Jesus Christ.

And the Lord Jesus was with them in power and added many to his church. They believed and were saved, baptized, and added to the church of Jesus Christ.

[3 : 44] What Satan meant to destroy the church was the very thing the Lord Jesus used to further advance it. Now chapter 8 marks a new phase then in the growth of the church that Jesus is building.

A new phase in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Because not only did the church break out of the geographical boundary of Jerusalem and go into all Judea and Samaria, but they also crossed the ethnic boundary of the Jews and reached out to the Samaritans who were half-breeds, not full Jews.

A people despised by the Jews for having intermarried with pagans so many years ago and now were a bunch of half-breeds and so had also mixed their religion with the pagan religions.

Well, this was Christ's plan for the gospel to reach Judea and Samaria, Acts 1-8. Indeed, the plan of Jesus is for the gospel to reach and to stretch even further to the very ends of the earth, to all the Gentiles, those who had no Jewish blood in their veins.

Indeed, to incorporate all nations, believers from all nations. But here, the gentle shepherd is teaching his infant church to walk before he teaches them to run, to accept half-breed Jews before they come to accept full-fledged Gentiles, non-Jews.

[5 : 25] They'll get there, but first things first. Let's climb Tower Hill before we take on Mount Everest. Let's see if the church can bring in the Samaritans as equals and then reach out to the Gentiles.

Now, the inclusion of the Samaritans was a huge step for the church at Jerusalem. It may not seem that to us. I mean, after all, we're Gentiles and we just kind of expect to be accepted in the church.

And we might think, well, this is nothing. It was a huge step to the church. It went against centuries of Jewish prejudice that caused them to stay away.

The old covenant that put up a wall between Jew and Gentiles and clean and unclean and they weren't to mix. Now, suddenly, we're being told to press through that wall and to incorporate Samaritans.

It went against their prejudice. It went against even, in many ways, the old covenant itself. And so this step of reaching out to Samaritans really was huge.

[6 : 40] And therefore, the Lord marked it with special features. He did special things at this point. Namely, the withholding of the Holy Spirit as the gift to believers there in Samaria until Christ's chosen apostles came and prayed and laid their hands on their heads and only then did they receive the Holy Spirit quite some time after their conversion.

Now, that's not God's normal way of dealing with believers. Something unique is happening here. Normally, at conversion, when a person turns from their sin and trusts in the Savior, at that moment, they are given the Holy Spirit.

As a gift to live in them and to empower them to live the supernatural Christian life. The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to believers at conversion.

That's what happened to the 3,000 new converts on the day of Pentecost. Remember, Peter said, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

They believed, they repented, and they were forgiven and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. At conversion, Paul is able to write to believers in Rome and say, You, however, are controlled not by the flesh, but by the Spirit.

[8 : 12] If the Spirit of God lives in you and if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

He is still an unconverted man, without Christ, without hope, lost in the world. The Holy Spirit is given to believers at conversion.

That's the norm. But that's not what happened here in Acts chapter 8. Something is different. Something is happening here that wasn't normal.

It's a unique situation. And I say it was a new phase in the building of the church. It marked the inclusion for the first time of the Samaritans into the church.

Now this brings us to the first lesson. We have two lessons from our text this morning. The first lesson is just this, that there is much in the book of Acts that is transitional in nature and therefore is not for today.

[9 : 14] It's transitional in nature and not for today. And if you don't get this point, it will lead to all sorts of confusion from the book of Acts.

You will expect to have living apostles in our day. Where are those apostles? You will think that the Holy Spirit is not given to you when you believe, but at some later date, afterwards.

You will think that the sign of the Holy Spirit's coming is maybe a tongue of fire on someone's head or speaking in other languages or a sound of a mighty rushing wind.

All of this, you see, is a failure to understand the transitional nature of the book of Acts. And it's led to so much charismatic confusion in our day.

They say, did they have living apostles in their day? Then we must as well. Did they speak in other languages that they hadn't known and studied? Then we must as well.

[10 : 14] But that fails to understand. No, this was a special time in the building of the church and God was doing special things here that he doesn't do today.

He was building his church. And how do you start building? You start with a foundation, don't you? You dig down footings and pilings onto solid ground and then you pour in the cement or lay up the block, the rock, because everything else you build on that foundation will rest upon it.

So even though you can't see it, it's important how it's to be built. But once you've built the foundation, you don't keep building the foundation. No, that's just the first stage of construction.

You then go on to the superstructure that rests upon the foundation. Now the Bible tells us that the New Testament prophets and apostles are the foundation of the church.

They're the footings. They're the pylons, Ephesians 2, 20 and 21. God's house built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

[11 : 30] And in him, the whole building then is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. The apostles, those 12 men that Jesus handpicked and trained, that were with him, that heard him, that saw him, they are the foundation of the church.

Their testimony, their writings, have been given and remain in the church's possession. We don't have and we don't need living apostles.

We have Jesus' apostles. We have the ones Jesus handpicked and we have their testimony and their doctrines that they learned from Jesus as the foundation of the church that we are now building upon.

No other foundation can be laid. So we don't expect to have living apostles. That was something that Jesus was doing at the foundation level of his church.

He needed an authoritative group of men to be able to oversee the very start of this church and especially during this transitional phase when they were moving from Judaism to Christianity.

[12:48] From a situation where the covenant people of God were mainly Jews to where now the gospel brings in the Gentiles and even half-breed Jews.

And there needed to be men who had been trained by Christ to oversee and make sure that this transition went properly in the building of Christ's church. That's all to say that the Lord Jesus did some things in the foundational stage that he does not do later on when the church has grown of age.

I dare say there are some things that parents do for their infant children that they no longer do for their grown children. Teenagers, did your mother feed you this morning with a bottle and then burp you when you were done?

She used to do that. She did do that. But it's not proper anymore because now you've grown up. And in the same way the Lord Jesus did some things for his infant church that he no longer does for his grown-up church that has a full canon of 66 books of the Bible and an indwelling Holy Spirit to lead us with the apostles' teaching recorded for us.

So this was the infant church taking its first baby steps with the gospel outside of the boundary of Jerusalem. You remember your first baby steps?

[14:12] Maybe you don't but maybe mom and dad have it on video. That was a big deal. They're not videoing you today with your walking, are they?

But that was important. It was the first step. Something significant was happening. Something significant is happening as they take their first steps outside of Jerusalem with the gospel going to half-breeds.

And so when the apostles in Jerusalem remember these are Christ's appointed foundation of the church when the apostles in Jerusalem because they hadn't been scattered when they heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God they sent two of their own Peter and John to check it out and to confirm the reports that they had heard.

And when they arrived they found something very different. something unusual and it struck them as such. And verse 16 even reports it as strange.

And it's just this that the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them. Here they are they believed they had been baptized and yet they did not have the Holy Spirit yet. Because believing on Christ and receiving the Spirit normally happened at the same time.

[15:32] but that didn't happen here. And the apostles saw that. And so they prayed and they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

And when the Holy Spirit came upon these believers there was some visible evidence of it. It was something that could be seen.

Now at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came with the external signs of the sound of a mighty rushing wind of flames of fire that sat on their heads. They were given the ability to speak in other languages that they had not spoken or learned.

Those were visible signs that showed something supernatural has happened here. The Spirit of God has come as promised. Now we're not told what the spiritual or what the visible sign of the Spirit was here.

We just are told that Simon saw it and was so amazed at it that he offered money to be able to do the same himself. So there's something visible that could be seen or heard.

[16:42] A clue to what happened may be seen later in chapter 10 in verse 46 when the gospel was first accepted among a group of Gentiles. That's the next step outside of Jerusalem.

Then Samaria and then into a Gentile home Cornelius. And what happened when they believed? Well the Holy Spirit came upon them and what did they do?

They spoke in other languages just as had happened to the Jewish believers when the Spirit of God first came upon them on the day of Pentecost for the first time.

Again you see a message is being sent these people are no less equal citizens of the kingdom than you Jews. Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?

Yes. Now look at the hands of the apostles these too have received the Holy Spirit. They are equals brothers sisters in the church of Jesus Christ led by the foundational apostles.

[17:49] Christ is signaling the full his full acceptance of these people into his church in such a way that no one could gainsay or argue with it.

It was kind of like a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the advance of the church now to the next stage of including Samaritans. And by the way that was not Peter and John's decision.

They could no more give the Holy Spirit than you or I could. That was Christ's decision to give the Holy Spirit through his apostles on this occasion. And so the Lord Jesus is marking this big step because there's important lessons for all.

Think of the three lessons. First for the apostles themselves. They're the leaders they're the ones to guide the church in this process of going beyond just Jerusalem and into Samaria and they're given firsthand to see that Jesus Christ himself has accepted these Samaritan believers because he gave to them the same gift of the Holy Spirit as they had received.

And you say well they were Jewish apostles they didn't need any visible sign. Don't reason that way. Yes they're apostles but they're not above needing a clear sign from the head of the church.

[19:14] Peter will need a threefold vision of a sheet with unclean things in it and the voice of the Lord saying rise and eat and he'll say no I've never eaten anything unclean and the spirit and the voice will say don't call unclean what I have called clean.

He's going to have to receive a lot of help before he's going to be able to allow Gentiles to come into the church on equal footing. In fact he's going to need a rebuke from Paul when he starts treating the Gentiles as if they're second class citizens Galatians chapter 2.

So that's Peter and then there's John this is Peter and John what did John do when they came to a Samaritan village that did not receive Jesus he wanted to call down fire from heaven and just turn them into ashes.

These apostles needed to be clear from the head of the church it is my plan this is the fulfillment of what I commanded you to take the gospel as my witnesses into Samaria.

Now receive them receive them see when you put your hands upon them look what happened the very same thing that I did with you. So there was a lesson for the apostles themselves and then there was a lesson for the rest of the church of Jewish believers at the beginning it was mainly Jewish believers and they might have questioned do we accept Samaritans?

[20:40] I mean these guys they've got pagan elements in their worship and they're not full-blooded seed of Abraham what what do we do with them?

And here the apostles the teachers the foundation can tell them no we're eyewitnesses of what happened they are to be included as equal members of the church so it's a critical moment in the advance of the church and then there's the Samaritan believers themselves think of them for centuries they've been hated by the Jews the Jews didn't associate with them they were despised and when they believe on Christ and were baptized how confirming it must have been to have the apostles themselves the handpicked people of Jesus who were leading the church to put their hands on them and at that sign of the approval of the apostles to see the Holy Spirit came and entered them as the gift of God what assurance that we're not second class citizens we are on equal ground with believing Jews believing Samaritans believing Jews what a wonderful thing for the Samaritans and it kept them from just separating to themselves and thinking well we're just going to be our own little thing over here since we're Samaritan believers and we're not going to have anything to do with the Jerusalem church no no it will be the apostles from the Jerusalem church that come and lay their hands on them and through which they receive the spirit we are one in Christ

Jewish and Samaritan believers so God Christ was doing this in a unique way at a unique time in the history of the church for and with good reasons for delaying the coming of the spirit to them so don't make what is unique to be the norm and think that the spirit comes sometime after conversion it was something of a Samaritan Pentecost if you will showing that in a very visible way that whatever their checkered past and present was by trusting in Christ they had been forgiven all of their sins and had received the Holy Spirit just as the Jewish believers in Jerusalem so here's the gentle shepherd carrying his young sheep the Samaritans in his arms to assure them that they are his own so that's the first lesson from our passage this morning there's much in the book of Acts that is transitional and is not to be expected today that doesn't mean we can't learn from everything in the book of Acts

I trust we're seeing that as we make our way through but there's a second lesson in this text and it's that there is much religion that is not saving religion there is much religion that is not saving religion and we see this primarily in Simon the sorcerer today that not all faith is saving faith not all who claim to be saved really are saved not all who take the sign of discipleship baptism are true disciples of Jesus Christ now when we first meet Simon what do we find we find a power hungry man who loved the spotlight he boasted that he was someone great and with magic and sorcery he had the whole region amazed at him listening to him convinced that he was super human in fact they called him the divine power known as the great power and he loved the spellbound attention that all the people gave to him and they'd been giving it to him for a long time and he had them eating out of his hand that's the first look at Simon it's a man who is in love with himself and lived for self and was proud and power hungry well then Philip came to town and spoiled Simon's party he proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ and how he saves from sin and he performed undeniable miracles

I mean there were some who were crippled and they were suddenly healed some who were paralyzed and they were healed there were many demon possessed people and here's a power greater than the demons that causes them to leave even against their own will shrieking as they left and suddenly all the attention you see that had been focused on Simon found another object for they gave their close attention to what Philip said to them about the Christ yes Jesus Christ became the object of their fascination and trust for they believed what Philip said about him and then they openly professed that belief in Jesus Christ by entering into the waters of baptism identifying with him and then we read these words in verse 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized now before you you hold a hallelujah session we need to pause

[26:03] Simon himself believed and was baptized but the question remains what kind of belief is it and we have reason to ask that question as we'll see with Simon but also elsewhere because if we're familiar with our Bibles we know that not all belief is saving belief the book of James especially the second chapter warns about a faith that does not save there is a faith but it does not save and it urges us to be sure we have the kind of faith that does save he says what good is it my brothers if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds can such faith save him can a faith without work save a person and his answer is never a faith that does not work by love that does not obey God's commands that does not keep a tight rein on the tongue that does not keep oneself from being polluted by the world such a faith

James says is dead worthless and will not save there is such a faith James talks about it chapter 2 it's a mere historical belief in the facts of the gospel perhaps the person was raised in a Christian home perhaps attends church all their lives and they're well taught and so they believe that Jesus Christ is God God in the flesh they believe he was born of a virgin that he lived a perfect life that he died on the cross for sinners they believe it they believe he rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven and is coming again to judge the living and the dead they believe all that and they are not saved they may recite the apostles creed and nod the head and believe every one of those truths is real but they are not saved there's nothing more than a historical faith in the facts the kind of belief that the demons have

James 2 19 you believe that there is one God good the demons also believe that and tremble but they are no more saved than anyone else that has just a historical faith they believe the facts to be sure you can have be sure you have more than the belief of the demons a faith in Christ that really saves you from sin that really leaves you a different person this is more than right doctrine in the head it's a personal trust it's entrusting yourself to Christ it's a commitment to him in which you surrender yourself and all that you are to him to save you in life and in death and for all eternity yes Simon also believed and was baptized but not all belief is saving belief some is mere historical belief and then there's the Lord

Jesus parable of the soils you remember the farmer that went out to sow and he sowed his seed and he just scattered it and so the seed fell on all kinds of ground there were four kinds and Jesus talks especially about a certain kind that was the rocky ground soil some of the seed fell in rocky places where there wasn't much soil just a thin layer of top soil and then the shelf of rock right beneath it and some seed fell there so what happened well it sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow but when the sun came up the plants were scorched!

and they withered because they had no root they couldn't go down through the rock so they had no root and Jesus then explains how is this like some people who hear the word of God well these are the people he says who hear the word of the gospel at once and at once receive it with joy but since they have no root they last only a short time and when trouble or persecution arises because of the word they quickly fall away oh you mean Jesus I must follow your commands but that that will get me in trouble over here that might not work with what I want and so they fall away quickly receive the word rejoice in it hurrah for Jesus let's get baptized let's join the church let's be Christians but when trouble comes that cross that we heard of this morning and they must take up their cross daily identify with Jesus and go his way and follow him they're nowhere to be seen they fall away here's how

[31:21] Jesus explains them from Luke's account chapter 8 verse 13 they believe for a while but in the time of testing they fall away now those are Jesus words those are not my words they believe for a while yes they have some kind of belief but it's only for a while it's temporary belief proving that not all belief is saving belief and he's not saying that they were really saved they really had saving faith and then they lost it somehow no you don't lose real faith it just shows that whatever faith they had it was not saving faith it was bandwagon faith it was perhaps historical faith it was temporary and that shows it to be defective not saving and if that's the response when Jesus the perfect preacher preached and that's the response when his twelve apostles preached we shouldn't be surprised to find that that was the response that Philip received when he preached and you shouldn't be surprised that at the preaching and witness of the church today that we find people that they're ready to sign up what do I do

I want to be saved and you look for them a year later and they're nowhere to be found we're told temporary belief it's real it's real not all who are said to believe are true believers now I want you to turn over to John chapter two hold your place here we'll be back but I want you to see that Jesus attached very little value to faith that rested in miracles alone and in John chapter two we see some people who are said to believe just like Simon here and Jesus responds to them John 2:23 and following now while Jesus that is he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and what believed in his name they believed but

Jesus would not entrust himself to them for he knew all men he did not need man's testimony about men for he knew what was in a man now let's just get this straight Jesus always entrusts himself to anyone who entrusts themselves to him whoever comes to me I will never push away so if these people truly entrusted themselves to Christ in saving faith Jesus would have entrusted himself to them they believed but Jesus did not entrust himself to them why not because he saw what kind of belief it was just a belief because of the magic the miracle the supernatural how could you deny it but he did not entrust himself to them because he saw what was in a man he saw what it really was it was not saving faith it was miracle driven faith and that is what we see here in

Simon can't you see that in this whole account and Jesus even said in Matthew chapter 7 that there will be many who in this life claim to be believers whom others thought were believers who even preached and cast out demons in his name and yet to them he will say I never knew you depart from me you workers of iniquity there is a faith a belief then that is not saving faith so when everyone else believed and was baptized Simon did the same what else was a power hungry man to do all his believers were now worshiping Jesus and if he was to have any further influence upon them he would have to join them and having told us that Simon also believed and was baptized it's not a period and then off to some other subject oh no now we are told something about Simon to help us understand this belief he also believed and was baptized verse 13 goes on to say and he followed

Philip everywhere astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw the word therefore followed him means he cleaved to him it's what a man does to his wife he cleaves to her he sticks to her like glue that's the idea so wherever you saw Philip there was Simon like a shadow on him astonished at the signs and wonders the miracles that Philip was doing awestruck he's following him and we're not left to guess why it was not to hear more about the wonderful Savior Jesus Christ but rather to see more of these great signs and miracles of Philip because in them Simon saw that Philip had access to a power that far outstripped his own and what he saw Philip do was the real power of God not his shekinery and magic what he saw Philip do made his magic look like a cheap card trick and he sees it and he's wondering at it and he's following

[36:52] Philip and wondering what would he not give for a power like that how impressed would the people be if I could do these things there's no indication that Jesus Christ had become his new attraction that Jesus Christ was now his love the object of his faith rather we find him still the same power hungry man attracted to Philip's amazing power sticking to him like glue in the hopes of learning his secret and let's be sure of this that people are attracted to Christianity for many other reasons besides Jesus Christ it's not just something of Acts 8 it's not just something that happened to Simon it's happening all the time in Christian America people are attracted to Christianity for things other than Jesus Christ people believe for a while for other motives than being saved from their sin there's a group of friends to be gained!

maybe a girlfriend a boyfriend a husband a wife to be gained! if I join up with Christianity there's money to be made there's fame there's a following there's music there's wholesome activities for the kids there's a logical system of doctrine that makes sense all sorts of things that may attract people to Christianity so that they believe and are baptized but are no lovers of Jesus power thirsty people can thrive inside the church as well as outside the church in fact they often succeed better inside the church where there's a lot of gullible people who are ready to follow anyone claiming to be someone like Simon was doing claiming to have some supernatural power to cast out demons and to heal just remember that the

Lord Jesus says in Matthew 7 that many who preached in his name and cast out demons in his name will end up spending eternity with them that's no sign of saving faith so Simon's power hunger his true colors come out when the apostles come down from Jerusalem if you got any question about what he was and what he is he shows his hand all the more clearly when the apostles arrive and when they lay their hands on people and they receive the Holy Spirit with some remarkable visible sign Simon saw it and could hold back no further and he offered money to have the same power so that when I put my hands on people this happens to them as if the free gift of God purchased by Jesus Christ could be bought with money now the heart of Simon is laid bare and Peter's words just make clear to us what our hunch has been all along verse 20 may your money perish with you have you thought about what that's saying you're perishing okay and may your money perish with you 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 perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart for I can see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin yes he had some kind of belief and a baptism to match it and yes at first glance he looked like just like everybody else in that city who had believed and was baptized but in reality we find that he is still the same unchanged Simon he's still greedy for power he's still seeking attention for himself he's still perishing in his sin he still has no part or share in this true work of God going on there he still has a heart that is not right with God he's still in his wickedness that he has never repented of and turned away from he's still governed by evil thoughts in his heart that showed no appreciation for free grace he's still full of bitterness and captive to sin for all of his religion now his new found religion and his new baptism he's still the old

Simon and Peter says repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart ever the evangelist Peter is still calling on this man Simon to repent and to receive Jesus Christ the perhaps he will forgive you some say it's because maybe Philip or Peter thought that he had sinned the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit others say the perhaps is based on Simon's response will you truly repent and confess your sin and forsake it only then will God forgive you he must humbly pray and pray with true repentance not just say some prayer well did he what was

[42:38] Simon's response well Simon's response is lacking on at least two important counts number one he does not pray for himself Peter said repent and pray to the Lord and he tells Peter you pray to the Lord for me Thomas Scott is right he says many desire others to pray for them who do not humbly!

pray for themselves the promise is whosoever will call on the name of the Lord shall be saved but you've got to call on the name of the Lord there's no praying by proxy that will save you don't ever rest in the fact that a lot of other people are praying for your salvation you will never be saved until you pray God be merciful to me a sinner you must seek the Lord while he may be found you must have dealings with him and ask him to forgive you of your sins for Jesus sake we see nothing of praying for himself and secondly there's no repentance in his response just a desire to not perish he doesn't want to be saved from such sinful thoughts of his wicked heart his concern is only to be saved from perishing notice pray to the

Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me well there are many who don't want to perish in hell I would think that it's most of the human race many who don't want to perish in hell who have no desire to repent and be saved from their sinning because they love their sinning and they love themselves and if they could have heaven and their sins they would but there is no such offer made in the gospel rather Jesus says repent or you too will likewise perish that's the offer of the gospel he came to save his people from their sins and he saves none from hell that he does not save from sinning from its bondage over them most everybody wants to be saved from hell hardly anybody wants to be saved from sin and sinning but wherever you have true belief there you will find its

Siamese twin of true repentance repent and pray to the Lord all saving faith is repenting faith and it's missing here in Simon it's a sad ending to the story did he ever repent later I don't know but it's a sad way to leave this man we found him power hungry and we leave him religious but still power hungry the same man captive to sin in closing let's realize that the Holy Spirit wanted this man recorded in scripture for us to read about let's just think about that for a moment this happened 2000 years ago and it's been written down for us God the Holy Spirit wants us to read about Simon and think Simon stands on this page of scripture as a beacon a beacon saying don't be like me don't be like me be sure you have true saving faith in

Jesus Christ be sure that he himself is your attraction to Christianity is Christ precious to you is he that pearl of greatest price are you denying yourself taking up your cross daily and following him would you sell everything to have him is he precious is he the attraction or is it something else that has your heart Simon's on these pages of scriptures to warn us and if it's something else that has your heart repent and pray for the Lord to show mercy on you today and then Simon stands also as a reminder that wherever you find a true work of God you'll find Satan's counterfeit I'm reading the revivals under Whitfield and Edwards it doesn't matter what revival you read about where there's a true work of

[47:17] God there's always the counterfeit Satan's goddess counterfeits mixing and indeed Jesus has told us that's the way it will always be the weeds growing together with the wheat until the final judgment when they will be separated the chaff always mixed with the grain the goats always with the sheep a Judas among the twelve a Demas among Paul's co-workers expect it that wherever you have a true work of God a true believer baptized you'll also find someone claiming to be a believer and be baptized who does not have Christ as the object of his faith and love but then let's not miss the true work of God that happened in this chapter it's amazing think of this city under the power of

Satan's lies and Simon's deception for years and years and the gospel comes to town and suddenly the whole attention of the city is turned away from Satan's lies and onto the truth as it is in Jesus and they embrace him a tremendous inrushing of Samaritans into the church of Jesus Christ so that now there's great joy in the city their sins are forgiven what a change has come over them and there's even greater joy in heaven there's joy in heaven when one sinner repents here the whole city the whole city repents and believes and is made joyful in the forgiveness of sins and what we're seeing is that Jesus has safely led his church through his apostles through this first step out of Jerusalem and into

Samaria and he's done it in a way that they get it the Samaritans get it the Jews get it that we are one in Christ Jesus it doesn't matter what our bloodline is doesn't matter what our pagan past the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sins and makes us one body of Christ what a glorious picture we have here yes there will be false sons in her pale yes there will be Simons in the midst of the church but Jesus is building his church with true disciples and we have this great encouragement you see Philip is just one of the many who proclaim Christ remember they were all scattered out of Jerusalem and wherever they went they spoke of Christ we're just focusing on one man Philip but all of these believers when they left and were scattered they're all doing the same thing they're talking about Christ so the gospel is coming to many

Samaritans and even the apostles John and Peter verse 25 the last verse of our text tells us that they proclaim the word of the Lord there in that city to these new believers they built them up in their newfound faith and then on their way back to Jerusalem they preached the gospel in many cities of the Samaritans praise God the gospel is on the move it's breaking out of the Jewishness of Jerusalem and into the half breed Samaritans the first hurdle in the great commission has been cleared and there's another hurdle that this will help prepare them for when the gospel goes out to Gentiles and that would be you and me thank God for a savior who is the Messiah for Samaritans and the savior and Messiah for us Gentiles though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow and if you will receive this

Christ he will forgive you let's sing of it in 465 465 in your hymnal let's stand as we sing this gospel invitation together we thank you Lord Jesus for such a promise it brought the whole city here in Samaria to repentance and faith a look to this Jesus and the joy of sins forgiven and we here many of us have tasted and seen just how gracious you are to forgive all of our sins the things that we would blush to speak of and even to remember that you would remember them no more as we look to Christ and they are put under his blood thank you for such a gospel promise thank you that the blood of Jesus cleanses from every sin send us in the joy of having tasted and seen that the

[52 : 33] Lord is good and where there is false belief make it true belief even this day for the praise of Jesus amen amen