

Simon The Sorcerer

No. 234

Introduction.

I. Please open your Bibles to Acts the 8th chapter. I will begin reading with verse 5.

5 And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them. 6 And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. 7 For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 And there was much rejoicing in that city. 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; 10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God." 11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts. 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. 13 And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. 14 ¶ Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." 24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord

for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." 25 ¶ And so, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

- II. As a background for this passage we need to go to Acts the 6th chapter. In Acts the 6th chapter the inspired record states that the Grecian Jews were murmuring against the Hebrews because the needs of their widows were being neglected in the daily ministrations of goods. The apostles instructed the multitude to select 7 men from among themselves to look after their needs. These men were to be full of wisdom and the Spirit. When the men had been chosen, the apostles laid their hands on them. This gave them the responsibility of serving the widows and gave them the power to perform miracles. Among those chosen was a man by the name of Philip. Philip not only helped serve the needs of the widows, but also served as an evangelist of the word of God.
- A. **The next time we read of him is in Acts 8.** Luke states Philip was preaching the gospel in the city of Samaria and was performing great signs (miracles). As the result of his work many of the Samaritans became Christians.
- B. **One of those accepting Christ was Simon the sorcerer.** Upon seeing the mighty power of Philip he gave up his sorcery and accepted Christ.
- III. When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John who laid hands on them that they might receive the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands that the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands he may receive the Holy Spirit. Peter said to him, "Thy silver perish with thee because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money." He then told him to repent and pray that he might be forgiven.
- III. There are several important lessons we can learn from this account of Simon.
- I. **Miracles Authentic** - One lesson we learn is that miracles of Christ and His apostles were authentic.
- A. **For a long time Simon had amazed the people** of Samaria with his magical powers and had convinced them that he was someone great, but when the people saw the miracles of Philip they recognized the difference between the tricks of Simon and the genuine miracles of Philip and believed the preaching concerning Jesus and the kingdom of God. Simon also recognized the great difference and was convinced that Philip was truly from God.
- B. He had amazed the people with his tricks, but he himself was "amazed" by the miracles of Philip. If they had been false, this expert in trickery would have discerned them to be false and exposed Philip as a fake. The conversion of Simon is a powerful, irresistible argument for the genuineness of the New Testament miracles.
- II. **Miraculous Gifts Of The Holy Spirit Were Given To The Early Christians** - A second lesson we learn from this account is that miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to the early Christians.
- A. These gifts are named in 1 Corinthians the 12th chapter. (1 Cor. 12:4-10).

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the

Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

1. Paul names here 9 miraculous gifts that were given to the early Christians.
2. These gifts of the Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in foreign languages they had not learned, heal the sick, prophesy, and do many other wonderful works.

B. These gifts were given for three reasons.

1. First, they were given to reveal the word of God, and to edify (build up) the church.
2. Second, the gifts were given to **confirm the word of God**. For example, when the Samaritans saw the many signs and wonders of Philip they knew he must be from God and accepted his teachings. Without these miracles they would not have known if he were from God or not. (Heb. 2:4).

III. Apostles Could Impart These Miraculous Gifts - A third lesson we learn from this account is only the apostles could impart these miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

A. Even though Philip had the power to perform miracles he could not pass on this power. Peter and John had to come from Jerusalem to impart these spiritual gifts to the Samaritans.

1. That only the apostles could impart miraculous power to others is also shown to be true by **Acts 19:1-7**.
2. The question could be raised here, **“What does this mean to us today?”** It means simply this. Since miraculous power of the Holy Spirit could only be imparted by the laying on of the hands of the apostles that miracles have ceased. When the apostles died there was not anyone to pass on this power.

B. This is in accordance with Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10.

8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. Literally the text read “that which is perfect is come.”

1. Paul states here that the spiritual gifts would pass away when “that which is perfect is come.” The word “perfect” does not refer to Jesus, as some as thought, because the word “that which” are neuter in gender.
2. The word “perfect” comes from the Greek word “teleios” which means “full-grown” or “complete.” Paul has in mind the word of God and states that when the complete revelation of God had come that these gifts would pass away because they would no longer be needed. Perhaps this illustration will help us understand this point more fully.
 - a. **If you decide to paint a room in your house, you need some drop-clothes.** The drop-clothes are needed so you will not get paint all over your floor or rug. But after the room is painted, the drop-clothes are no longer needed. Why? They have served their purpose and are thus removed.

- b. **So it is with the spiritual gifts.** They were removed when they had served their purpose of revealing and confirming the word of God.

IV. Fall From Grace - A fourth lesson we learn from this account is men can fall from grace.

- A. It refutes the doctrine that teaches “once saved always saved.” Here we have a man who fell from grace because he tried to buy the power to impart miraculous gifts to others.
- B. There are some who have challenged this interpretation by saying **Simon was not truly converted.** They state the verb “believed” describes the supposed or apparent state of Simon, not his actual state.
 - 1. One wonders how a person could know that Luke was describing Simon’s “supposed or apparent state.” Luke tells us that the Samaritans “believed.” Does the verb “believed” describe their “supposed or apparent state?” By what law of interpretation does it mean real faith in verse 12 and “supposed” faith in verse 13?
 - 2. Let us read Acts 8 verses 12 and 13 noting the word “even.”

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. 13 And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip; and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

The word “even” indicates that Simon believed in the same manner as the other Samaritans did.

- 3. The intensive pronoun “himself” in this statement “and even Simon himself believed” emphasized the fact that even the famous Simon had come to believe in Christ as the other Samaritans.

C. I am glad, however, that we do not have to depend on this one passage for the truth on this matter.

- 1. There are other passages that help us arrive at the truth. (1 Cor. 9:27; 10:12; Gal. 5:4; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:12; 2 Pet. 1:10).
- 2. These scriptures show a person can stumble and can fall from God’s grace.

V. Restored To God’s Grace -A fifth lesson we learn from this account is how a Christian can be restored to God’s grace.

- A. In Acts 8:22 Peter told Simon to repent and pray that the intent of his heart would be forgiven. This is God’s law of pardon for the erring child of God. The child of God is not to be baptized over and over again every times he sins.
- B. The child of God today can also be restored to God’s grace by repentance and prayer. (1 Jn. 1:9).

VI. How To Become A Christian - Another lesson we learn from this account is how to become a Christian.

- A. Simon and the Samaritans became Christians by believing and by being baptized.
- B. This is exactly what Jesus taught we must to be saved. (Mk. 16:16)

Conclusion.

I. You (who are not Christians) can be saved by putting your trust in Christ and by being baptized. If you are a Christian who has sinned, you can be forgiven through repentance and prayer.

II. Will you obey the Lord today? Come as we stand and sing.

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