

ACTS#6CHAPTER8 SIMON COUNTERFEIT CHRISTIAN

Acts 8:3-25

Persecution does to the church what wind does to the seed

It scatters it and produces a greater harvest.

²On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Acts 8:2

Two things stand out here:

First The reason the apostles were not persecuted in Jerusalem

THE greek and Hellenistic Jews were was .

because Peter was still keeping a kosher home even when

he was sent to evangelize the household of Cornelius Acts 10:9-16

Second: Philip was sent to evangelize in Samaria,

Where the half breed Jews which were off limits to the Apostles Matthew 10:5-6

Samaria prejudice started when Assyria captured the ten northern tribes in 732 BC

The Jews had intermarried and their half-breed Samaritan children were rejected

So they build their own temple

And started their own priesthood.

And forbid contact with the Jerusalem Jews.

And the prejudice of the Jews went internal.

Friend we live in a world of prejudice today.

A few years ago, a radio station ran a contest.

"Just for fun," they said, "when you wake up to the sound of FM-106,

call and tell us the first words you spoke when you rolled out of bed.

If you're the third caller, you'll win \$106.

The first morning, "Caller number three said in a groggy voice:

"Do I smell coffee burning?"

Another day, a sleepy clerical worker said, "Oh no, I'm late for work."

Another's first words were, "Honey, did I put out the dog last night?"

A muffled curse was heard in the background, and the man said, "No, you didn't."

One morning the Disc Jockey said to the third caller:

"Good morning, this is FM-106. What did you say when you rolled out of bed?"

A voice from the Bronx replied,

"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And your neighbor as yourself."

There was a moment of embarrassed silence.

Then the radio announcer said, "Sorry, wrong number,"

and cut to a commercial.

Prejudice and persecution is very real today

Not just for Jews, but for Christians as well..

But God persists because he wants all his people saved

Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. Acts 8:5

And he sends Philip down .

A GREAT RESPONSE

⁶When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. ⁷With shrieks, evil^{E36} spirits came out of many, and

many paralytics and cripples were healed. Acts 8:6-7

The people believed because they saw the miracles,
 Demons were cast out,
 Paralytics were healed,
 Cripples were raised.
 The result was

⁸So there was great joy in that city. Acts 8:8

We see at the same time the Holy Spirit arrived,
 Satan also arrived in Samaria.
 Wherever God sows a true believer,
 Satan will eventually sow his counterfeits.
 The enemy comes as a lion to devour,
 as a serpent to deceive.
 In this case it was a sorcerer who believed.

We are introduced to Simon,

A CLEVER DECEIVER

²Now 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, Acts 8:9

Don't they all.

Our world is full of self made boasters.
 Prophet and teachers who claim to have the answers.
 People seem gullible to follow them.
 Why else in an Arizona retreat would people pay \$9,000 for
 A two week experience to spend 36 hours in the desert without food,
 And then another 24 hours in a sweat lodge
 With the promise from Leader James Arthur Ray to bring them new life.
 However 2 die and 19 were injured

¹⁰and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." ¹¹They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. Acts 8:9-11

Amazed is translated Bewitched:

It simply means astounded, confounded.

They considered him **"the divine power known as the great power."**

He was a counterfeit.

That reminded me of a newlywed who didn't know how to cook,

But she wanted to please her husband.

So at coffee break her co-workers would share some helpful hints and recipes.

One day she asked us for step-by-step instructions on cooking sweet potatoes, one of her husband's favorites. "I've finally been able to make them sweet," she said, "but how do you make them orange?"

You can't make a common tater into a sweat potato.

Simon's sorcery was counterfeit.

It was energized by Satan,

While Philips miracles were real
 empowered to Glorify God.

When Philip began to preach,
 Simon began to loose his followers.
 The people heard the truth
 and believed on Jesus Christ
 became born again and were baptized.

So Simon

¹³Simon himself believed and was baptized.

The question is was Simon converted?
 Just because people say they are a Christian does that make it so?"
 If we believe in a sub-Christian concept of life,
 We receive a sub- Christian type of life.

Was Simon born again?

We get the answer to that question by looking at what was the basis of his faith.
 His faith was not in the Word of God,
 But in the miracles he saw Philip perform

And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. Acts 8:13

And there is no indication that Simon repented of his sins.
 No indication Simon believed with his heart.
 He had a head experience.
 But his heart was far from it.

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. Romans 10:10

You may believe today that Jesus is the Christ,
 But if you have not accepted him in your heart,
 You are a counterfeit Christian.

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. James 2:19

The Demons have a head knowledge of God,
 But their heart is far from it.
 They are not saved.

Simon followed because he was curious about Phillip.

He didn't follow to hear the word,
 He didn't follow to learn more about Jesus
 He followed to learn how to do the miracles
 And gain notoriety, money, and power.

Now the odd thing here is that the Samaritans believe and
 accepted the word of God but hadn't receive the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into^{F37} the name of the Lord Jesus. Acts 8:14-16

why did they not receive the Holy Spirit at Conversion?
 Why did Peter and John have to place their hands on them?
 Well, God wanted to end this disunity between Jerusalem and Samaria.
 And unit the Samaritans with the Jerusalem believers.

He did not want two churches, two temples,
 Two places of leadership.
 He wanted the conflict of the centuries to end.
 There are no half-breeds in the Christian faith.
 We are all children of the same God.

And

A PATTERN IS SET.

What we have now is the way people come to faith.
 First: they hear the Gospel,
 Second: they believe in Jesus Christ.
 Third: they accept and receive the Holy Spirit
 Fourth: They are Baptized.

¹²But 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.

¹³Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. Acts 8:12-13

However it is dangerous to base any doctrine and practice
 Only on what is recorded in Acts 1-10
 This was a transitional time for the early church.
 Once you accept that this is transitional time,
 a lot of biblical problems are solved.

The major change today is that when we
 Believe and receive Jesus as our savior
 We immediately receive the Holy Spirit.
 There is not additional laying of hands.
 Or speaking in tongues.
 Or saying 20 hail Mary's

SIMON'S RESPONDS.

Simon doesn't get the holy spirit.

When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Acts 8:18-19

Simon not only wanted to perform miracles,
 But he also wanted the power to convey the gift of the Holy Spirit to others
 And he was quite willing to pay for it,
 And then sell it for a profit.
 This is the passage that gives us the word – simony.
 Which means the buying and selling of church offices or privileges.
 The making for profit out of sacred things.
 As of 2007, simony still remains an offence.
 And clergy today can be disciplines by the church for it.

There is a lot of under the table simony going on in the church today,
 When a person will try to give something to the church
 Or to the pastor to ease their conscience,
 Or get closer to God,
 Or feel more saved.

Or to get more notoriety.

A form of Simony might be to use the church to gain votes,
or increase political popularity.

Or to meet clients to increase our business.

Its dangerous business.

Annanias and Sapphira lost their lives because they lied about their money.

Paul put a fortune-teller out of business in Philippi and ended up in jail Acts 16:16-24

Paul gave the silversmiths trouble in Ephesus and caused a riot. Acts 19

Jesus cleared the temple and was crucified for it.

Money and greed can destroy a church

And it can destroy a person faith.

How much does thinking about your money play in your faith?

And in your relationship to the church?.

In the days of the circuit riders a minister was out riding one afternoon

and came upon a man out working in his field.

He said: "Fine day isn't it?" .

The man replied: "Its fine for you", "All you have to do is ride around on that horse thinking about God all day long, while I have to sweat here in this field and then walk home afterward. I don't think it is right you should have things so easy while I have to work so hard."

The minister answered: "On the contrary thinking about God is one of the most difficult things you can do. And to prove it, I'll give you this horse if you can think about God and nothing else for one minute."

"You're on," said the man and immediately he sat down in silence. Thirty seconds later he looked up at the minister, and said, "Does that include the saddle?" Richard Fairchild, Not Far from the Kingdom of God.

The early church had its priority straight.

It was more important to preach the word.

Than to gain the support of the wealthy or influential people of the world.

Or to be politically correct.

Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! ²¹You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. Acts 8:20-22

The word Thought in your heart

Here means: plot in your heart, or scheme in your heart.

Peter said

²³For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

Would indicate that he had never truly been born again.

SIMON'S REACTION

At first seems to be correct,

²⁴Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me." Acts 8:24

Even now Simon's prayer is more concerned about avoiding judgment than getting right with God.

A sinner who wants others to pray for him ,
 But will not pray himself is not going to enter God's kingdom.
 You have to pray your own prayer of forgiveness.
 "Lord forgive me for I am a sinner."

This passage shows
 Just how close a person can come to salvation
 Be in the church, understand what they need to do,
 and still not be converted.

Simon heard the gospel,
 Saw the miracles,
 Gave a profession of faith in Christ
 Was baptized
 And yet he was never born again.
 He was one of Satan's clever counterfeits.
 And had Peter not exposed the wickedness of his heart
 Simon would have been accepted as a member of the Samaritan congregation.
 What about you?
 Have you prayed and asked God to forgive your sin?
 Have you invited Jesus to come into your life?
 God doesn't care how we come to him,
 He doesn't care what our past sin have been,
 Or what our present faults may be,
 But God does ask us to come with Honesty and integrity,
 And with a willingness to repent, believe,
 And live a Godly Christian life.
 When we do his arms are open.

If you have not done this weather you are a child here today,
 Or an adult.
 I invite you to pray this pray in your heart after me.

O Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need your forgiveness,
 I invite you to come into my heart
 Forgive my sins, and fill me with your Holy Spirit.
 I want to trust you as Lord
 And follow you as my savior.
 Thank you Lord for coming into my heart.