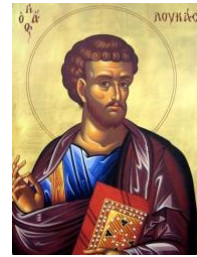


**"Acts of the Apostles: Lesson 15" by  
Faber McMullen, Union Grove Baptist  
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"The Sin of Simon the Sorcerer"



## **ACTS CHAPTER 8**

### ***Christ is Preached in Samaria***

→<sup>4</sup> Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. <sup>5</sup> Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. <sup>6</sup> And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. <sup>7</sup> For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. <sup>8</sup> And there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:4-8, NKJV).

The persecution of the church took the gospel out from Jerusalem. This account shows that persecution was like trying to beat out a small fire on a pasture on a windy night. The embers flew, the wind took hold, and carried sparks and embers into the dry grass of the hearts of the people of Samaria. The gospel broke out into a huge fire and Philip was in the middle of it all. God gave him the ability to do the great miracles we have seen thus far in our study of Dr. Luke's Book of the Acts of the Apostles.

The Bible tells us that all things work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28). The horrible death of Stephen and his reaction to the stoning was taking root in the heart of Saul (who would become St. Paul). Stephen's death was a major catalyst in the creation of the church. God was coming out of his seemingly senseless death. We must never underestimate the spiritual benefit of hardships through which we pass.



### ***The Sorcerer's Profession of Faith***

<sup>9</sup> But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, <sup>10</sup> to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." <sup>11</sup> And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. (Acts 8:9-12, NKJV).

We are introduced to a person named Simon. Simon worked the area of Samaria. He was wildly popular among the people for his wizardry. Wizards or sorcerers fall into two categories. There are those who merely work sleight of hand and do what we commonly call "magic tricks," and then there are others who practice sorcery that involves supernatural Satanic or demonic power.

I want to remind the congregation and those who will read this sermon that believers are to have no involvement with the occult or supernatural evil. Scripture is clear that such involvement is contrary to God's instruction for our lives. Jesus spoke about the "great signs and wonders" that will be used by false prophets and false messiahs that will fool many of the faith.

➔<sup>14</sup> *For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. <sup>25</sup> See, I have told you ahead of time.*" (Matthew 24:24-25, NIV). Paul himself tells us that as history marches on, there will be more and more supernatural displays of power that come from evil sources.  
<sup>9</sup> *The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie,"* (2 Thessalonians 2:9, NIV).



As believers we are to absolutely avoid fortune tellers, Ouija boards, horoscopes, and any such thing. Many of today's video games and cartoons are filled with covert (and overt) demonology, magic spells, wizards, and such). Don't fall for the trap in thinking Satan is not real. Demons are real and Satan is real. Satan desires nothing more than to have people stop believing that he exists. A close friend of

mine who was a crystal meth addict described how as she fell further into addiction with the progressive use of drugs, demons spoke to her on a continual basis. She told me the conversations made a fool out of her and promised her such things as hidden riches and secret blessings, only to never see them delivered. She explained that it was ALL an illusion. It always stopped short of satisfying her need. Satan and the demons baited her with things that they could not deliver to her. She also reminded me that the Greek word *pharmakeou* from which we get the word for pharmacy, is another word used for sorcery. Drug use is closely connected to demonism and evil. It gives an opening to demonic oppression of a believer or possession of the unbeliever. Satan is the great counterfeiter. Nothing he can promise you or give you compares to the abundant riches of your heavenly Father.



Satan has a counterfeit for most of the blessings God gives us. For example, God gave beautiful, sexual love to a man and woman to be enjoyed exclusively in the context of marriage. Satan creates counterfeits

of that precious love. Pornography is a counterfeit. The lie is that it is wonderful and will satisfy a man or a woman's sexual desire. It will not. As I have explained to young men in counseling, it is like drinking salt water. It will not satisfy, but will only make you thirstier and eventually kill you. Drugs may give a euphoria and sense of well-being that is also completely temporary. It cannot and will not satisfy. I once asked a cocaine



addict how he ever dared to take his first hit knowing it was incredibly addictive. He explained to me that he was drunk at the time and when he was offered the drug, he thought, "why not?" He told me "I took a hit, and it made me feel like I had never felt before. It was like having the most intense sexual experience imaginable for fifteen minutes." He told me, "I was hooked immediately." Getting drunk had lowered his defenses, and given

opportunity for the horrific slavery of crack addiction to take over his life. In time he lost his wife, his household, and any future relationship with his children. Satan offered him a lie and he chose to believe it. It was all an illusion, and he lost everything.

In summary, keep your minds sober lest you give entrance to the workings of evil in your life. And always remember you have nothing to fear with demons, demonology, witchcraft, or any other such dark evil. The Bible is clear that He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world. *"<sup>4</sup> You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."* (1 John 4:4, NKJV).

➔ Going back to the text for the day we read, *"<sup>13</sup> Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done."* (Acts 8:13, NKJV).

The text then tells us that Simon believed the gospel and he was baptized. Then, interestingly it tells us that "he continued with Philip." I don't know if he just followed Philip or became a devotee of Philip, but something went wrong in his early discipleship. The text does tell us that Simon was fascinated by the signs and wonders that Philip performed. Let's read on.

### ***The Sorcerer's Sin***

➔ *<sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, <sup>15</sup> who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>16</sup> For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

*<sup>18</sup> And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."*

*<sup>20</sup> But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! <sup>21</sup> You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. <sup>22</sup> Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."*

<sup>24</sup> Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me."

<sup>25</sup> So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. (Acts 8:14-25).

When we read this whole passage it becomes confusing to determine whether Simon was a true believer in Jesus or not. Simon might have sincerely believed, but then he quickly became engrossed in the "signs and wonders" that were happening in Samaria. What happened was that he took his eyes off of Jesus and put them on men and on the powers of the Holy Spirit.

What exactly is happening here? Simon is keeping one foot in the world and another foot in the things of God. When he saw the signs and wonders and the Holy Spirit being given, he immediately tried to figure out how to put this power into his bag of tricks. He was in it for what he could get out of it.

I am not sure, but I believe what we are seeing is a completely carnal Christian. Some have asked me, "How can old so and so be an alcoholic and really be a Christian?" Or, how can someone live in some sort of sin that has a hold on their life and really be a Christian? The fact of the matter is that they can. It is what Paul calls living a carnal life. The believer that lives this way may in fact find themselves in heaven, but their life on this earth will be hell. It will be dry, empty, and will be an unblessed life in every way.



The word carnal is translated from the Greek word *sarkikos*, which means "fleshly." Paul uses this word in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 where he addresses "brethren" so we know he is talking about believers in Jesus. He goes on in this passage to describe these believers as "fleshly." And like Simon the sorcerer, part of their carnality is their devotion to a person instead of to the Lord Jesus.

I want to say that although a Christian can be for a time period a carnal Christian, a true Christian will not remain carnal for a lifetime. The idea of someone "just being a carnal Christian" has been abused. There are some who say that someone may come to Christ and then live the rest of their life in a carnal way. I don't really buy that. The Bible tells us that when someone comes to Jesus they are made to be a new creation in every way. It tells us that the old things pass away and all is become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). James, the brother of Jesus, also makes it very clear that genuine faith will always result in good works. I've taught you over and over in this group that we are indeed saved only by grace, and that any amount of good works cannot and will not get us to heaven. But, the Bible also is clear that the purpose of that salvation is to save us to do good works that God has laid out for each of us before time began (Eph 2:8-10).

Can a Christian, in a time of failure and/or rebellion, appear to be carnal? Yes. But, will a true Christian remain carnal? No. It appears that Simon the sorcerer did believe and was baptized, but at that point he was nothing more than born again. He immediately attached himself to Philip with his signs and wonders, and Simon began to try to figure out how to make profit out of the things of God. This didn't cause Simon to lose his salvation because scripture tells us that once we are truly saved, we are always saved.<sup>1</sup>

➔ In Paul's letter to the Corinthian church he describes the salvation of such carnal Christians. Paul says, "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." Paul the Apostle is in essence saying, "These people will be saved, but they will get in to heaven by the skin of their teeth." We shouldn't be asking whether a person who claims to be a Christian but lives like the devil has lost their salvation, but whether a person was truly ever saved to begin with. *"<sup>19</sup> They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us."* (1 John 2:19, NKJV).

Christians who live carnal lives can expect God to lovingly discipline them (Hebrews 12:5-11), and they will not live a "blessed" life. God will not share the throne of your life with you. He wants to be on the throne of your life. He desires to have close and sweet fellowship with Him, and He wants you to live in obedience to Him. This is all so that some day you and I will be in the precious image of Jesus.

➔ Peter tells Simon, *"<sup>22</sup> Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."* (Acts 8:22-23, NKJV).

A great part of Simon's sin was bitterness. Bitterness robs a believer of the abundant life and gives entrance to bondage. Simon refused to give the pain that he had experienced from others to God. People that are focused on the pain that someone else caused them, live in the past. For them there is no present. For them there is no future. It is all the past. Bitterness was the entrance that Satan had into Simon's life to do what? The text tells us. To keep him "bound in sin." A life of bitterness is the exact opposite of the abundant life that Jesus promises each of us. Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly." Are you living an abundant life? Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at <a href="mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com">uniongrove362@gmail.com</a> or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868.
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<sup>1</sup> See John 10:28; Romans 8:37-39; and 1 John 5:14)

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