

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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THE WAKE-UP CALL FOR SIMON THE SORCERER

Acts 8:9-25

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Two points to today's message:

- Simon saw the supernatural from another perspective.
- Simon could not buy the Holy Spirit.

Continuing our series from the book of Acts, we pick up with chapter 8.

I'll be diverting from a common interpretation of this scripture which is that Simon was not a true believer. Verse 13 tells us plainly that Simon believed and was baptized, so I'll have that point of view as I progress through the message.

**1-SIMON SAW THE SUPERNATURAL FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE**

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 8:9-13

*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,<sup>10</sup> and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God."<sup>11</sup> They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery.<sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.<sup>13</sup> Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.*

**EXPLANATION:** The scripture speaks of several people in the Bible who practiced sorcery, divination, or witchcraft. In Exodus, there are Pharaoh's prophets. Later there is the witch of Endor that King Saul summoned, and there are others. Here we have Simon.

I read some about this type of paranormal vocation as it was practiced in Bible days but really, we don't know a lot about the sorcery he performed, but sorcery itself is the invoking of evil spirits for evil purposes. He amazed people with it, boasted about himself, had a large following, and people confused his sorcery with the power of God. Clearly, this man was a professional in his trade.

Philip the evangelist preached salvation, and many believed and were baptized, including Simon. I want you to underline that part of verse 13. *Simon himself believed and was baptized.*

Some writers believe that sorcery is learned and if so, this means that Simon had a teacher in his past. Now that he had become a believer in Jesus, he had a new teacher, or so he thought...and that was Philip. He followed Philip around.

Simon saw a different type of supernatural happening. Sorcery is always talked about in a negative sense in the Bible. Intrinsicly it is not good. What was it that Simon was fascinated with? I think it was the nature of what Philip was doing. Philip's supernatural works were completely different. His works had nothing to do with conjuring up evil spirits or casting spells, or anything like that. As we learn earlier in this chapter, Philip actually cast evil spirits out of people and healed the lame. And as we see in verse 8, the result of Philip's efforts was joy. No doubt Simon observed this as well. The nature of sorcery itself in the scripture was the conjuring up of evil spirits, but not taking control of them as Philip did. And nothing about sorcery brought healing to people. This was new stuff for the people of Samaria and for Simon.

So here you have it – people who knew nothing about the supernatural other than sorcery and evil spirits and Simon was a proprietor of such, and now they saw the supernatural from a completely different point of view.

When the people came to Jesus, their perspectives changed.

Earlier in chapter 8, we read that the Christians were scattered due to persecution, but the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. Now the good news carried back to the apostles, and they sent two to help.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 8:14-17

*When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. <sup>15</sup> When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

A bit of an aside that has nothing to do with the story of Simon. We see Acts chapter 1-10 as a transitional time for Gospel to go from Jews to the Samaritans to the Gentiles. The purpose for the apostles bringing the Holy Spirit to Samaria was, I believe, to bring unity. After Acts 10, everything changes. We'll talk more about that later.

## **2-SIMON COULD NOT BUY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

In the book of Acts, we find conflict between money and what we might call “big business”.

- Ananias and Sapphira died because they lied about their gift in Acts 5.
- Paul shut down a fortune teller in Acts 16, and he went to jail for it.
- In Acts 19, Paul got into it with the silversmiths and caused a riot.

The main focus of Acts is the spreading of the Gospel even when it conflicted with particular trades and people who earned a living doing something contrary to the Gospel.

Now we have Simon who had been in the “business” of sorcery.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 8:18-19

*When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money <sup>19</sup> and said, “Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”*

Let's keep in mind here that Simon was very new to the Gospel, a baby Christian, perhaps only a few weeks old in the faith. In his experience, money was connected

with sorcery. That's how he made his living.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 8:20-23

*Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup> You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."*

There is a very important principle that everyone needs to see. It's clear to me now, but I have never seen it before: It is important for us to be patient with new believers. They do not know. They do not understand.

As you know, Peter was impulsive at times and said and did things out of emotion. Once he defended Jesus and drew his sword and cut off a man's ear – but Jesus healed the man. In Matthew 16, Peter rebuked Jesus and Jesus rebuked him. Later in Matthew, Peter denied Jesus three times. And here in Acts 8, we see classic Peter.

Let's assume, however, that Peter was full of the Holy Spirit when he rebuked this new believer. If that was the case, then Peter said exactly what Simon needed to hear.

Simon only knew one model of the supernatural, and he wanted to pay to be able to spread the power of the Holy Spirit. Somewhere in our Christian culture, we have this false idea that when a person comes to Christ, that person completely lets go of their past including their presuppositions. Simon was an adult who had been caught up in the work of Satan for years. Verse 13 says that he believed and was baptized. Is verse 13 wrong? Is it a mistake? No, it is not. Simon was just a new believer and had a lot to learn. He also had a lot to surrender.

If a person comes to Jesus Christ as a child and grows up learning the Bible, then that person will have less baggage to let go of. If a person comes to Christ as an adult, they will have more baggage. They may struggle with letting go at times. Do you know what that struggle is called? It's called GROWTH.

Simon could have taken the rebuke as an insult and returned to his former lifestyle. But he did not.

**SCRIPTURE:** Acts 8:24-25

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

*<sup>25</sup> After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.*

There you have Simon’s repentance. Again, as I said earlier, my take on this diverts from what many Bible scholars and preachers believe. They will interpret this as Simon being more concerned about judgment than about being right with God. I don’t see it that way. The scripture is clear that he believed and was baptized. It does not say that he believed in Philip’s miracles. It said he believed in the same language that is used when others believed and were baptized. He believed in Jesus, he had been baptized, but he made a mistake – why? Because he did not know any better.

New believers need mentors who will be patient, will help them and will correct them when they are wrong. With the Gospel spreading as it did in Samaria, no doubt Simon had many opportunities to have mentors and grow as a believer.

New believers who are adults are going to have more baggage to deal with than children who believe in Jesus at an early age and are raised in the scriptures.

The wake-up call for Simon was that being a follower of Jesus is to be taken very seriously and that nothing about following the Lord can be bought.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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