

Introduction:

Simon the Sorcerer of **Acts 8** was like us, a convert who continued to struggle with temptation. Quickly, let us remind ourselves of Simon's story and what we learned this morning. Simon had astonished the people of Samaria for some time with his magic tricks (**Acts 8:9-10**). When Philip came to town, the Samaritans abandoned Simon for the truth. Even Simon was converted (**Acts 8:13**). When the apostles learned about the salvation of the Samaritans, Peter and John traveled to Samaria to impart spiritual gifts upon the new Christians. According to **vs. 18-19**, Simon offered Peter and John money for the ability to pass on spiritual gifts. Peter's response was very straightforward and clear, Simon was sinning (**Acts 8:20-23**). **Vs. 24** indicates Simon not only repented but even asked the apostles to pray for him. From this story, we learned four lessons. 1) Modern Pentecostal "proofs" are nothing new. 2) Real miracles outshine the trickery of men. 3) Christians can lose their salvation. 4) Baptism does not produce perfectly mature Christians. These points mostly focused on contradicting error. Tonight we continue our examination of Simon and learn some issues about Christian living.

Discussion:

- I. Never prejudice who might become a Christian.
 - A. The most amazing part about this story is that Simon was converted at all (**Acts 8:13**). Here was an influential man in the community. He was the leader of an occult religious group. Yet, competition comes and takes his followers. Instead of being bitter or jealous, instead of trying to keep up the competition, he recognized the truth and submitted, becoming a Christian himself.
 - B. Lest you believe Simon didn't really become a Christian, notice the way his conversion is described. KJV says, "Then Simon himself believed also ..." NASB says, "And even Simon himself believed ..." That is, his conversion is put on par with all those who believed (**Acts 8:12**).
 - C. Would you have expected this? A liar, false teacher and leader of a false religious movement turns to Christ and becomes a Christian? But it happened. Who would have expected Paul to be converted? Who would have expected the people mentioned in **I Corinthians 6:9-11** to be converted? It is easy to look at people and think they are too immoral, they are too entrenched in false doctrine, their family is too devoted, etc. and think they are a lost cause. How many of us did someone else think was a lost cause? I can tell you about those of whom I was sure conversion would come, and they won't even talk to me anymore. Never prejudice, only teach. When Jesus gave the great commission in **Mark 16:15**, He didn't say, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to those you think are likely to obey." He said preach it to all. That commission comes to us, as we have been taught to follow all that the apostles were commanded. Let's teach and let the taught make their own choices.
- II. Don't bring in your baggage.
 - A. According to Gareth Reese's **New Testament History: Acts**, "The idea that such knowledge could be purchased also would have come from his background in the occult. It was the custom of the time for novice enchanters to purchase the secrets of magic from previous masters in the magic arts" (p 326). Simon was not acting as an upstart rebel. He was simply applying to Christianity the baggage he had brought along with him, that is, that he could buy power. Peter quickly set him straight. Simon's baggage didn't apply to Christianity.
 - B. Others did this. The Jews tried to bring in circumcision (**Acts 15:5**). The gentiles were warned by the apostles not to bring in their idol sacrifices, eating blood and things strangled and fornication (**Acts 15:29**). These were all issues of bringing baggage into the church.
 - C. Paul makes it clear, get rid of your baggage in (**II Corinthians 6:14-16**). God's kingdom has nothing to do with the kingdoms of men. Don't bring in your baggage. Rely on God's word.
 - D. I recognize we cannot possibly approach the Bible without preconceived ideas. We all have ideas about what is right and what is wrong. Those things come from our upbringing, our society, our prior study, etc. We can't get rid of those thoughts. We can recognize those ideas and lay them alongside scripture to see if they correspond. If we discover our ideas don't correspond, we need to replace them with new ideas, based on the Bible. When you become a Christian, check your baggage at the baptistery and leave it there.

- III. A Christian deals with sin by repentance and seeking forgiveness.
- A. I am often asked, if baptism is how a person initially enters Christ (which it is), then what must a Christian who sins do, be baptized again and again and again? Here is a great place to learn this lesson, because here is a Christian who needs to re-enter Christ. He is now in the gall of bitterness and the bondage of iniquity. How did Peter respond to him?
 - B. **Acts 8:22** is clear, Simon was to repent of his wickedness and pray that God would forgive him. Peter did not tell him he had to be baptized again. This parallels **I John 1:9**. If we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us. This passage teaches us a little about Peter's statement to Simon saying "if possible." The question was not about God's willingness to forgive. He has promised forgiveness if we repent and confess our sins to Him. He wishes that all will come to repentance (**II Peter 3:9**).
 - C. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action. It is motivated by the sorrow and guilt we feel for our sins, but is not the sorrow and guilt we feel. **II Corinthians 7:10** demonstrates the relation between sorrow and repentance. When John the Baptist preached he taught about repentance in **Matthew 3:8**. Repentance is not just in the mind, it is in action. If there is no change of action, there is no repentance.
 - D. Notice, Peter didn't say anything to Simon about going before the congregation. That is not a part of being reconciled to Christ. For some reason, some people get the idea that coming forward after a sermon equals repentance before God. That is just not the case. I don't know from where that idea comes because we have certainly never taught that. Perhaps it is just a misunderstanding of what people see. Coming forward is nothing more than a convenient way to inform the congregation that you have recognized sin in your life, you are changing and need help. As far as your relationship with God, you don't have to wait for the invitation to repent and confess your sin to God. You can do that right now. Change your attitude and thinking of the sin and determine not to do it again. Humble yourself before God in prayer, confessing your sin and asking for forgiveness and you will be forgiven.
- IV. The straightforward approach to sin is best.
- A. In our society of tolerance and fear of offense, we often feel as though sin must be handled with kid gloves, lest the sinner be upset and scared off. But notice how Peter deals with Simon.
 - B. Keep this in perspective. Simon was not an upstart rebel. Simon was a young in the faith, immature Christian. He was not grounded and educated fully in the way of Christ. He made this request, not because of rebellion, but because of his background and ignorance. He probably didn't even realize what he was doing was wrong. Nor had he considered the sinful nature of his motivations. In short, as we have already noted, he was where we often are.
 - C. Yet, Peter blasts him. I am unsure that I have ever heard a rebuke such as this given to anyone in my lifetime. Peter didn't play around. His response contained three parts.
 1. He clearly explained the truth (**Acts 8:21**). Simon had no part in the ability to pass gifts to others. His money could not buy that ability.
 2. Peter explained the status of Simon's soul, without pulling any punches (**Acts 8:23**). Peter didn't vacillate and waver on this. He clearly explained Simon's state.
 3. Peter explained what Simon needed to do in response (**Acts 8:22**).
 - D. This is how we should respond to sin. Instead of being afraid we will drive people away, we need to be open, honest, straightforward and up front with the truth, explaining the sinner's situation and explaining the response the sinner needs to take. If the sinner wants to serve God, they will respond as Simon did, not only repenting but also asking for your intercession.
 - E. And of course, we also learn from this how to respond when someone approaches us with sin. Humbly seeking intercession from others and forgiveness from God.

Conclusion:

Simon was not some apostate rebel; he was a Christian, struggling with temptation as we all do. His story teaches us so much. But his lessons do us no good if we do not follow his example, believing and obeying the preaching of the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.