

# Revealing the Counterfeits for the Sake of the Gospel

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[0:00] If you take your Bibles and turn to the book of Acts, Acts chapter 8, if you're visiting with us, if you go to that black Bible in the chair in front of you, pull that out, go towards the back, and find page 98.

98, that's where you'll find Acts chapter 8. Acts 8, we're gonna read, study this morning, verses 4 through 25, 4 to 25. Again, page 98 in the black Bible, Acts chapter 8, verse 4 through 25. I'm gonna read and then we'll begin our study. Verse 4, therefore those who have been scattered went about preaching the word, and Philip went down to the city of Samaria, proclaiming Christ to them.

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. For many who had unclean spirits were coming out shouting with a loud voice, and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

And there was much rejoicing in that city. 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.

[1:33] And they all from smallest to greatest were giving attention to him, saying, this man is what is called the great power of God. And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.

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. And even Simon himself believed. And after being baptized, he continued on with Philip as he observed signs and great miracles taking place. He was constantly amazed. Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them, Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen upon any of them.

He had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.

But Peter said to him, May your silver perish with you because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money. You have no part or portion in this word, for your heart is not right before God.

[2:57] Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours and pray the Lord that if possible the intention of your heart may be forgiven you, for I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.

But Simon answered and said, Pray to the Lord for me yourselves so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me. 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.

On the management and expansion of savagery was the title of the article in the Christian Science Monitor a couple days ago, July 2nd.

The article begins like this. In 2004, an Al-Qaeda ideologue uploaded a book to the internet that shifted jihadi thinking across the globe.

It argued that the way to establish an overarching Sunni califat in the Muslim world was not with scattered terrorist attacks on the West, but with a sustained campaign of violence in Muslim countries.

[4:13] It advocated targeting important infrastructure to force government forces into a defensive crouch, and sowing economic and human chaos in target countries to help create pockets of autonomy and eventual expansion of control.

The book, it continues on, had a powerful and lasting impact, particularly in Iraq, where in 2006, the local Al-Qaeda affiliate changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and set about winning territory and imposing its harsh version of Islamic law.

That group evolved into what's now called the Islamic State, ISIS, which with the territory it has won in Iraq and Syria since 2013, is the most powerful jihadi army in modern history.

And that's how they expand, through terror. And then there's Christianity. Now, people will sit there and tell you, well, the crusades, alright.

I'm talking about biblical Christianity. God doesn't use terror to expand the gospel, does He? No. I mean, God doesn't use terror to expand the good news of salvation.

[5:39] How do you expand the good news of salvation by bringing terror? That's kind of an oxymoron. I'm going to give you good news, and I'm going to kill you to do it. Well, that kind of doesn't make sense.

God doesn't use terror to bring about good news. What He does use, or who He does use, are faithful messengers to bring about the expansion of the gospel.

Faithful messengers. And as faithful messengers, faithful to proclaim the gospel, the gospel expands, God Himself deals with counterfeits.

God Himself deals with false faith. As we will see, just let God use you to fulfill His mission, and He's going to reveal the counterfeit gospels for the sake of gospel expansion.

That's what we're going to see today in this passage. Revealing the counterfeits for the sake of gospel expansion. That's what God does. He's going to make known the counterfeits, so that way His gospel can expand.

[6:46] The good news of Jesus can expand. Revealing the counterfeits for the sake of gospel expansion.

Nobody can stop the expansion of the gospel, the good news. It spreads. And God does that. Not through terror, just by faithful messengers.

As the gospel expands, God wants a Jesus-focused, gospel-proclaiming, gospel-unifying church, so He will reveal and rebuke superficial, counterfeit faith.

That's what He does. That's the kind of church He wants. He doesn't want churches to be about wow-ing people. He doesn't want churches to be about entertaining people. He doesn't want churches to be having a next big show.

I mean, how do you compete with Disneyland? It's impossible. I mean, have you seen their show that they do? They have it up on smoke and on water and they have like Mickey doing all this stuff and they're like, how do they do that?

[7:54] How are you going to top that? You don't. Well, God does. Just through words. A church that's focused on Jesus, that's proclaiming the gospel, and it's unified around the gospel.

And then God rebukes. He will bring out, reveal, and rebuke superficial counterfeit faith. Another statement for you. God doesn't want rock star proclaimers. He just wants humble, faithful servants to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ.

You don't got to be a rock star. And as we proclaim the truth of Jesus, God will reveal the phony so that His gospel will continue to expand unhindered. That's what He does.

He doesn't need a rock star. He just needs faithful messengers. From last week, we see God's strategy for church planting.

We proclaim the gospel. Hatred comes from hearers. We may suffer for the gospel. God vindicates His people and then He scatters them out to proclaim and then it starts all over again.

[9:01] Well, God's persecuted church is called to faithfully disperse and proclaim the good news of Jesus, the word of the gospel.

And this section sets the stage for God's mission to the Gentiles. You see how the Spirit fully endorsed, was totally behind Philip's ministry.

And Philip's primary focus was the word and the effect it had on people's lives. Not wow-ing people. Versus Simon, which we will see, almost like a Satan or Satanic-like figure with his magic, his idolatry, wow-ing people, power, wanting money.

But God's work is not for sale. He's trying to hinder gospel expansion, but God's work is not for sale. People are called to respond to the message, not think that they can buy the message.

God's Spirit is a gift given to those who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and this gift is in direct conflict with the powers of magic, with counterfeit faith, counterfeit gospel.

[10 : 25] And that's what we're going to see. So as we begin our trek through verses 4 through 25 in chapter 8, there's going to be seven different aspects I want to bring out to you. Notice the first aspect, number one.

You see, gospel proclamation and expansion. Verse 4 and 5. Notice it starts in verse 4. Therefore, those who have been scattered went about preaching the word. Evangelion, preaching the word. Preaching, proclaiming the good tidings. evangelism. That's where you get the word evangelism. Evangelion. So this dispersion that took place with Stephen, remember Stephen?

He was stoned, he was killed, then their persecution started, people scattered. And that dispersion, that scattering, led to wider preaching of the gospel. And actually, it led to people obeying what Jesus said in Acts chapter 1, verse 8.

Remember, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria. That's what's going to happen. So persecution, or gospel proclamation and expansion, that's our first point, persecution does not stop the spread of the gospel.

[11 : 38] It actually expands the gospel. Persecution doesn't stop it. It expands it. So as they, as they bring terror upon us, it will expand the gospel.

That's the difference. They bring terror upon other people and they think that's expansion. We allow people to bring terror upon us and then that expands the gospel. And the one scattered began proclaiming the gospel.

And Philip was one of them. Notice it says, those who had been scattered went about preaching the gospel. And then verse 5, and Philip went down.

So Philip was one of those who was in the scattering. What does that mean? All of them were involved in evangelism. Not just the pastor.

All were engaged in winning people to Jesus. Friends, we all need to be involved in evangelism. We all need to be proclaiming. Now maybe you won't to Cottonwood Park, the kids park, July 4th at 4 o'clock with some of us.

[12 : 49] Maybe you won't do that. It's not saying that you have to do that. We're saying, we all need to be involved in proclaiming the gospel. All of them are doing this. And that's what we're called to do.

As part of being a Christian, part of being a follower of Jesus, is that you speak the word, you speak the gospel, you speak the good news, you proclaim it. And notice, verse 5, Philip was one of them. He went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed Christ to them. One of the seven, Philip was, proclaiming the gospel, that is proclaiming Messiah to the Samaritans.

Now we're not sure of the exact locale. Maybe it's Shechem, not really sure, but wherever it was, he was proclaiming the gospel to the Samaritan people. This was radical, folks.

This was against the flow. And against the flow action by Philip. This was, he was an extremist. He was a religious fanatic.

[13 : 57] Because the Samaritans, if you remember, they were hated by the Jews. Jews left behind after the northern kingdom fell to Syria in 722 BC.

They intermarried with foreigners. And they settled in the area of Samaria. So they were ethnic and religious half-breeds.

They set up a rival temple at Mount Gerizim. They believed only in the first five books of the Old Testament. And their version of, their translation was not part of the Masoretic text.

So it was very different. So they only recognized the Pentateuch. The Jews thought of them at the same level as Gentiles. Who wants to be around them? But they were looking for the Messiah. They were looking for who they called the Restorer. What a great event. The gospel expanding to the Samaritans.

[15 : 04] Friends, the gospel is for all. Black or white. Asian, Hispanic. Israeli, Pakistani. Saudi or Yemeni. It doesn't matter.

For the gospel calls us to cross any and all ethnic barriers giving the message of hope in Jesus. We're called to give the gospel to any and all people groups.

We say to them, come, come to Jesus. Anybody, come, come. Any ethnic group, come. Whoever you are, come. It doesn't matter.

Plus, the gospel is for drug addicts, prostitutes, gays, lesbians, drunks, partiers, nobodies, those on the down and out.

The gospel is for them too. And the Lord Jesus Christ calls them to turn from their evil ways and put all their hope in Jesus. All their trust in Jesus.

[16:07] The gospel is for them too. Are you here today? You're not a follower of Jesus. You don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. You haven't placed your trust in Jesus.

You haven't turned from your sin and put your trust in Jesus. Friend, do that today. Don't wait. You deserve God's judgment as everyone does. Yet God is like this, his arms are open wide.

He says, come, I will save you. My son died for sinners like you. You can be saved. Friend, if you're not a Christian, take this seriously. So we see here in this passage, in these first two verses, gospel proclamation and an expansion of the gospel.

And then notice, you see gospel response. Number two, verses six through eight. The ironic part, 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.

They were responding. They were giving attention or paying heed to Philip's preaching and to the signs. Notice seven, for many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out shouting with a loud voice.

[17:20] Many had been paralyzed and lame were healed. God's power was being displayed. God's kingdom, his kingdom power was displayed through Philip.

He was doing signs equivalent to the apostles themselves. This is amazing. He was under the apostles' direction and leadership, which we'll see in just a few moments. So these signs and wonders, they establish his credentials.

These signs authenticated or verified his message that this was really of God. And the focus wasn't upon Philip. The focus was upon Jesus, which you'll see in just a moment.

The focus was upon the word, upon the gospel, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, not upon Philip. So as he's doing these signs and wonders, it's verifying, confirming that he's of God, he's been sent of God to focus and to have the people see the glory of Jesus Christ.

Which is why, by the way, we believe those gifts ceased with the death of the apostles. Because God's revelation is closed, there's no need to authenticate the message. It's been authenticated already.

[18:37] Notice the results in verse 8. There was much rejoicing in that city. The city was full of joy. Well, yeah! The signs, the proclamation of the word, people are responding.

These hated Samaritans were coming to Christ. Of course there's joy. So you have some people responding to the gospel.

So friends, for there to be responses, there must be proclaimers. God calls you to be a proclaimer. Well, you might say, well, you know what, I can't go out and give people the gospel.

Well, we need people to pray. Like Anne, she can't go out and do that, but we need her to pray. You might say, I can't go out and do that because I'm doing this and this. We need you to pray. We need you to pray for us who are out there.

Pray for the church who are proclaiming the gospel. We need you to pray. That's how you can be involved in this. That's how you are a proclaimer. You are connecting with us who are proclaimers by praying for us when we go to Jerome or we're at the store or we're connecting with a neighbor or a relative or a friend and proclaiming the gospel.

[19:50] You need to pray. So we have the gospel is being proclaimed, it's being expanded, you have the response of the gospel, but then notice. Number three, counterfeit gospel.

Verse nine, there's a certain man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great.

So Luke is reflecting back on Simon and what he was doing, Simon Magus, which is Latin for magician, who and what he did.

Notice how it says, claiming to be someone great, he astonished the people of Samaria. Simon enjoyed the attention of the Samaritans, practicing magic among them, unusual displays of power, probably involving charms and incantations.

His actions were just amazing, the people. So astonishing that he claimed to be someone great. They all from smallest to greatest were giving attention to him, saying, this man is what is called the great power of God.

[21:03] Yes, that's right. That's me. I'm the great power of God. You get a little money there. Some type of heavenly power, maybe even thinking of him as divine.

Contrast that with Philip, who will point them to Jesus as the Messiah, point them to God, not to himself. Notice it says in verse 11, they were giving attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic art.

He worked in Samaria, wowing the people with his magical power. So the contrast is being set up, notice. Who really speaks for God?

Who really works for God? Simon, with his God-like powers, or Philip, with his signs and that preaching thing?

God and his messengers, what we bring, is totally different and unique. By the way, this is around the subject with Simon.

[22:16] There's talk and there's stuff written about Simon. Justin Martyr from the second century, he himself was a Samaritan. He wrote about Simon.

He said he was empowered by demons to perform his magic. It says Simon was later honored by Rome as of God. Irenaeus, another church father, described Simon as the founder of the Simonian sect.

He even said from him came Gnostic heresies. Now, there's nothing in Acts that remotely suggests that this is like that Simon did any of this. It's hard for us to say that he really did this.

We don't know. But all that to say, notice he had widespread and powerful influence over the people of Samaria. He was proclaiming a false, counterfeit gospel.

It was a fake. You can see a fake or false gospel when the proclaimer focuses upon self. You can tell false faith when the person focuses upon self, not directing away from self to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[23:28] Jesus. Notice what happens in verse 12. But, when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized men and women alike.

Well, instead of giving attention to Simon now, they gave their attention to the gospel. They believed in the gospel, the good news about the kingdom and the name Jesus Christ. Jesus, the kingdom, Jesus, Jesus is the fulfillment of what the prophets had spoke about regarding the kingdom.

God's rule as king has been established as a fulfillment of prophecy through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what one writer puts it, how he puts it. It's exactly the way the kingdom is.

It's like I connect the kingdom with Jesus Christ. He's the fulfillment of it. So, they're totally convinced of Philip's message. And, they're responding, they're being baptized, whether men or women.

So, the focus is not upon signs and wonders. Notice, the focus is not upon that power that was being displayed by Philip, the signs and the wonders. No, the focus was upon the gospel, the word, the good news.

[24:42] Unfortunately, churches today focus on signs, wonders, or a good show, and not on the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

It's more about how to wow people. Or, how God will prosper you. God will make you rich. God will give you this. He will give you that.

And, people today, they want to be entertained. They're not entertained. They fall asleep, they get bored, they want to do something else, play a game, whatever.

It's all about, right, if you're watching TV, right, it's just popping, it's just popping, it's just popping, it's just popping. Then, you come to the message of the gospel, everything slows down, and people are like, oh man, this is boring.

No, it should be about the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, in this, this is really odd.

[25:43] Notice verse 13. Even Simon himself believed. Whoa, that's kind of weird. And after being baptized, he continued on with Philip.

And as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed. Luke's kind of giving us a little clue here, though. So Simon himself believed he was baptized, but given what will happen to him, was this true, genuine faith or was it superficial?

At first, it's hard to determine, and we'll unpack Peter's comments to Simon in just a few moments, but what is odd, though, is that he continued on or attached himself to Philip.

Do you see that? There in verse 13. This is not the normal way to describe discipleship. As he observed the signs and great miracles, he was constantly amazed over what he saw.

Notice, he wasn't impressed with the word. Miracles motivated him. So was this a genuine attachment to Philip, or was it a way to hang out with him in a quest to enhance his own power?

[26:55] I believe it seems more like he, Simon, was obsessed with power and glamour.

Simon's belief was likened to a superficial commitment to Jesus. And Luke is kind of giving us a little clue here by what he says in verse 13. And then as we go to Peter's response to Simon, you'll see it just unfold because Peter will make known and reveal who Simon really is.

And then he will actually rebuke him for his superficial faith. Friends, there's something I want to just bring up to your attention. We must be careful if we're coming to a worship service to get a feeling, a certain feeling, a euphoric experience.

We should come asking the Lord, Lord, what do you want to show me from your word today? Or, what do you want me to hear from your word today? You speak.

I'm here to listen. I'm not here to be entertained. I'm not here to have some euphoric experience. I want you to tell me what do you want from me today? That's what we've been looking at on Wednesday nights about worship.

[28:11] That's what we should be asking ourselves. So you have these things happening, and you have that counterfeit gospel. Well, notice what another part that comes into play here is gospel unity.

Another point that comes in here is gospel unity. Unity in the gospel is vitally important. Verse 14.

When the apostles and Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

Wait a second. Whoa, that's kind of weird. I mean, now that's really weird. What's this? I mean, why did this happen? I mean, when was the last time?

I mean, they believed in the gospel and they had the Holy Spirit. Acts chapter 2. They believed that the Holy Spirit. They believed the Spirit. Well, they believed, but there's no Holy Spirit. Well, that's weird.

What's going on? Philip's ministry would receive apostolic endorsement by their presence and response to him. In other words, Philip was truly an instrument being used by God.

[29:22] And this is going to unite the people of God. It's going to unite them around the gospel, around the truth. So, they would sanction his work, Philip that is, and show that there would be no Samaritan church versus a Jewish church.

There would be one church. So, laying on of hands for the people to receive the Spirit, it indicated fellowship and identity, participation and unity.

Confirmation and affirmation was most important here because of the non-Christian relationship between Jews and Samaritans. Remember, they hated each other.

Samaritans, they were just like, ah, the Jews are just a bunch of snobs. The Jews are like, ah, they're a bunch of half-breeds. They couldn't stand each other. So, the reaction and the response from Peter and John, from the apostles, Peter and John, would speak volumes.

Since they included these despised Samaritans, they truly had responded to Christ. They're truly part of the church. Notice as well, verse 16.

[30:38] For he, the Spirit, had not yet fallen upon any of them. They were simply, had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on him, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

So, here we see that Philip was not the only extremist here. But so were Peter and John. Talk about radical! They broke traditional, cultural, religious, social barriers.

I mean, you didn't do that with Samaritans. But, what's important here, there would not be a rival Samaritan church. The leaders of Jesus' body gave hearty, solid, full approval of the Samaritans, and they were Christians.

They're with us! And notice, the Spirit had not fallen upon any of them. None of them received the Spirit.

They received the Word of God, they received the Gospel, the Jesus Christ, but none of them had the Spirit. So, see, this belief, and then baptism, with the later coming of the Spirit, this was different. It wasn't normative.

[31:48] It was exceptional. They were being incorporated into the new community. They're Samaritans, they were hated, but it's so important. Peter and John, they gave that, they say, yes, God truly has brought salvation to you guys.

You are a part of us. We are together. We are one. Allegiance to one Gospel, to one Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God acted showing that any who turn from sin and trusted in Jesus alone will be part of this new community. So these were special circumstances to underscore God's acceptance of the Samaritans.

This is important here for us to realize because some people like to take this and they say, see, this is the way it's supposed to be in the church. No, it's not. This is exceptional. It's not normal.

And the action of the apostles removed any sense of inferiority toward the Samaritans by the Jewish believers.

[32:54] See, this is why the Gospel is for anybody and everybody. We include anybody in. We say to them, turn from your sin and trust in Jesus and you are a part of us. I mean, you feel the oneness.

You can feel the unity from the verses. Just oozing out of the verses, you can actually feel that unity. The Gospel unity. Peter and John would help the Jerusalem church embrace what was taking place outside Jerusalem.

Especially amongst these people that were not so loved. Was there a manifestation of the Spirit? I don't know. Did they start speaking in tongues? I don't know.

Was there some other indicator? I don't know. Maybe something similar to Acts 2. It wasn't told.

What we see here is Gospel unity is important.

It's vital. Which is why membership is so vital. Because one commits, you commit to a church and you embrace what we teach as a church to be in the Word of God.

[34:02] That's why there's membership in a church. Because you're saying, I'm connecting myself to this church. I believe what they're teaching is in the Word of God. So I'm connecting myself to that church. Gospel unity is vitally important.

Or else it just doesn't matter. You say, I'm committed. That's why gospel unity is so important.

That's why we believe membership is so important to a church.

church. We have all this stuff going on now. And then this is what takes place in verse 18 through 19. The fifth aspect of this passage.

The counterfeit gospel is finally revealed. 18 through 19. Simon saw the Spirit was being bestowed to the laying on of the apostles' hands.

He offered them money. He said, hey, give this authority to me as well so that everyone in whom I lay my hands may receive the Spirit. Why did he do that?

[35:03] Did he want that power? Did he want to exert influence again? Was he hoping he would become a rock star? Giving out the Spirit?

Did he want to share in the leadership with the apostles? And really have it be all about him? Is that what he really wanted? From the context is what it seems like.

Did Simon himself receive the Spirit? It doesn't say. But the fact that he offered them money when it was maybe his turn probably would say no.

He asked to have this power, this authority. He wanted the right to give it out. He wanted the authority to distribute the Spirit and he offered the money to Peter and John so he could have that authority.

It seems like, friends, he did not understand that it's God's sovereign work of giving the Spirit. It's a gift from God. He did not truly understand the Gospel.

[36:14] The Gospel is God's grace to sinners. It's His sovereign work, His gift to sinners. You don't buy it.

You don't buy it. What's it called? Simony? Or simony? Simony? Which means the making of profit out of sacred things?

Well, thank you, Simon, for giving us a turn. It seems like he wanted to synchronize things. Syncretism is when you take a little bit of this and a little bit of this and a little bit of this and a little bit of this and you kind of mix it all together.

He wanted to syncretize things to believe and get some authority. He was thinking in his old Gentile ways. There's a definite distinction between magic and the gift of the Spirit.

His fake faith came out. One writer says this, Quote, Whenever religion is used to make its leaders seem great and powerful, and whenever religion becomes a commodity by serving the interests of those who have or want money, it has become corrupt.

[37 : 35] End quote. There's a warning. Warning for us here to desire power and misuse material goods to have control or influence via the ministry.

This is counterfeit faith. A counterfeit gospel. And God, God will reveal those counterfeits because He wants His truth, the good news, He wants it to grow and expand.

He will not deal with that. And notice, that's the next point that comes out. Number six, the counterfeit gospel's rebukes. Verse 20, Peter said to Him, May your silver perish with you because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money.

Peter's rebuke was harsh and severe. The way you can translate this is, May destruction take your money with you. Wow. Wow. At best, Peter warned Him to heed His words to avoid an awful fate.

If you want to try and put this in a much more positive spin. Then notice, 21, You have no part or portion in this matter as maybe some of your translations.

[38 : 49] The actual word is word. You have no part or portion in this word because your heart is not right or straight or upright before the eyes of God.

Another way to translate that. Unless He would repent, then He would receive forgiveness. So it seems that His apparent faith, it was deficient.

Notice, Peter called Him to have a right response to God. And then He says in verse 22, Therefore, repent of this weakness of yours and pray.

The word pray literally is implore. implore the Lord that if possible the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. Repent of your wickedness. Implore, desperately pray for forgiveness.

He's commanded to repent. And if He does, forgiveness would follow. Why must He repent? Why does He need forgiveness?

[40 : 02] Verse 24. Excuse me, verse 23. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity. Bitter, poison.

The bondage of sin. He was bitterly envious. This is His position, His condition. His attitude was poison. That's bitterness.

He was risking, missing out on God's blessing. He had no share with God's people. He had no blessing. He was in great sin. Now did Peter see his fake faith?

It seems like it. He rebuked his phoniness. The poison needed to be extracted. He did not understand God's grace.

Among all these genuine responses, His was fake. So it seems like what's going on is that Simon heard the proclamation of the gospel. He's impressed by miracles.

[41 : 06] He wanted some nice blessings of the gospel. Yet it seems like he did not have genuine heart change. But was in it for the glory, the fame, to be known.

He wanted to be a rock star. It seems like that. Luke doesn't say this. Peter doesn't necessarily even say this himself.

Given what's going on, what's happening here, and then in just a few moments we're going to look at verse 24. Looking at his response, this is what seems like what's going on. Friends, what about us though?

What about us? Do we need to do a heart check this morning? Do we trust Christ alone? Do we need to say, Lord help my unbelief?

Do we have bitterness in our hearts? Are we in its grip? Do you need to repent today?

[42 : 05] Do you turn to the gospel? And as Paul says, put away the bitterness, put away the anger, put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

In a few moments we're going to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Maybe that'll be a time for you to be able to put that away and remind yourself of the gospel, how there's forgiveness and grace and compassion in the gospel. If you let go of the bitterness that you have against this person or that person, that situation, your circumstances, whatever the case.

We'll notice Simon's response. He answered and said, pray to the Lord for me, or implore to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you've said may come upon me. Did he obey Peter's command to implore himself? No. It kind of seems like he bailed. He didn't take heed to Peter's severe rebuke and plan of action.

He dismissed it. No, you pray for me. What? I just said you pray. That's not what I said.

[43 : 22] Simon was heading in the wrong direction. Peter was warning him. So it seems like Simon just wanted to escape the consequences of sin and not exude true repentance.

Luke, he usually records positive outcomes when people respond to the gospel. He doesn't do here with Simon. Because all of a sudden, Simon says this and then Luke says, and so when they had Solomon, and you go, wait a second, what happened?

What's the rest of the story? It's like, where's the punchline in the joke? You know what I mean? It's like, it's gone. Well, it seems like Simon was pretty much clueless. Look, when counterfeits, counterfeit gospels, where faith comes on the scene, God will reveal it and rebuke it so that the truth of the gospel, the good news of his son, will expand.

And he won't let phonies hinder the expansion of the gospel. He's not going to do that. He's going to pull out the weeds within his church. He will. As the purity, the unadulterated gospel is being proclaimed, it will weed out that.

Eventually, it will fall by the way of saying. He'll make it known. He'll rebuke it. And then the last point, it's kind of funny because it actually ends the way it began.

[44 : 47] Because here you have number seven, gospel expansion. When they had solemnly testified and spoke of the word of the gospel, they seemed to refer to the apostles.

They continued to mission to the Samaritans by testifying and speaking the word. Then it says, they started back to Jerusalem. They were preaching the gospel, evangelism.

They were evangelizing many villages of the Samaritans. Kind of a better response, right? Than the request from James and John.

Remember that? You know, they're all walking along with Jesus and the Samaritans. Jesus wanted to stay somewhere, and the Samaritans are like, blah, blah, blah. And Peter, John and James went up to Jesus and said, Jesus, should we call down fire upon those Samaritans?

Do you remember that? And Jesus is like, get out of my face. That's the gym version. Will you get out of here? Oh, stop it.

[45 : 56] You know, it's so annoyed. Like, ah. In a very godly, holy way, God, Jesus did that. It's interesting. Now they're not doing that. Now Peter, John, who was one called down fire, he's now euangelion.

He's now evangelizing the hated Samaritans. The gospel's expanding. The apostles totally endure Samaritan inclusion into the church. Now realize that we will run into possible false conversions or counterfeit gospels.

Money and power blind people to the truth. It's so true. It's not about pursuing a reputation that enhances oneself, but one that boasts and boasts upon and puts all our hope in Jesus Christ, not in ourselves.

Listen, when it all comes down to it, as we look at what's happened with the gospel here with verses 4 through 25, you don't need to be a rock star.

You just need to be a faithful, humble witness or proclaimer of the Lord Jesus Christ. So who's that co-worker? Who's that close friend? Who's that relative? Who's that neighbor? That you need to speak to?

[47 : 12] Whoever. Just simple proclamation. Who's that person you need to pray for? Who are those members in the church you need to pray for that you know they're talking to that relative or those people in Jerome or those people that are down the street from them or that relative, that wife or cousin that has been so antagonistic to the gospel?

Who is it? You don't need to be a rock star. You just need to be a faithful servant. That's all. Gospel expansion.

Take a few moments. Ponder what you've seen from God's word here in Acts chapter 8. I'll give you a few moments. Take a few moments of silence for you to think and ponder. To contemplate what we've seen.

And then we'll do our time of giving. sing. We'll sing one song and then prepare our hearts to partake of the Lord's Supper together. But take a few moments to think and ponder what we've

seen in God's word.  
And then we'll continue on.