

God's Way: Acts 8:1-25

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Steve and Colin, for leading us in worship this morning. I'm grateful that you have come to worship him, to hear from him. And so let's do that today.

If you have your Bible with you, if you would turn to the Acts chapter one and you say, well, Scott, I thought we were further along in the message than Acts chapter one, but we're going to do a quick review of something before we get into the content or the rest of the message.

I want us to remind us what the Lord had said to the disciples. There's a hundred and twenty of them in an upper room and they're asking about the time of his return.

And the Lord responds and says, it's not really the times and seasons for my return are fixed by the Father. It's not for you to know. Don't worry about that.

But then in verse eight, Acts chapter one, verse eight, he does tell the disciples how he wants them, what business they need to be about, where to focus their energies.

[1 : 0 8] Don't worry about when I'll return. Here is where I want you to focus your energies. Acts chapter one, verse eight, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be witnesses. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Disciples, I want you to wait. You're waiting for a person. He's the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes, a member of the Godhead, when the Holy Spirit comes, you'll receive power.

And with that power is going to accompany the responsibility and with the Holy Spirit is going to accompany the responsibility to be my witnesses. Yes, in Jerusalem, also in Judea and Samaria and even to the ends of the earth.

And so far in our account of the book of Acts, the church is swelling at Jerusalem. 20,000 people have come to know Christ. The church is swelling. It is burgeoning.

But it's not going anywhere. And so through an unfortunate set of circumstances, the Lord causes to get His people outside of Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria.

[2 : 3 4] And so let's look at that account today. If you have your Bible, if you would now turn to Acts chapter 8, we are going to look at verses 1 through 4 to begin. And this is the word of the Lord.

Let's read together. And Saul approved of his execution, speaking of Stephen. And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem.

And they were all scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.

But Saul was ravaging the church and entering house to house. And he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

One of the first things we note in this passage is that persecution refocuses the church's priority and mission.

[3 : 41] I am sure you have heard many stories, as I have heard many stories, of why churches have split through the years. And from colors of carpet and while we may laugh at that, it's true.

Some churches have split over such mundane, menial, ridiculous things as colors of carpet. And when persecution hits the church, imagine the persecution we were in a nation and this exists, where you have to, on your ID card, like your driver's license, you have to name your religion.

Islam, Christian, Buddhism, whatever. And so imagine on our name card, and every time we apply for a job, everyone is told who we are.

But the persecution, they don't want to hire Christians. And so can you imagine us gathering as a church? We're having a hard time finding employment.

We're having a hard time providing food on our plates. All of a sudden, arguing about carpet colors and things like this soon fade away, doesn't it? Soon fades away.

[4 : 50] And so that's one of the benefits of the church, and the church has neglected this responsibility. When the Holy Spirit comes, be my witnesses. And the Lord allows the stoning of Stephen and this man's death, and allows, it says, a great persecution on the church of Jerusalem that many flee Jerusalem to get relief.

The apostles remain, but many flee. And where do they go? Into the regions they were given responsibility to Judea, it says in verse one. And Samaria, some devout men then buried Stephen.

And it says that Saul is ravaging the church. And this word ravaging is used in the Old Testament in Psalm 79 verse 14.

9 verse 14 as a wild boar through a vineyard. Like a wild boar rooting up roots, tearing things out. And that's the image we get that Saul is going house to house in the church of Jerusalem, finding believers, taking them out, throwing them in jail, committing them to prison, we're told.

And this is the occasion that we find. And the result, it says in verse four. And now those who are scattered went about preaching the word.

[6 : 17] The very responsibility they were given, they are now having opportunity to do. These are, and what I want us to note is where the apostles are.

So who are they that are going and preaching this word? They're ordinary people. These ordinary people with an extraordinary message. These ordinary men and women displaced outside of Jerusalem because of the persecution are now just oozing the gospel everywhere they go.

They are speaking the good news of Jesus Christ. You're speaking the good news of Jesus Christ. They are, if you will, gossiping the gospel as they go about.

They did it naturally. They did it enthusiastically with conviction. And guess what? They're not even paid to give this message. So it gives some credibility. Sometimes I don't like mentioning to individuals that I'm a pastor because then my previous conversation about God all of a sudden makes sense.

Oh, you get paid to talk about him. You have the benefit that you don't get paid to talk about him. You don't have that hurdle. That's wonderful.

[7 : 40] Neither persecution nor relocation could stop the gospel from spreading. And in fact, quite the opposite. Persecution and relocation only aided in the gospel spreading.

The church is scattered through the region of Judea and Samaria. So I have some points of application. Have you ever considered that even your promotion or demotion, your setbacks, your relocation, your broken relationships, your new relationships, your health reversal are instruments of God's sovereignty and or his ordination to allow given to you as an opportunity to preach the gospel to share Jesus Christ with your new friends?

People you would have never met if that had not occurred. I have a lady whose name is Shanoah who cuts my hair.

The first day I met her, she was cutting my hair and it's at great clips if anyone's curious. Anyway, it's not like I pay big dollars to see Shanoah or anything like this.

But I was thinking, man, with that name like that, she must be with this kind of, it doesn't need much attention. So anyway, the first time I met her, I just sat in her chair and got to know her.

[9 : 25] And she mentioned to me and I just kept asking questions. And I just love learning about people's lives. At the end of the time, she says, I just feel so comfortable talking to you next time.

I sit down in her chair and she, I said, Shanoah, you seem down today. I said, if you're willing to share, I'd be more than eager to listen.

And she began to share about her life. I won't give the details because I pray someday she'll be sitting here. But she had some weighty things on her mind and heart and some legal things.

And it was, it's a mess. And she has two boys and young children. And several visits went by and I wrote her a card with, and I gave her my phone number.

And I said, if you would ever want to talk, and here's what I said, I know people and you're my people, by the way, I know people who would love to visit with you about such things, who would love to share the similar things that I'm sharing about the Lord.

[10 : 37] And if you would want that, because she has no one who will really listen to her. So I love it. Why am I sitting in a chair, getting my hair cut?

Because Shinoah needs to know the Lord. But anyway, persecution refocuses the church's priority and mission.

The church was to be a witness in Judea and Samaria and the ends of the earth, but they were not leaving Jerusalem and the church was swelling. It was time to reach the nations and God sends persecution to the people.

And God sends persecution and he causes a refocus of their mission, not perhaps by choice, but not by coercion either.

Fourth, let's remain focused on our mission. What would be great is even in peacetime, so to speak, where we are not facing deep persecution to remain focused on our mission.

[11 : 45] Let us grow and mature as disciples of Jesus Christ. Let's abide in him. Let's be a people and grow into a being of people who are selfless, who are generous, who are courageous about their faith, who proclaim the gospel.

Let's have a growth and multiplication mindset where we don't think there is always room for those who are welcome. And if this room fills, we can go to two services. If this half of this room fills, we can go plant a church.

Let's be intentional and deliberate to raise up leaders. Let us stay focused on the mission that the Lord has given us to make disciples of all the nations.

And let's do that. Secondly, we find in this passage that Jesus Christ is the true deliverer. Read with me in verse 5 through 8.

Philip, we find one man in particular. Let's read 5 through 8. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them Christ.

[12 : 54] And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits were crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many were paralyzed or lame were healed.

And so there was much joy in the city. We learn about one specific person and we learn about one specific location.

We learn that Philip went to Samaria. And Samaria is the capital city of the region of Samaria, so it's a little bit confusing. And so we see that Philip went to the town of Samaria.

Philip, who is he? He is one of the seven individuals that the congregation had put forward who was full of wisdom, full of the Holy Spirit to serve the widows, the distribution of bread, if you remember.

He's one of them who the apostles confirmed and affirmed and prayed over him. He was a man of good reputation, full of the Spirit. And later in the book of Acts we read about Philip that he is a Philip the Evangelist.

[14 : 03] This is who Philip is. And he goes to Samaria. He's one of those displaced out of Jerusalem. And let's first, we know that there's this negative connotation about the Samaritans in the first century.

But what is that about? I want to quickly give some history to understand how deep this hatred of the Samaritans was that now Philip goes to.

First of all, Samaritans in the 10th century BC, so a thousand years prior to Christ, if you will, in the 10th century BC, ten of the twelve tribes of Israel defect and they go to the northern region, northern north of Jerusalem.

All but the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remain, if you will, faithful to Jerusalem. Making Samaria the city, Samaria the capital of these ten tribes that went north.

And it became steadily worse when Samaria was captured by the Assyrians in 722 BC. And thousands of inhabitants were now deported. So of these ten tribes, thousands of them were deported off to Assyria.

[15 : 19] And the region of Samaria became inhabited by now Gentiles. There was a gutting of the Jews out of the land, and so then it became resettled by some Gentiles.

It gets worse. About a hundred years later in the 6th century BC, the Jews returned to their land and began to rebuild the temple.

So, Assyria and Babylon and Persia, and there's this resettlement. You remember Nehemiah and Ezra, in that period of time, there's this resettlement of this land.

But what's difficult is the Jews in Jerusalem did not allow the Jews in the north to help them rebuild their temple. And so that because they intermarried with these Gentiles, and so you have this half Jewish, half Gentile group of people, and they don't want their help in building their temple.

And so what's the consequence of that? When you don't want help building your temple, they build their own. And so what happened on Mount Gerazim, the northern people, they built their own temple.

[16 : 35] And that only worsened the reputation and this hatred for these people in Samaria. They were seen as heretics and religious dissidents.

And so that's why we read in the book of John, John 4-9, we say, Jews do not associate with Samaritans. And out of this largely Jewish congregation who get saved by believing in the person and the work of Christ, these now are displaced out of Jerusalem and they go to these despised people.

And so that's why we read, we know in the first century there was no love lost between Jews and the Samaritans. The Samaritans were unclean and outside the covenant community of Israel.

But Jesus thought differently of the Samaritans. Jesus engages the woman at well in Samaria and offered her salvation. Jesus healed the Samaritan leper while he was on his way to Jerusalem.

Jesus made the Samaritan the unlikely hero in the parable of the good Samaritan. And so Philip follows the pattern not by his Jewish friends, but by Jesus, his master, and extends the gospel to this Samaritan neighbors.

[17 : 56] And Jesus had transformed Philip's life of any prejudice against the Samaritans and it was put to death. And in Jesus and in the gospel, there is no room for racism.

There is no room for prejudice. There is no room for bias. We too should reject categorizing people or ethnicities that we find without hope of the gospel.

It is not to be tolerated in the church of Jesus Christ. So what is Philip doing? We read in verse five, he is proclaiming to them Christ. That is what he is doing.

He is proclaiming the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ in his sinless life, his death for sin and resurrection, overcoming sin and death. That is what Philip is doing.

And what is happening? Demons are being cast out and miracles of healing are being performed. And look with me in verse six. This is important because it's going to pertain later in the message.

[18 : 57] And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip. And when they heard him, saw the signs that he did. They were intent on what Philip was saying about who Jesus is and what was being done.

They gave him their full attention. And what was the result of that?

Look with me in verse eight. And there was much joy in the city. Can you imagine going home? You just heard Philip preach. Can you just heard you saw your neighbor get healed?

Can you imagine going home? Hey, Troy, let's imagine there's a neighbor, Troy. Troy, my sins are forgiven.

I'm forgiven. Oh yeah? Did you hear about what happened to my brother? He's healed. He's not demon pissass. He's in his right mind. Oh, Aunt Nancy, you know what happened to her? She was healed.

[20 : 01] She can walk now. Can you imagine what joy there would be? Sins are forgiven. People are healed. Demons are cast out.

The Samaritans had realized that God had visited them and they were filled with gladness. In the book of Galatians, though, we read the stark contrast.

Something had happened and Paul writes to them and says, what happened to your joy? All of a sudden, somehow in the church at Galatia, they had lost some of this joy.

So what had happened? We read in the book of Galatians that they had slipped back into a legalistic relationship with the Lord and had been reduced to a bunch of do's and don'ts.

Religion will bring you no joy. Jesus brings joy. Sin is a joy killer. Unbelief sabotages joy.

[21 : 02] Sells kills joy. Living by fear over faith kills joy. And Jesus came to give us life and life more abundantly.

I appreciate how the Psalmist says it in Psalm 16. You'll make known to me the path of life and your presence there is fullness of joy.

And at your right hand, there are pleasures forevermore. Oh, Lord, thank you. Thank you. We keep reading on.

We come to a next section of Jesus is the deliverer of the formerly deceived. We're going to meet a man here whose name is Simon that is going to stand out to us.

And so let's read now nine through 13. But there was a man named Simon who was previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying he himself was somebody great.

[22 : 03] They all paid attention to him from the least to the greatest, saying this man is the power of God that is called great. And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.

But when they believed Philip, but when they believed Philip, as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, they were baptized, both men and women.

And even Simon himself believed. And after being baptized, continued with Philip and seeing signs and great miracles performed, he too was amazed.

Jesus is the deliverer of the formerly deceived. Notice how in this passage we have Simon who had been the guy in the city of Samaria.

And notice in verse 10 and 11, it says, and they all paid attention to him and look in verse 11 and they paid attention to him. Remember how in verse six, they paid attention to what Philip was proclaiming and they were looking intently.

[23 : 14] Well, now that's true today, they were all looking intently at Philip and his message about Jesus. But formerly, guess who had their attention? Simon.

Simon was enjoying a cult following among the Samaritans. And I would say he was a false prophet. He was a sorcerer of types. He was an expert in the occult.

He was a prophet motivated false prophet. True prophets direct their praise to God. False prophets receive praise as fuel for their own selfish gain.

And in order to keep the accolades coming, false prophets will set up hope in the wrong place. Simon placed hope in himself. And he allowed people to, the people said of him, he is somebody great.

And then he said of himself, this man is a power of God who is called great. The true prophets in contrast faithfully exalt the cross.

[24 : 20] So people's faith may not be based in human wisdom, but on the power of God. Simon was a false prophet. He was flashy. He amazed people and true prophets come with humility and dependence upon God.

False prophets like Simon are to be exposed while true prophets will one day be rewarded. And he was enjoying this cult following.

And Philip comes to town and he jeopardizes Simon's followers and his following. Now people are intently paying attention to Philip no longer Simon.

Philip is cutting into Simon's livelihood. And amazingly, many in Samaria, including Simon, believed and were baptized. It says in verse 13 that Simon himself believed and were baptized.

And just like the Samaritans were delivered from deception, so too were we who have believed in Christ. We were dead in sin and we were blinded.

[25 : 29] All we could do was to believe lies. The benefits of getting saved is to believe truth. I distinctly remember a lie that I believe.

One of the benefits of getting saved later in life is I remember some of the lies that I believed. I remember arriving at the age of 19, 18, I mean when I was 17, 18 and 19 years old, I was beginning to think that this world had any purpose for living for.

And if you don't believe there is a God, there is no purpose for living. The ultimate reduction of that and I could get into that later. But I remember at 19 years old when the Lord gifted me with faith to believe in his grace.

And I believed in the life, death and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sin. And I came to know him and I remember thinking, I have purpose and it sounds so silly, but it was like a light switch for me.

I now get to live for the glory of God. I had no idea what that would mean at that time. Still don't entirely, but I know that that's what I get to do for my life.

[26 : 51] And there's nothing better than that. And Jesus is the deliverer of the formerly deceived.

We read in verse 12, but when they believed Philip, as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, they were baptized, both men and women.

He, Jesus is a deliverer of the formerly deceived and that was me and that was you who are in Christ. Next, the gospel is confirmed by the apostles.

So can you imagine, let's put ourselves in the first century. You're an apostle, you're in Jerusalem and you're hearing word that Samaritans are coming to faith in Christ.

Now there's still some of that perhaps stigma that may exist and you think, I don't know if this is true. So now we're going to read that the gospel is confirmed by the apostles.

[27 : 54] So let's read verses 14 through 17. Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent from, they sent them Peter and John who came down and prayed for them and that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

For they had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Before I get into the text, I want us to recall something I emphasize in the first sermon of this series and that is that I emphasize that this is a historical book and we need to interpret historical books well because if we're not careful, we can misapply scripture and come to wrong conclusion as doctrine.

And this text in particular, there's two red flags that should light up in your mind and we just read about one of them. Let me just share more about this.

Acts is a book that is historical. It's in the historical genre of scripture, meaning it describes what has occurred or what did occur.

[29 : 15] It is not descriptive though in its nature, sorry, it's not prescriptive in its nature. It doesn't prescribe for us what the practice should be for us. It's just telling us what occurred.

Let me give you an example in history. There was a practice called bloodletting and it existed for 3000 years in human history. That is when you were sick or ill, you used to cut yourself and let out ounces of blood to get that bad thing that was in you out.

And so if you were sick, if you had seizures, they would cut you and they would let blood out and it was bloodletting and that was the practice for about 3000 years of human history. That's history.

It describes what occurred. Actually in the 19th century with some microscopes and understanding germs and viruses, now we have antibiotics that we treat things and I'm glad that bloodletting is not a common practice anymore.

So all that to say, history tells you what happened. It doesn't always prescribe to you how you should now think of it or the practice that you should have.

[30 : 23] That is found in the epistles. So when we think about doctrine of how to practice what we believe, the epistles are the letters of Scripture by the apostles and disciples are what we get from like 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Romans, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, Peter, James, Philemon, Jude, 1st and 2nd Timothy, these books prescribe the practice of whatever the doctrine is of what that looks like.

Why do I make mention of this? Notice these individuals are saved. They are baptized, but it says, verse 16, for he had not fallen on them yet being the Holy Spirit.

So you have saved baptized believers without the Holy Spirit. That for you should go, I have a question. That should be a red flag and it just describes what occurred.

And this passage has been a problem for many theologians throughout time. So let me now share with you how some have interpreted this passage.

Let me first say, in verses 4 through 6, you said, Scott, you said there are two red flags in this. And so the first one would be found in verses 4 through 6. And that is, what is up with the exorcisms and the healings?

[32 : 01] And does what happened here mean that we should expect present day gospel presentations to be accompanied by the casting out of demons or healing the paralyzed or lame or sick?

Or does what we read here suggest it is inappropriate for modern-day Christians who have the power to cast out demons and heal at will due to some supernatural giftings?

And the question in essence is, is this descriptive or is this prescriptive? So let me share this. To be clear, we should read and apply much of the books of Acts directly, but we should also take care when making one-to-one correlations at every turn.

We have to allow the rest of the Bible to help us make interpretations and applications for present day.

Second, verses 14 through 17, this is the passage that we came to. So you have saved and baptized believers in Christ and yet who have not yet received the Holy Spirit.

[33 : 09] So the questions arise. Is there a delay between when one is saved and when one receives the Holy Spirit? Historically, this has made this passage difficult to understand.

Some have come to several understandings, so let me share with you them now. Number one, some would contend that this text teaches that not all believers receive the Holy Spirit at salvation and must therefore seek a later spiritual experience, which is often supplemented by the speaking of intangs.

This is the case of this view. Usually teach that a person can be genuinely saved and regenerated, yet be devoid of the Holy Spirit. Second, some teach a slightly different view than this, teaching that the Samaritans mentioned in this passage were not genuinely saved and not genuinely regenerated.

And so they possess a measure of the Spirit, but do not have the spiritual gifts. That's how others have interpreted this. Third, still others have understood that these verses teach that the initial faith of the Samaritans was somehow defective, and therefore the Spirit did not come until they had genuine faith.

And most advocates of this view believe that this text emphasizes the dangers of insincere faith. And I believe these views are misguided, so we must take the genre of this book back into consideration and say this is historical.

[34 : 41] Let me share with you what Ephesians 1.13 reads. It says, in him, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Having believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. When one comes to faith in Christ and receives the person and the work of Christ on the cross for salvation, the Holy Spirit is instantaneous.

That they are met having believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. So then you say, well, Scott, what on earth is happening in this passage then? I'm glad you asked.

Let's remember where we're at in redemptive history. The Spirit was withheld until the apostles could verify the work in Samaria.

This is a unique case that the gospel is now moving outside of Jerusalem. The Lord sovereignly waits to give any manifestation of the Spirit until the apostles, namely Peter and John, could be there to witness it.

[35 : 54] That way they could see and could testify that the Samaritans received the same Holy Spirit given to the Christians in Jerusalem. In this way, there could be no question that the gospel was for the nations and that the Jews and the Samaritans who once were bitter enemies are now brothers and sisters and members of the same household of God because of their shared faith in Jesus Christ.

So Jerusalem believers had received the Spirit at Pentecost and now at the proper time, the apostles from the mother church, if you will, were there to witness and welcome the incorporation of the Samaritans into the believers of the Church of Jesus Christ.

We will see something similar about Cornelius in Acts chapter 11. So this would be a joyous good news because think about this.

Without the apostles, you can imagine the apostles in Jerusalem hearing word that the Samaritans had received Christ and the Holy Spirit had come. You may have been a little suspect of that, but having them present when that occurred, they go back and give a accurate report.

We were there. We know they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Next, my last point and we'll be done.

[37 : 20] The gospel must be protected. Read with me the last section of this passage 18 through 25. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on the hands of the apostles, he offered them money saying, give me this power also so that anyone 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 Spirit of God with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter for your heart is not right before God.

Not therefore of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven of you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

And Simon answered, pray for me to the Lord that nothing of what you have said may come upon me. Now when they, that is Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem preaching the gospel to many villages and to many Samaritans.

It is the responsibility of the church to protect the gospel, the simplicity, the beauty of God condescending to earth and the person of Christ who lived perfectly without sin, who died sacrifice, sacrificially atoning for the sin as a substitute taking my place.

[38 : 49] He rose victorious over sin and death and offered all a relationship with him and the promise of eternity with him to all who believe in his person and work.

That gospel must be protected. Simon's salvation is suspect as it begins early. I want you to read with me the account of his so-called salvation in verse 13.

When Simon himself believed and after was baptized and continued with Philip, that word, he continued that verb has been previously applied already in the book of Acts.

And it talks about people who continued in prayer. It talks about people who continued in various forms of ministry. And so here you have a man who got saved and he continues not in prayer.

He continues not in ministry. He continues with Philip. He wants, it's like a dog that is right at your hip. He will not leave his side.

[39 : 57] And so you have this man, Simon, whose salvation is suspect, but for right now he comes alongside Philip and he will not leave Philip's side.

That's the image that's being painted for us. And so Simon attaches him to Philip and seems out of place for the rest of the text of scripture.

Number verse 13 also, Simon is preoccupied with spiritual power. Look at what he observes in verse 13 and sees signs and great miracles and he is amazed.

Keep in mind, Simon is someone who also worked miracles, but he is amazed at Philip of what he is able to do. These healings and these signs that Philip is doing in the name of Christ as the gospel is shared.

And so he is preoccupied with signs and wonders and dropped down in verse 18. And when Simon saw that the spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles hand, he offered them money.

[41 : 05] And he gave and he said, give me this power also so that anyone who I may lay my hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.

He is preoccupied with spiritual power. We learned that Simon was astonished by the great signs and miracles. He was amazed. You see, Simon's life, this obsession with spiritual power that he is seeing and demonstrated in the apostles life.

Even magical worldview had not changed. A more thorough renunciation of his former belief and practices are still necessary.

Simon's belief in Jesus seems to be based on miraculous signs over a commitment to Jesus. Simon believes the spirit's power also can be bought.

There is nothing, there is no mention of outward signs and miracles being confirmed by the spirit, though these verses imply this reference. So when it says in verse 18, now when Simon saw that the spirit was given through the laying on of hands, so how do you witness that?

[42 : 19] So many people believe that there was some wonders done because the Holy Spirit and that is what he saw. When Simon saw the spirit was given, laying on it and appeared to Simon, maybe perhaps a new type of magic.

And if he could only lay his hands on that and it could be purchased with money, imagine that. And give me this power, give me this ability is what Simon is crying out.

No doubt Simon saw this as a way to regain influence and a hold on the Samaritans. W.A. Criswell says this, Simon has been, what's unfortunate is Simon's name because of what he did, if you just add a Y to the end of his name, you have a noun in the English word Simoni.

And it means to make a profit out of sacred things. Simon is the sin of buying or selling church offices or preferment.

So Simoni has been practiced for millennia. A bishop's office, this is what W.A. Criswell says, I'm quoting from him now. He says, a bishop's office could have been bought for so much money.

[43 : 37] And that was true of an archbishop's office or a cardinal's hat or an ecclesiastical living in a parish or a monastery. Simoni finally gave rise to the Reformation when all over Europe indulgences were sold in order to get money and to build St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome.

But let us check our hearts. We too perhaps are guilty of Simoni today. We would be wrong to suppose that this would not apply to us simply because we are not offered money for spiritual power or spiritual position or a church office.

Simon tried to obtain spiritual power in order to promote himself. So anytime we seek spiritual power or abilities to put ourselves forward to make, we make the same error.

This one applies to me specifically and to us who teach or preach the word of God. It would be Simoni to preach to gain recognition or status.

Serving with an eye on advancement in a church's power structure would be Simoni. If you serve to become someone else, to become someone like a deacon or an elder, if you serve with that motivation alone would be Simoni.

[45 : 02] Seeking spiritual gifts or the promotion of oneself is Simoni. Even seeking to be godly so that others may think of you as godly is Simoni.

One should have realized that God does not belong to a magician's union. And so Peter rebukes him in verse 20. But Peter said, may your silver perish with you because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money.

But Peter's all responses also seasoned with grace. Look with me in 21 and 23. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, your heart is not right before God.

Look in verse 23. For I see that you are a gall of bitterness, a gall of wretchedness, and a bond of iniquity. That bond of iniquity Simon was a prisoner of sin.

Solution was offered to him in verse 22. Repent therefore of this wickedness and pray to the Lord that if possible the intent of your heart would be forgiven you.

[46 : 10] Unfortunately for Simon, I don't believe he ever repented. And his response to Peter is insipidly lame.

Read with me in verse 24. Pray for me to the Lord that nothing of what you have said may become of me. He asks Peter to pray on his behalf to the Lord.

You know and I know who are in Christ. You who have a relationship with the Lord may talk to the Lord, not through a mediator. Your mediator is Jesus Christ.

You don't need a human mediator to talk to the Lord or seek his forgiveness. Jesus did that on our behalf. And Simon missed it.

So how is it that we protect the gospel? Let me admit on this point I can get a little testy. And so but I want you to hear what I'm doing when I hear certain things.

[47 : 15] Oftentimes I will ask for someone's testimony and say how is it that you know the Lord? What is the gospel? Why do you think you are saved?

How did you come to know the Lord? I will ask the question in a variety of ways and inevitably I may hear things like this. Perhaps you have said them. You certainly have. But I will admit that I am willingly playing dumb because I'm trying to ensure that the person who I'm talking to knows the gospel and they know the Lord.

And so I play dumb. So I hear phrases like I grew up in a Christian home. And so I'll respond with something like so by having Christian parents.

Is that what makes you a Christian? Well, no. So is it because then if you don't have Christian parents, there is no hope for you ever getting saved?

No. Oh, I went through confirmation or I was baptized. So if you go through a nine months class confirmation and you're faithful attendants in that class and you were there every time, every time that met, does that make you saved?

- [48 : 25] Is that why you are saved? No. Because you were baptized and you experienced Spokane aquifer water. Is that what removes sin?
- I went to church camp as a child. Oh, because your parents paid \$200 to \$600 for you to spend a week up a camp. By virtue of you stepping on that campground, that makes you saved.
- I went grew up going to a Christian school. Oh, because your parents paid more thousands of dollars for you to have someone to help you. If someone talked to you in that environment, that's what forgives sin.
- I went forward in a church service. Is there something special about the carpet up here that causes someone to go get saved when they come forward? Is that what happens?
- No, thank you. At the end of the church service, I stood up or I raised my hand. So if anyone raises their hand and when asked by a pastor, is that what saves you?
- [49 : 29] I have believed in God. So out of the womb as an infant, you knew God and your sins were forgiven just because you were born because you've always been saved.
- Thank you. I prayed the prayer. Lord, thanks for this food. Amen. Is that what saves? And what is the prayer?
- Do we just recant a certain words led by a pastor? Is the word recantation what saves you? No. Why am I being so picky on this matter?
- What's my last point? The gospel must be protected. Let's be absolutely clear what it is that saves, what it is that forgives sin.
- And his name is Jesus. And God in his gracious mercy sent his son, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died to forgive sin as a substitutionary tone rose three days later, overcoming sin and death and is now seated at the right hand of God, living to intercede for us.
- [50 : 45] And in his person and his work on the cross, because of what he has done is what saves. I have believed in life, death and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sin.
- That gospel must be protected because we make it also confusing, also confusing to those who listen.
- Let's quickly go to some application and then we'll close.
- Money cannot buy spiritual favor or ability. Money, the Holy Spirit is not for sale.
- Proclaim the gospel no matter one's circumstances. I'm sure it was incredibly hard to be displaced. They're being ripped out of your home under threat of imprisonment.
- [51 : 44] Some were and others just fled. That was their circumstance. Undoubtedly, it's hard. But what did they do? They just took the gospel wherever they went, the knowledge of Jesus Christ and they shared.
- Proclaim the gospel no matter what your circumstance and praise God for his work of salvation among the nations, even the Samaritans got saved.
- That's how we would have thought in the first century. And in the praising of God for the work of salvation, it ought to humble us. It ought to remind us to repent of any prejudices we have toward those who we think less worthy of salvation.
- It ought to challenge us to pray for the faith to believe that God would use forth to engage this global mission. Praise God for his work of salvation among the nations.
- Let's pray. Father, thank you for this day. Help us to refuse any motive in us of self-seeking, for seeking any power or prestige for any wrong reason.
- [53 : 01] Help us to seek only you, not for mere gifts, but for the enjoyment and delight of who you are. Search our hearts today.

Purge us and strengthen us. Use us in the city of Spokane, in our places of work, in our places of influence, in our neighborhoods, in this nation.

Use us, Lord, for the sake of the nations, that you would raise up missionaries here at forth that would be a listening attentively to what you are doing in each other's lives and encourage each other.

Be strong and courageous. Go. Share the gospel wherever you are. We love you, Lord, and it's in your name, Jesus.

Be pray, amen.