

# Acts 045

## Was Simon Saved? (Part 2)

Acts 8:13a

April 17, 2024

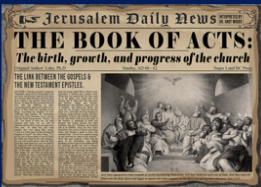
Dr. Andy Woods

All right, let's open our Bibles this evening to Acts 8:13. This is the chapter that highlights the ministry of Philip the deacon, who was also an evangelist. He has a two-fold ministry here in Acts 8.

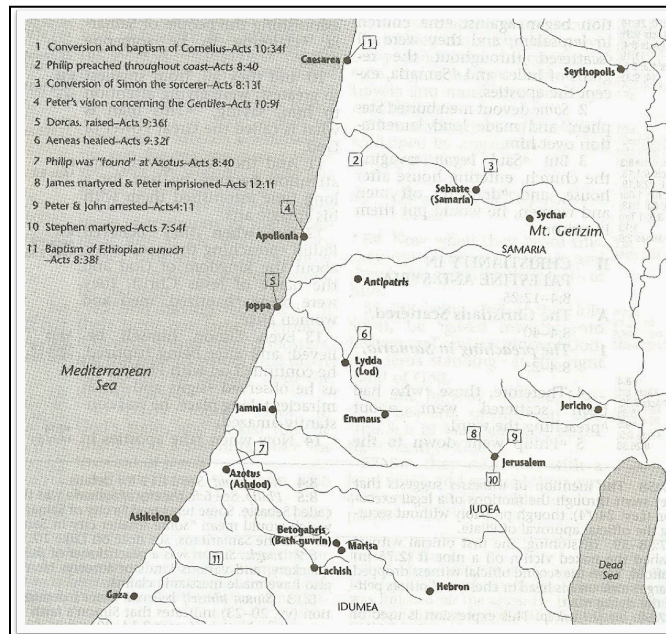
**Acts 8:5-40**  
Philip's Ministry

I. **Samaria (8:5-25)**

II. **Judea (Acts 8:26-40)**



The first part of his ministry is in Samaria, and then later he is going to minister in Judea. We are still in the section where he is ministering in Samaria.



Philip has come into Samaria as an evangelist. His evangelistic activities have led a lot of Samaritans to the Lord, including, as we are going to see tonight, a man named Simon who, prior to his salvation, was involved in magic arts and things like that.

**I. Ministry in Samaria**  
Acts 8:5-25

- A. Evangelization in Samaria (5-8)
- B. **Simon's conversion (9-13)**
- C. Peter & John lay hands on the Samaritans (14-17)
- D. Peter rebukes Simon (18-25)



Before Simon's conversion, he was promoting himself as someone great amongst the Samaritans. If you look back at Acts 8:11, you will notice the words "long time"—

*"...he [Simon] had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts" (Acts 8:11).*

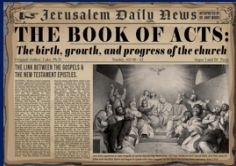
So those who had originally been impressed by Simon start getting saved. Then we come to Acts 8:13. What happened to Simon? It says in Acts 8:13,

*"Even Simon himself believed;..." (Acts 8:13).*

Simon exercises faith in Philip's message. Philip's message, I think, is very sound, because his message is described in Acts 8:12 as being about the name of Jesus Christ.

**B. Acts 8:9-13**  
Simon's Conversion

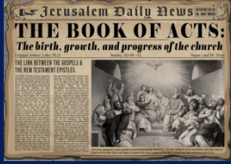
1. Simon's deception (9-11)
2. Samaria's response to Philip's preaching (12)
3. **Simon's response to Philip's preaching (13)**



So I am of the persuasion that Simon was really what I would call an authentic believer. What I just said is very disputed, and we will get into why that is, this evening.

3. Acts 8:13  
Simon's Response to Philip's Preaching

- a) Faith (13a)
- b) Baptism (13b)
- c) Followed Philip (13c)



You will notice that Simon himself believed. Now, that is the same word used in Acts 8:12 to describe the Samaritans who believed. Nobody doubts the salvation of the Samaritans. So why is it that everyone doubts the same word used to describe Simon and his salvation. I will show you why people doubt it in just a minute.

So why was Simon saved? He believed, just like the rest of the Samaritans. He fulfilled the condition.

Lewis Sperry Chafer says,

"...upwards of 150 passages of Scripture conditioned salvation upon believing only (cf. John 3:16; Acts 16:31)."<sup>1</sup>


To believe means to trust. Simon trusted in the message of Philip, which was all about Jesus Christ.

Belief – God's One Condition for Justification

**Gen 15:6**  
Then he **believed** in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

**John 3:16**  
For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

**Acts 16:30-31**  
"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..."



<sup>1</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 7, *Systematic Theology*(Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.

These are some of the classic verses that you can look at that teach that there is only one condition necessary to be justified before God: to believe.

*"Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).*

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).*

*"... 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,..." (Acts 16:30-31).*

The Bible, over 150 times, lays this out as the only condition the lost sinner must meet. Believing, as you know, is more than just intellectual assent. It has to do with trust. Simon met the condition, as did the rest of the Samaritans.

You will also notice that Simon was baptized. Acts 8:13 says,

*"Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized,..." (Acts 8:13).*

So Simon believed, and then he was baptized, just like the rest of the Samaritans. If you go back to Acts 8:12, it says,

*"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" (Acts 8:12).*

So the Samaritans believed and were baptized. The exact same thing happened to Simon. He believed and was baptized.

Now, who was doing the baptizing? It was Philip—Philip the Deacon, Philip the Evangelist. You have to ask yourself at some point, "If Simon's salvation was somehow in doubt, why would Philip have baptized him?" Philip apparently had no reservations about Simon's newfound faith. He baptized Simon, along with the rest of the Samaritans.

A third reason that I think Simon was saved is that (if you go down to Acts 8:24), after Peter rebuked Simon, Simon experienced remorse. It says in Acts 8:24,

*"But Simon answered and said, 'Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me'" (Acts 8:24).*

Simon seems to feel sorry for trying to grab the reins of power, which he does in between his salvation and his remorse. So the fact that he is experiencing remorse is evident that the Holy Spirit is inside him working. I do not think he would have experienced that kind of remorse without the Holy Spirit inside him.

That is what Chafer called a secondary evidence of the assurance of salvation. The primary evidence is the promise of God. When you believe, God makes you a promise


that you are saved if you believe on Jesus Christ, the true message of Jesus Christ—you are saved. God promises it. But then you will notice that after you do get saved, you start to have certain experiences that you did not have prior to salvation. You will commit a certain sin that you used to commit regularly, except now you feel really bad about it.

So what happened to you? The Holy Spirit came inside you and started to make you sensitive to particular sins that you really had no sensitivity towards before salvation. That is a secondary evidence as to how you can know you are saved. But you want to hold on to subjective experiences somewhat loosely, because they can come and go. The primary evidence that you have that you are saved is the promise of God who cannot lie: if you believe on God's Son, God makes you a reciprocal promise that you are saved. You have passed over from death to life.

So when you look at this man named Simon, a sorcerer, to me he looks as though he is saved, because what is happening in his life is exactly what happened in the lives of the Samaritans in Acts 8:12, whose salvation no one contests.

**Why Simon Was Saved**

1. Simon believed (Acts 8:12, 13)
2. Simon was baptized (Acts 8:12, 13)
3. Simon experienced remorse (Acts 8:24)



Number one, Simon believed, just like the Samaritans. He did not just believe, but he believed in the right thing, because faith is only as good as the object it is placed in. You see Philip's bold proclamation of Christ in Acts 8:12. That is the message that the Samaritans trusted in. That is the message that Simon trusted in.

Number two, Simon was baptized, just like the Samaritans. Baptism does not save you, of course. It is an outward confession of an inward reality. That is what baptism is. But it is highly unlikely that Philip would have baptized Simon with the rest of the Samaritans if Philip somehow had doubts about Simon's salvation.

Number three, Simon had a subjective experience, which is not your primary evidence that you are saved, but it can be a secondary evidence. When confronted by Peter, he experienced remorse (Acts 8:24), which indicates that the Holy Spirit was inside him, sensitizing him to the need to live a holy life.

I remember that when I first got saved, as some time passed, I started to have desires that I never had before. One of those desires was to read—to read my Bible, and to read books about Christianity and the things that are eternal. I never had that desire before salvation. In fact, getting me to read anything before salvation was a work in and of itself.

I am not even sure how I graduated high school, to be honest with you, because I did not read anything. I majored in basketball—that was part of the problem. But after salvation, it is so interesting how you can walk into a Christian bookstore and just have a desire to read this, a desire to read that—something I never had before.

So in addition to the promise of God that I was saved, God was giving me sort of an accompanying secondary experience, demonstrating that I was saved. The same kind of thing has happened in the life of Simon.

So you would think that we would just move on from this verse, right? If you were in a normal church, you would move on from this verse. But you are not in a normal church. You are in a church that goes deep into the things of God. I want to explain to you why the vast majority of commentators out there do not believe that Simon was saved. They think that his faith was spurious.

### Illegitimate Faith

1. Spurious faith (Luke 8:13; Jas. 2:19)
2. Miracle faith (John 2:23-25)
3. Repent (2 Pet. 3:9)
4. Perish (John 3:16)
5. Description of the Lost (Acts 8:21, 23)
6. Simon never received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-18)
7. Founder of Gnosticism

This happens from the Arminian perspective: maybe Simon was saved and lost his salvation. It also happens largely from the Calvinistic perspective that teaches if you are saved, you have to bear fruit, and if you are not a fruit bearer, then they have a right to question whether you were saved to begin with.

In Simon's immediate post-Christian life—and keep in mind that he did not have a lot of time to mature—there is not a lot of fruit. There is maybe some in his remorse in Acts 8:24, but he does some really naughty things as a so-called believer. So people, coming from the Calvinistic persuasion, say that Simon is not bearing fruit, so his faith is illegitimate.

So let me give you the seven arguments that you will run into over and over again when teachers or commentators question Simon's salvation. I have given you the three reasons that I think he was saved. But why do so many people challenge this? There are basically seven reasons they do.

The first is that they believe that his faith was what they call "spurious." Notice this quote from William Hendriksen, a Calvinist. He writes, commenting on John 2, which we are going to talk about in a little bit,

"Many trusted in his name; i.e., because of the manner in which his power was displayed they accepted him [Jesus] as a great prophet and perhaps even as the Messiah. This, however, is not the same as saying that they surrendered their hearts to him. Not all faith is saving faith..."<sup>2</sup>

Look at that last clause there that I have underlined:

"Not all faith is saving faith..."<sup>3</sup>

Well, then, what is saving faith? Hendriksen mentions surrender. You can memorize this through the mnemonic "COPS." You have to have commitment; you have to have obedience; you have to have perseverance; and you have to have service. COPS stands for Commitment, Obedience, Perseverance, and Service. You had better have it fast, and if you do not have it fast, then you do not have the real faith—you have a fake faith, because not all faith is saving faith. There is the faith that saves, and there is the faith that does not save.

I cannot tell you how many Christians labor under this doctrine. And I say "labor" because if you believe that last clause—"Not all faith is saving faith..."<sup>4</sup>—do you know what just got thrown right out the window? The assurance of salvation. You are going to spend your whole life as a Christian wondering if you have the right kind of faith, because William Hendriksen said, "There are two kinds. There is the faith that saves, and the faith that does not save."

People call the faith that does not save "easy believism." The truth of the matter, folks, is that in the Bible, you will never find the expression "easy believism." It is made up. You either believe or you do not. It is that simple. It is like getting on an airplane. I am either going to trust the pilot and get on the plane, or I am not. Now, I might get on the plane with sweaty palms being nervous, but I am still on the plane. I am either in or out.

That is how the Bible presents salvation. You either believe or you do not. This idea of easy believism is basically made up. But Hendriksen and others would say that Simon did not have the right kind of faith.

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<sup>2</sup> William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 3d ed. (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), p. 127. (1978). *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 135. (1978). *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 135.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

A lot of this relates to the gift of faith that the elect receive according to Calvinism. God has ordained a certain small fraction of the human race unto salvation. Everyone else, according to John Calvin himself, is doomed from the womb. They are unsavable.

Since no human being has the ability to believe in Christ, Calvinists say that God has to impart the gift of faith to the elect. So if you happen to have the right kind of faith, faith accompanied by COPS (Commitment, Obedience, Perseverance, and Service), then you probably have the gift of faith. But you really do not know, because in the course of your life you might lapse into unbelief. So you really have to wait till the very end of your life to know whether you are one of the elect or not.

That is why so many of the Puritans, who believed this (there was a doctoral dissertation written on this), went to their deathbeds in total fear—because they did not really know if they were one of the elect and had the right kind of faith, the gift of faith. How would you know, until you get to the end of your life, whether you have persevered or not? So you have to have Commitment, Obedience, Perseverance, and Service.

Those are very subjective. How much commitment do you have to have? How much obedience? How much perseverance? How much do you have to serve? Those are never objectively quantified. So people who believe this, the two faiths doctrine (the faith that saves and the faith that does not save), do not have any assurance of salvation. It is very sad to see how many Christians have been seduced by this.

So the first argument that people give is that Simon did not have the right kind of faith. He had spurious faith. It is at this point that they will run you right through James 2:19. Every legalist I have ever run into runs you through James 2:19.

*"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder" (James 2:19).*

Look there: even the demons believe and they are not saved.

They will also run you through Luke 8:13, where it says,

*"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13).*

So they will use James 2:19 and Luke 8:13 to argue for this spurious faith idea. There is the faith that saves and the faith that does not save. And they try to defend the faith that does not save from the parable of the sower—those that believed and fell away—and from James 2:19—even the demons believe and tremble. So that is the first reason people do not think Simon's faith was legitimate, even though his conversion is described the exact same way as everyone else's conversion in Samaria.

The second argument that they use is they say that Simon had miracle faith. In other words, he was just interested in miracles. Their favorite passage for this is John 2:23-25. That is the passage that Hendriksen was quoting earlier, or alluding to. It says this:

*"Now when He [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in ['pisteuo eis' (πιστεύω εἰς)] His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man" (John 2:23-25).*

So there were people who believed in Jesus in John 2, but Jesus would not entrust Himself to them. That is taken as meaning they did not have authentic faith—they had miracle faith, but not saving faith. They just believed in Jesus' miracles.

Now, they are abusing the passage, as I will show you a little bit later, but that is the second argument that they use. They make a big deal about how in the second part of Acts 8:13, it says of Simon,

*"...he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed" (Acts 8:13).*

"Oh, he had miracle faith—spurious faith—but not the real faith. He never received the gift of faith, which is always accompanied by a desire for commitment, obedience, perseverance, and service."

The third argument that you will run into as to why people do not think Simon was saved is that he is told to repent. Look at Acts 8:22 (Peter speaking to Simon).

*"Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22).*

Simon is trying to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit here. Peter says, "You need to repent." Basically what people will say is that the word "repent" only applies to unsaved people. They will quote Acts 2:38, where Peter is speaking to the unsaved on the day of Pentecost.

*"...Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).*

They will run over to Paul on Mars Hill in Acts 17, who applies the word "repentance" to the unsaved. Paul says to the unsaved,

*"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a*

*Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).*

So people will say that repentance only applies to an unsaved person. Simon is told to repent, so he must not have had the real faith.

Peter, in his epistle says,

*"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).*

People say that repentance only applies to the unsaved. So obviously Simon is unsaved, and did not have the real faith, because he is told to repent. That is the logic.

The fourth argument that you will run into as to why Simon was allegedly unsaved because he just had spurious faith, is the use of the word "perish" (Acts 8:20).

*"But Peter said to him, 'May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!'" (Acts 8:20).*

So people will say, "Well, there is the word 'perish'—Peter says, *"May your silver perish with you,..." (Acts 8:20).*"

(That is an interesting question. How does silver perish? These are questions they do not bring up—this side of the ledger—this side of the argument.)

They will run over to John 3:16, which says,

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).*

"Peter said, *"May your silver perish with you,..." (Acts 8:20)*, and because 'perish,' in John 3:16, is applied to unsaved people, Simon was unsaved." Then they will run down to Acts 8:21-23, where Peter rebukes Simon. They will say, "The process of the rebuke obviously describes an unsaved man." I will concede that it is a harsh rebuke—Peter rebuking Simon because Simon thought he could buy the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter says to Simon,

*"You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.... For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity" (Acts 8:21, 23).*

People will say, "See—*"bondage of iniquity" (Acts 8:23)*—*"have no part" (Acts 8:21)*—all these kinds of things—*"your heart is not right" (Acts 8:21)*—obviously you are dealing with an unsaved person."

Then they will say, number six, that Luke never says Simon received the Holy Spirit. It says in Acts 8:17, concerning the Samaritans,

*"Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:17).*

We are going to get into (I do not have time to do it tonight) why the Samaritans got the Holy Spirit at a later point after believing. There is a reason for that. It has to do with the Jewish-Samaritan conflict. But very clearly, even though the Spirit is delayed, the Samaritans received it.

It says in Acts 8:18,

*"Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money," (Acts 8:18).*

So people will make a point about how it talks about how all these Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit, but it does not say that Simon received the Holy Spirit. Now notice that it does not say that Simon did not receive the Holy Spirit either. So it is an argument from silence that they use.

Then a seventh argument that you will run into is that people will trace Simon to Gnosticism, which started to get developed at the end of the first century into the second century. Henry Morris, a commentator that I really like on almost everything, but not on this, writes,

*"Simon's 'belief' was evidently only a belief in the reality of signs and wonders performed by Philip (note Christ's rebuke of this kind of belief in Jo. 4:48; also compared John 2:23-25)."<sup>5</sup>*

So Henry Morris is saying that Simon had miracle faith, but not saving faith.

*"These wonders were greater than those which Simon was able to do with his sorceries (Greek 'Mageia' [μαγεία], from which we get the word 'magic'), and he was envious. In early Christian literature, he was called Simon Magus, and he was said to be a prominent enemy of the true faith."<sup>6</sup>*

In later Christian literature, a lot of people believe that Simon obviously did not persevere in the faith because he had some kind of role in starting Gnosticism.

So you take those seven arguments and you put them together, and almost every commentator you read comes to the conclusion that Simon was never really saved, even though the Bible says that he believed, was baptized, and experienced remorse.

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<sup>5</sup> Henry Morris Study Bible, 1646.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

### Answering Illegitimate Faith Arguments

1. Spurious faith (Luke 8:13; Jas. 2:19) – Angels
2. Miracle faith (John 2:23-25) – *pistueō eis*
3. Repent (2 Pet. 3:9) – Rev. 2–3
4. Perish (John 3:16) – Temporal
5. Description of the Lost (Acts 8:21, 23) – No time for Sanctification
6. Simon never received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-18) – Argument from silence
7. Founder of Gnosticism – *Sola Scriptura*

Let me give you what I think are the answers to these seven arguments. Why do I think Simon had authentic faith? Well, the first argument is that his faith was spurious—James 2:19 says that even the demons believe and tremble. When someone brings up that passage there, they are comparing apples and oranges. Salvation is not open to the demons. Salvation is not open to the fallen angelic realm.

So when you bring in, "Well, the demons believe too, and they tremble"—and almost everybody does this—you are bringing in an issue where salvation is not even applicable to the demons. We are not dealing with demons here. We are dealing with a human being. Salvation is open to humans. It is not open to fallen angels. So they are putting two things together that do not even belong.

And also, in James 2:19, the gospel is not presented. The name "Jesus" is not found in James 2:19. Specifically, all it says is,

*"You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder" (James 2:19).*

That is a belief in monotheism. That is not the gospel. No one is saved by believing God is one.

In Acts 8, Jesus is mentioned. In James 2, Jesus is not mentioned. In Acts 8, human salvation is referred to. In James 2:19, demonic salvation (which is not even a possibility) is referred to. The only thing James 2:19 is talking about is that our faith needs to become productive so God can use it. And James, to get the point across, says that is even true with the demons.

The demons believe in God and they have a reaction. They are afraid. So since that happens amongst the demons, how much more should it happen amongst God's people who believe the truth, if there is a demonic reaction to demonic faith—a trembling. In order for our faith to be productive and useful, we need to apply it.

So James is arguing from absurdity. But people grab that James 2:19 passage all the time and argue for this spurious faith idea. And in the process, they are equating two things that do not go together.

Then people go over to the parable of the sower, Luke 8:13.

*"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13).*

Now, what people are assuming is that—as the gospel is preached and the seed is planted on different soils, and only in one soil does it bear fruit—the only person saved in that parable is the one who bore fruit. Everyone else is unsaved.

I want to give you a different interpretation of the parable of the sower. In three of four cases, salvations happened. In one case, salvation does not happen. So you might want to just go over to Luke 8:5-8. (You know this parable well.) It says,

*"The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up [so it sprouted; there was life there], it withered away, because it had no moisture. Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out [so there is life there again, but it is choked out]. Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.' As He said these things, He would call out, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear'" (Luke 8:5-8).*

The standard interpretation of this is that only in the batch of soil that bears fruit do you have actual salvation. I do not think that is true at all. I think that in three of the four soils salvations happen, but the worries of this life choke the believer's maturity. That is what Jesus is talking about.

Someone is saved, justified, but they are not making any progress in the middle tense of their salvation. Rather than seeing only one of four saved, I think three of the four are saved. Certainly salvation has occurred in the good soil. But according to our understanding, when does life begin? Doesn't life begin at conception? Well, spiritual life begins at conception. The moment there is birth, spiritual life has happened.

People need to start making a distinction between birth issues and growth issues. Those are two different things. You can be born and have maturity problems, nutrition problems, etc. That does not mean you are not born. It is the exact same way in the spiritual life. You can be born again and not be growing the way you should. That you are not growing the way you should is a growth issue, a maturity issue. It does not necessarily support the fact that a birth has never happened. That is how to understand those two other soils.

So when you look at the interpretation of this, Luke 8:12-15, Jesus says,

*"Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12).*

Now, that first group there by the road, I am on board with that there is no salvation, because it Luke 8:12 that they did not believe so as to be saved. But what about the rocky soil?

*"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy;..." (Luke 8:13).*

So this is a situation where a conception has happened, and growth is coming up, before it is stagnated through the cares of this world.

*"Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13).*

What happened to that group? There was an actual conception. There was an actual birth. But they did not make progress in the middle tense of their salvation. This is not describing someone with a birth issue, but someone with a growth issue. The spurious faith idea assumes that the people in that second group were unsaved. I am saying they were saved, but they just did not grow.

*"The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity" (Luke 8:14).*

See that? It is a maturity problem. That third group did believe because it says back in Luke 8:7,

*"Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out" (Luke 8:7).*

There was growth, but as they were trying to live the Christian life, they were not making progress. Maybe they were not being disciplined. Maybe they were not reading their Bible. Maybe they were not in prayer. So they were stifled in the middle tense of their salvation.

*"But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance" (Luke 8:15).*

So the spurious faith idea is assuming that only people in that fourth batch of soil were saved. I am saying that it is a completely legitimate interpretation to have people in the second group and the third group saved as well, but they have—not a birth issue—a growth issue. They do not have a justification issue. They have a progressive sanctification issue.

So that is an approach to the parable of the sowers that you probably have never heard before. Just study it out for yourself and see if this could be a possibility, because typically what you get today in Christendom is one interpretation: three of the soils are unbelievers, and only that fourth soil is actually a believer. But if you believe that life begins at conception in the physical realm and in the spiritual realm, the sudden growth up before it is choked demonstrates that spiritual life was there.

So therefore you cannot use Luke 8:13 and James 2:19 to somehow come in and argue that Simon's faith was not real. Simon did not have a salvation problem. He had a growth problem. He did not have a justification problem. He had a discipleship problem. And of course, if you believe that there is the faith that saves and the faith that does not save, then you are going to spend the rest of your life as a Christian looking at your salvation like the weather report.

"Hey, thirty percent chance of rain. Am I going to go to heaven one day? About a thirty percent chance. But then I have a really good week. Now it is up to sixty percent. Then I have a lousy week. Now I am down to ten percent again."

You are bouncing all over the place like a pinball in a pinball machine, because you have been robbed of something that is your birthright, the assurance of your salvation. I know one hundred percent—not ninety percent—not ninety-five percent—that when I die, I am going to heaven. I have total and complete assurance of that.

Do you know why I believe that? Because I am kept by grace. That is how I know it. (Now, if the whole thing rode on my shoulders, some days I would think I am saved, other days I think I would not be saved.)

I bounce back and forth in certain cases because I have a growth problem, a maturity problem. Am I going to obey God and walk by faith when I hit a particular trial or not? That is not a salvation issue. Your performance as a Christian does not determine whether you are saved, because you got into the door by grace.

Now, if you did not get in the door by grace and you got in by works, or if you got in by faith, but your works keep you, God help you. One day you are going to think you are saved; the next day you are going to think you are not saved. It is no different from the surety of the weather report.

What about this miracle faith idea? "Oh, Simon just had miracle faith." Look very carefully at John 2:23-25, where people are using the text for this miracle faith idea.

*"Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them,..." (John 2:23-24).*

So people say, "Well, these are people who just believed in miracles. They observed His signs." But if you look very carefully, they did not just observe His signs, they believed in His name. But this passage is taught to mean, "Well, they just believed in miracles. So obviously, their faith was illegitimate."

That is why I have in brackets the Greek construction that is translated *"believed in"* (John 2:23). It is "pisteuo eis" (πιστεύω εἰς): "believed in." Study that right on through John's gospel, and what you will see is that every single time where that Greek construction is used, it always refers to a person who is authentically born again. So you have to take the same construction "pisteuo eis" (πιστεύω εἰς) and make this passage here (John 2:23-25) a special pleading.

"Pisteuo eis" (πιστεύω εἰς) ("pisteuo" [πιστεύω]) is the same construction used in the purpose statement of John's Gospel, where John says,

*"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe [pisteuo eis' (πιστεύω εἰς)] [pisteuo' (πιστεύω)] that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).*

If "pisteuo eis" (πιστεύω εἰς) ("pisteuo" [πιστεύω]) meant that maybe your faith is illegitimate, then why is it used in the purpose statement in John's gospel to convince people to get saved? It is the same Greek construction there that is used back in John 2.

Jesus wants us to have miracle faith. There is absolutely nothing wrong with believing in Jesus on account of the signs. The purpose statement in John's Gospel is,

*"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;" (John 20:30).*

So actually, Jesus is in favor of miracle faith because He invites faith based on His miracles which confirm who He is. So this whole sort of miracle faith versus real faith is just false. It is a false dichotomy. It is a false distinction.

Now, watch this. If these people in John 2 believed in Christ and were really saved, which they were, because the "pisteuo eis" (πιστεύω εἰς) construction is used here, why does it say that Jesus would not entrust Himself to them? Does that mean that Jesus is saying, "Well, you are really not saved?"

All you have to do is juxtapose John 2 with John 15, where Jesus starts to draw a distinction between being a believer in God and a friend of God. The whole thing is solved here in John 15:14-15, where Jesus is speaking to His disciples, eleven saved people, in the Upper Room (the only unbeliever, Judas, has left [John 13:26-31]). So Jesus is talking to eleven saved people, and now He starts to talk about something beyond being a believer. He is talking about being a friend of God.

*"You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:14-15).*

"Hey, you believers, you eleven believers, you have graduated. You are no longer just believers. You are now My friends. And the reason you are My friends is that you have a walk of obedience."

Now, your walk of obedience does not qualify you for salvation. Faith alone does that. But the walk of obedience qualifies you for friendship with God. Well, why would I want to be a friend of God? Because God makes disclosures to you that He does not make to believers who are not His friends—disobedient believers.

*"You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My father I have made known to you"* (John 15:14-15).

"Hey, I have been with you guys, eleven believers, for three years now, and I am seeing a walk of obedience. So guess what? You are no longer just believers. You are still that—praise the Lord! But you are also My friends, and because you are My friends, you are entitled to disclosures of insight that other believers are not exposed to."

You have to learn to draw a distinction between salvation and friendship, two different things. What is the condition of salvation? Faith by itself. What is the condition for friendship? Obedience. What is the key Scripture on salvation? John 3:16. What is the key Scripture on friendship? John 15:14.

Of the three phases of salvation—justification, sanctification, and glorification—which one does salvation deal with? Justification—being made right with God. What phase of salvation does friendship deal with? Sanctification—growth. Friendship with God is a growth issue, not a salvation issue.

Well, what is the benefit of salvation? Being saved from sin's penalty. What is the benefit of being a friend of God as demonstrated through a walk of obedience? You now have insight into things, as Jesus said would happen John 15:14-15, that the average believer who has not yet really learned the walk of discipleship does not receive.

So all friends of God are believers, but not all believers are friends of God. Now, once you get solidified in that way of thinking, John 2:23-25 is not hard to interpret.

*"Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in [*pisteuo eis'* (πιστεύω εἰς)] His name, observing His signs [*which Jesus invited*] which He was doing" (John 2:23).*

So these are people that are clearly justified.

*"But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man" (John 2:24-25).*

When it says that Jesus did not entrust Himself to them, what He is saying is, "This group here that has believed in Me has not learned the walk of obedience yet. They

have not learned the walk of discipleship yet. So they are not My friends yet, because there is no pattern of obedience in their lives. They are just baby Christians. They do not know anything about discipleship or obedience.

"So I will not entrust Myself to them with greater disclosures and insight. The greater disclosures and insight go to my friends. So I am going to wait for these people here to grow up, put on the big boy pants, get rid of the training wheels, man up, become disciples. And as they do that, one by one, I will start entrusting Myself to them as My friends because they have a walk of obedience."

So if you understand this correctly, there is no spurious faith doctrine here. There is one faith. You either believe in Christ or you do not. The issue with these people is not whether they have the right kind of faith. The issue is, "Are they going to become God's friend through obedience or not?" That is the issue.

Once you see that, it totally dissolves the idea that I am going to say that Simon is not a true believer because of John 2. John 2 is not even talking about so-called spurious faith. John 2 is drawing a distinction between believer and friendship.

How about this third argument? "Well, Peter tells him to repent. You only tell an unbeliever to repent, right? You never tell a believer to repent." You guys are all believers. Have you ever had to repent of something as a believer? I have. This idea that repentance only applies to an unsaved person, it is like, "My goodness, have you not read Revelation 2-3, written to the seven churches—believing churches?" Jesus tells them to repent, repent, repent, repent, all the way through those letters.

In fact, the seven churches were all bad except for two. That is why when I was driving my car not long ago, and I saw a church sign that said, "We are a first-century church," I thought, "Oh, no. Which one? Laodicea? I do not know. I do not know if I would want to be a first-century church." "We're the first church of Corinth." That is something to be proud of. Well, the worst of the worst was Laodicea. They were the bottom of the barrel.

Jesus does not even have anything good to say about Laodicea. At least with the other ones, He was able to muster a few compliments. There was nothing good going on in Laodicea. Yet the Laodiceans were saved. How do I know that? Because of Revelation 3:19, written to the church at Laodicea.

*"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline;..." (Revelation 3:19).*

See that? The concept of discipline does not apply to the unsaved. Judgment applies to the unsaved. Discipline is a totally different idea. "Whom the Lord loves the Lord chastens" (paraphrase, Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:6; Revelation 3:19). I have never disciplined the neighbor's kids, although it has been tempting at times. You discipline your own. In fact, Hebrews 12:5-13 says that if we experience the disciplining hand of God, it proves we belong—that we are His children.

So here Jesus is talking about discipline to Laodicea, which is the worst of the worst. So if the worst of the worst are saved, all the rest of them are saved too. And all the way through the letters to the seven churches, Jesus says, "Repent. Repent. Repent."

Repent. Repent." Not "Repent unto salvation." They already had salvation. "Repent according to certain sins happening in these churches."

I do not know where people really come up with this stuff, but this idea that somehow repentance only applies to unbelievers is just a ridiculous idea. You have to throw out Revelation 2-3 to get that to work.

What about this fourth argument, "perish"? Going back to Acts 8:20:

*"But Peter said to him, 'May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!'" (Acts 8:20).*

So people say that "perish" means that you go into hell. But that is interesting, because silver cannot perish (go into hell), can it? So *"perish"* (Acts 8:20) must mean something else. I think what it is talking about is, "Simon, if you do not get your act together and start experiencing mental renewal [Romans 12:2] then there are things in your life of a temporal nature that will perish. Ministry opportunities will perish. Rewards at the Bema Seat judgment of Christ will perish."

First Corinthians 3:10-15 talks about a man whose works go through the fire at the Bema Seat Judgment, and it is all consumed, but he himself is saved, yet as through fire. So here is a man (Simon) who did experience perishing. He did not perish. But the reward that he could have had, had he invested his life rightly, perished at the Bema Seat Judgment.

Paul was concerned about this. He said,

*"but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified [for the prize]" (1 Corinthians 9:27).*

The prize is not salvation, or else Paul just taught works salvation. When Paul talks about being disqualified for the prize, he is talking about a fear of losing reward at the Bema Seat Judgment after having preached to others.

As a Christian, you can go out and be disobedient if you want to. Although because of "Once saved, always saved," and being kept by grace—although you may not perish, a lot of things in your life will, not the least of which is rewards at the Bema Seat.

Second John 1:8 says,

*"Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward" (2 John 1:8).*

There is a reward perishing.

Revelation 3:11, written to the church at Philadelphia, says,

*"I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).*

"Oh, look, they are going to lose their salvation." No. The crown is a reward above and beyond salvation. Christians lose things constantly by being disobedient to God. That has nothing to do with one's glorification, which is already a done deal.

How about this argument here that Simon looks like an unsaved person? Well, how much time had Simon had to grow before he was rebuked by Peter? About five minutes. "What kind of Bible study program was he on? What local church did he attend?" He had no time for any of that. So that is why he is not doing well in the middle tense of his salvation, where Peter's rebuke to him is very strong.

Growth is a process, just like in the natural world. You have to avail your mind to the things of God constantly to grow. Romans 12:2 says,

*"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).*

That is a process that takes time. Justification happens in a nanosecond. Growth is a process. Conception in the physical world happens in a nanosecond. Growth and maturity is a process. Simon had no time to grow. That is why he is acting like an unsaved person, because that is the way his mind was working prior to the process of mental renewal.

How about this argument here: Simon never received the Holy Spirit? Well, that is an argument from silence. The text does not say that everybody got the Holy Spirit except Simon. He was baptized, though. Philip thought he was legitimate.

How about this last argument here: Simon was the founder of Gnosticism? Well, you know what, folks? The devil can use a saved person. Was Peter saved? Hello? Yes. Okay. I just want to make sure I am with the right crowd here. No doubt Peter was saved. Jesus said to Peter,

*"...Get behind Me, Satan!..." (Matthew 16:23; Mark 8:33).*

Just that someone's life is used for satanic purposes does not mean they are not saved. Ephesians 4:26-27, to the believer, says,

*"BE ANGRY AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity" (Ephesians 4:26-27).*

Were Ananias and Sapphira saved? Yeah.

*"But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie...?'" (Acts 5:3).*

Just that Simon went on and was the founder, perhaps, of some kind of false religion does not necessarily mean that he was unsaved. Satan uses saved people all the time if they pander to the flesh.

How about this statement here? Who said it?

"First, their synagogues should be set on fire...Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed...Thirdly, they should be deprived of their prayer books and Talmuds...Fourthly, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more...Fifthly, passport and traveling privileges should be absolutely forbidden to the Jews...Sixthly, they ought to be stopped from usury (charging interest on loans)...Seventhly, let the young and strong Jews and Jewesses be given the flail, the ax, the hoe, the spade, the distaff, and spindle, and let them earn their bread by the sweat of their noses...We ought to drive the rascally lazy bones out of our system...Therefore away with them...To sum up, dear princes and nobles who have Jews in your domains, if this advice of mine does not suit you, then find a better one so that you and we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden—the Jews."<sup>7</sup>

Who said it? Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation, a man that God used. But he got grumpy and angry at the end of his life, and he got frustrated with the Jews. Satan used him when he pandered to the flesh. Why couldn't the same thing have happened to Simon?

So when Acts 8:13 says, "*Even Simon himself believed;...*" I take it for what it says. He was authentically saved.

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<sup>7</sup> Martin Luther, *Concerning the Jews and Their Lies*, cited in Michael Brown's *Our Hands Are Stained with Blood*, pp. 14-15.