

Acts 046

One Body

Acts 8:13b-19

April 24, 2024


Dr. Andy Woods

Let's open our Bibles to Acts 8:13. This chapter really revolves around Philip, who is the second deacon selected in Acts 6.

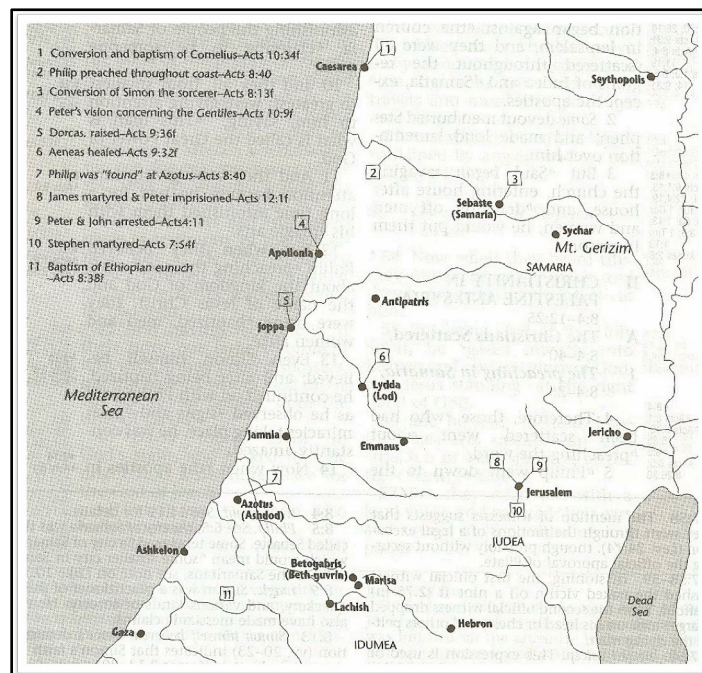
**Acts 8:5-40**  
Philip's Ministry

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

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




Stephen was the first deacon. His story is in Acts 7. Philip is the second deacon selected. His story is in Acts 8.



You can take his ministry and divide it geographically. He has a ministry in Acts 8 in Samaria, Acts 8:5-25. Then he will have a ministry in Judea, Acts 8:26-40.

**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)



Philip leaves Jerusalem and heads to Samaria, and we have seen his ministry in Samaria as he has evangelized the Samaritans, Acts 8:5-8. It has actually led to the conversion of an unlikely person, Simon the sorcerer, Acts 8:9-13.

**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)**



We have spent a lot of time analyzing that conversion to see if it is an authentic conversion. I am of the belief that Simon really did get saved, because the text says that he believed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Simon himself responds to Philip's preaching. He is basically someone who was wowing these Samaritans for a long time—in fact, Acts 8:11 says, "...a long time..."—with his black magic, magic that he was doing under Satan's power. Well, now Simon is a new-found believer in Jesus Christ. His faith is mentioned in Acts 8:13. He believed.

3.

### Acts 8:13

Simon's Response to Philip's Preaching

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



So Simon believed, just like the rest of the Samaritans. So if the rest of the Samaritans were saved, Acts 8:12, I would think Simon was saved as well. He met the condition for justification, which is faith alone in Christ alone.

### 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)



The Bible mentions that condition 150 times in some very famous passages that you know—Genesis 15:6; John 3:16; Acts 16:30-31. One hundred and fifty times or more, the Scripture gives one condition for becoming right with God, and that is to believe, or trust, in the finished work of Jesus Christ. It looks like Simon accomplished that (believed). And it was not Simon who accomplished the justification. It was God who accomplished it. Simon just received it as a gift, which is the only way a person can be saved.

So because Simon is saved, Philip the deacon, the man whom Acts 8 revolves around, baptizes Simon, Acts 8:13, just as he baptizes the rest of the Samaritans. So it is unlikely to me that Simon would be baptized by Philip if Philip had some kind of lingering doubt about the authenticity of Simon's conversion.

Down in Acts 8:24 Simon is rebuked by Peter, and he experiences remorse. So that is, I think, the evidence that the Holy Spirit is inside of him, convicting him of his sin. I am not sure if he would experience remorse had he not been truly regenerated. Now, last time I told you that this was a controversial issue. Most commentators, unfortunately, argue that Simon's faith was illegitimate.

### 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

I gave you the seven arguments that you typically hear when people critique Simon's faith as spurious or illegitimate. Then I tried to give you the answers to those arguments. So I was trying to give you the full spectrum of the discussion.

### 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*

But when all is said and done, I think Simon was indeed a believer. Consequently, as you look at Acts 8:13, Philip the deacon and evangelist now baptizes Simon. Acts 8:13 says,

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

So what is water baptism? Water baptism is an outward symbol of an inward reality. Water baptism does not save anybody, but it is a testimony publicly to the world that something has happened on the inside. Baptism in water is an outward symbol of Spirit baptism. Spirit baptism only God can do. Water baptism is done by man. Spirit baptism done by God saves. Water baptism done by man does not save, but it symbolizes saving faith.

The true baptism you need to be interested in is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:13, which says,

*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized..." (1 Corinthians 12:13).*

Now, 1 Corinthians 12:13 is not speaking of water baptism, but spirit baptism, which means identification. That is what literally the word "baptism" means. "Baptizo" (βαπτίζω) means "identification"—identification with Christ's church, His body, which happens in a nanosecond the moment a person trusts in Christ.

*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).*

So that is Spirit baptism, which God does. Water baptism symbolizes to the world that Spirit baptism has happened to a person's heart. So consequently, what you see here is Simon being baptized. You will notice that it is very clear in Acts 8:13. It says,

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

That is the order that you will see every single time in the Book of Acts concerning water baptism. It never takes place in the Book of Acts before faith alone in Christ alone. It takes place after.

In fact, in one of our past lessons, I actually talked you through all the passages in the Book of Acts that demonstrate this. I will not go through all of those again. But there is a very clear order here: first, faith alone in Christ alone; then baptism. In fact, there is going to be a conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in the second half of Acts 8, and you will see the exact same pattern: first he believes, secondarily he is baptized.

That is why we do not practice infant baptism here at Sugar Land Bible Church. We will baptize any infant that can come forward and state how they got saved. I guess we could do that. But the problem with infant baptism is that it gets the cart before the horse. If an infant cannot talk, how could they give any verbal testimony about their newfound faith in Christ? Infant baptism mixes up the order.

In the Book of Acts, you will see a clear order: faith alone in Christ alone, followed by water baptism. "Well, what if a person is not water baptized?" Well, that is an impediment to their growth in Christ. But it is not an impediment to the fact that they belong to Christ.

The thief on the cross, as you know, was never baptized in water, and Jesus said to the penitent thief,

*"...today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).*

"And quick—someone throw water on him before he dies so he can go to heaven!" No, Jesus did not say that. But the thief on the cross clearly was saved, though he never experienced water baptism.

If you are not water baptized, it is not an impediment to your salvation, but it is an impediment to your growth, or development, into Christ's likeness. The first command God gives to the new Christian is to be baptized in water. If someone does not want to do that, then they are basically telling Jesus, "No," right out of the gate in their newfound relationship with Him, which cannot be good for their development and growth spiritually.

So Philip has evangelized Samaria. Many Samaritans believe, including even a person that no one would probably think could get saved, Simon the sorcerer. Then as you continue on with 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).*

So what you are dealing with concerning Simon is somebody who is a brand new Christian, but has had no time to grow. "Simon, what is your prayer life like?" "What is prayer life?" "Simon, what is your Bible study reading like?" "What is Bible study reading?" "Simon, what is your church attendance like?" "What is church attendance?" You are dealing with someone just completely fresh out of paganism. He does not know anything about growing. His mind really has not been renewed.

The renewal of the mind is a perpetual process that the believer puts himself or herself through by studying the Bible, or sitting under the teaching of the Word of God, which helps them to mature. It helps them to grow. Simon had no opportunity for that at all. In fact, back in Acts 8:11, prior to his conversion, it says,

*"And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them [the Samaritans] with his magic arts" (Acts 8:11).*

So Simon was into, prior to his conversion, black magic miracles through Satan's power. After he gets saved with no time to grow, that is still what he is interested in. So that is why it talks here about how he is following after Philip and he is fascinated with the signs and the great miracles taking place in the ministry of Philip. Romans 12:2 had not become a reality for him yet.

Romans 12:2 says to the new Christian,

*"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,..." (Romans 12:2).*


That is not something that takes place in a nanosecond. That is a process. Justification is instantaneous. Growth in Christ is a process.

*"...so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).*

There had been no opportunity or time in Simon's newfound Christian life to do that. So he was still thinking much like a pagan. He was wrapped up in signs and wonders before he got saved, so now he was attracted to the signs and the wonders in Christianity as were being executed by Philip.

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Now, the story of Simon is interrupted at this point. As you go down to Acts 8:14-17, you see now Peter and John having to travel from Jerusalem, which is where the leadership of the early church was, to Samaria, to figure out if these Samaritans' salvations were really true or not. So that becomes the subject of Acts 8:14-17.

**C. Acts 8:14-17**  
Peter & John Lay Hands on the Samaritans

- 1. The concern (14)
- 2. The problem (15-16)
- 3. The solution (17)



You have a concern, Acts 8:14; a problem, Acts 8:15-16; then a solution, Acts 8:17. So notice the concern. Acts 8:14 says,

*"Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God [the Samaritans were believers, in other words], they sent them Peter and John," (Acts 8:14).*

So are these Samaritans, whom we have had a racial conflict with for seven hundred years, really believers or not? That is why Peter and John leave Jerusalem, which is down south, and journey up north to Samaria to see if these conversions were really true. The Jerusalem church sends their leaders, Peter and John.

Now, this is interesting because this is the last time John is mentioned in the Book of Acts. The focus of the Book of Acts is not on John. The focus of the Book of Acts is not on the other apostles. The focus of the Book of Acts is on two apostles: Peter, and then later, Paul. John is mentioned in a tangential way. He is not the focus of the book, and he basically disappears from the Book of Acts at this point.

The early church sent Peter, in addition to John, from Jerusalem to Samaria to see if these conversions wrought at the hands of Philip, as the Holy Spirit was using Philip, were true. Now, why in the world would the Jerusalem church send Peter to investigate these conversions?

The answer is found in something the Lord said to Peter in Matthew 16:19. I believe this conversation took place far up north in a place called Caesarea Philippi. I have actually been there myself. Once you are standing there, you understand why the Lord surfaces the things that He surfaces in the conversation. It fits the geography of the area perfectly. He said to Peter,

*"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).*

So to Peter were given these keys, keys to entrance into the coming Kingdom. The Kingdom, the "basileia" (βασιλεία), is always portrayed as something future. We are not building the Kingdom today. What we are doing is we are winning citizens, or heirs, or sons, of the coming Kingdom. And Peter was given these keys.

What do you do with a key? You open a door. He was given the privilege of opening the door of citizenship to the coming Kingdom to men. Peter, in the Book of Acts, took the metaphorical keys that Jesus gave him, and he opened the door several times to several groups to come to know Christ.

The first group Peter opened the door to was the Jews, because he was the speaker on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. Through that sermon around 3,000 Jews were saved. Peter took the keys and he opened the door to the Jews.

Now Peter in Acts 8 has taken those same metaphorical keys, and he is opening the door to the Samaritans, this half-breed race, to come to Christ. Then there is the third

time in the Book of Acts when Peter is going to take the keys and open a third door. He will open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles in Acts 10.

So Peter used the keys in Acts 2 for the Jews, in Acts 8 for the Samaritans, and in Acts 10 for the Gentiles. The way it works is that once the door is opened—and only the person that has the keys can open the door—the door stays open. It is very similar to what the Lord said to the church at Philadelphia. He said,

*"...I have put before you an open door which no one can shut,..."*  
(Revelation 3:8).

That is essentially what happens every time Peter takes these metaphorical keys and turns them in the metaphorical door. He is opening the door to these various groups so that they can be saved.

So that is why Peter is involved in this whole investigation of Samaritan salvation, to see if it is really true or not. That is the concern. But now a problem emerges. Here is the problem in Acts 8:15-16.

*"...Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them [the Samaritans] that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He [the Holy Spirit] had not yet fallen upon any of them;..."* (Acts 8:14-16).

The Holy Spirit is a person. Yes, He is the eternally existent third member of the Godhead. That is all true. But He is also a very real person with a very real personality. You can offend the Holy Spirit. Paul in Ephesians 4 says,

*"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit..."* (Ephesians 4:30).

Do not think of the Holy Spirit like Star Wars. Do not get your theology from Star Wars—the Force: there is this impersonal force. "Use the Force, Luke."—all that kind of stuff. In Star Wars, they portray this Force as some kind of impersonal source of energy that you have to delve into. That is how Luke was able to destroy the Death Star, as you remember: because he used the Force.

But an impersonal force is not what the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is an actual personage, an actual personality. So that is why it says "He" here in Acts 8:16.

*"who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He [the Holy Spirit] had not yet fallen upon any of them [the Samaritans]; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"* (Acts 8:14-16).

We would call this a transitional problem in the Book of Acts. This is a non-normative, unique situation, in which a person believes but does not get the Holy Spirit until later. The Samaritans were believers, but did not yet receive the Holy Spirit until the Jerusalem apostles Peter and John traveled to Samaria to lay hands on them.

Now, why is this happening? First of all, it is not normal. Romans 8:9 says,

*"...if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him"  
(Romans 8:9).*

Typically the way it works is the moment you believe, you are regenerated—you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That is what is normative in the Age of the Church. But here something different is happening. It is an odd occurrence. It is not normal. The Samaritans believe, and they do not get the Holy Spirit until later.

Now, why in the world would the Holy Spirit and the Jerusalem apostles operate in this manner? The answer relates to the Samaritan-Jewish conflict, which we had a chance to develop in detail, not in the last lesson, but the lesson just before. The Samaritans and the Hebrews hated each other's guts going back seven hundred years.

Do you want to talk about racial hatred? The Samaritans were a half-breed race. They were brought into the land by the king of Babylon from Babylon, after the Assyrians had kicked the Northern Kingdom out. They were Babylonians, and they were brought in and they started to intermarry with Jews. They would not follow the program. They would not go to Jerusalem to worship. They would go to Mount Gerizim to worship. We went into all of that and explained all of that.

It was the amazement of the apostles as to how Jesus would waste his time in John 4 with the Samaritan woman. "What are you talking to her for? She is the wrong gender. She is the wrong race. She is immoral. And she has the wrong religion."

Answer: Jesus does not care about stuff like that. He cares about people. But man is all wrapped up in these intense racial conflicts. I do not even like to use the word "race," because according to the Bible, there is one race: the human race. We are all descended from one man, Acts 17:26 tells us, but within humanity there are slight differences of skin pigmentation, color, all of that kind of thing. So people turn that into some sort of racial divide, and you have racial antagonism.

That is what you have going on here for seven hundred years between the Hebrews, or the Jews, and the Samaritans. They hated each other's guts. That is why James and John (one of the guys that is coming to investigate this [Acts 8:14]), in Luke 9, at the end of the chapter, when Jesus went to a Samaritan village and they would not receive His ministry—James and John (the Love Apostle John) said, "Lord, shall we not call down fire from heaven and consume these people?" (paraphrase, Luke 9:54). That is so over the top. Why would you say something like that? Well, it makes sense if you are caught up in seven centuries of racial hatred.

So in Acts 8, the apostles have got to go and they have to figure out, "Are these Samaritans really saved?" So to determine that, the Holy Spirit is not given to the Samaritans right away. Now, think with me just for a minute. What if the Samaritans had received the Holy Spirit immediately, totally independently of the Jerusalem apostles laying hands on the Samaritans?

What you would have had right out of the chute in the Age of the Church would be two churches. You would have had a Jewish church and you would have had a Samaritan church. Such an idea is contrary to the nature of the church.

So consequently, in this particular case, to demonstrate that the Samaritans now belonged to the Jews as Christians and the Jews now belonged to the Samaritans, and we are all one in the body of Christ, and the body of Christ transcends man's racial divisions, the Holy Spirit was delayed so that the Jerusalem apostles could lay hands on the Samaritans.

That way, when the Holy Spirit came through the laying on of hands, the stubborn Jews now understood that the Samaritans were part of the body of Christ, and the stubborn Samaritans now understood that they were part of the body of Christ as well, just like the Jews.

So this is a one-time occurrence in the Book of Acts. That is why there is a delay here in the giving of the Holy Spirit. So the solution happens to this division in Acts 8:17.

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

So now the Samaritan believers knew that they belonged to the Jewish believers. The Jewish believers now realized that they belonged to the Samaritan believers. Without the delaying of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands right out of the gate in the Age of the Church, you would have had in the nation of Israel two churches. And that is not what the church is. The church consists of all nations, all people groups, all tribes, and all tongues.

In fact, the church, in the Book of Revelation is portrayed as worshiping the Lord in heaven, the full bride of Christ. Revelation says that over and over again. We, the church, people from every nation, every tribe, every tongue, and every people group are worshiping the Lord.

We do not have an American church. We do not have a Hispanic church. We do not have an Asian church. We do not have a Caucasian church. We do not have a European church. What we are all part of, regardless of minor dissimilarities between us in terms of where we live and what language we speak and the slight difference of skin color, is the body of Christ. That is a new concept.

That ministry of baptizing or identifying people, regardless of their racial background, into Christ's body when they trust Christ for salvation is a work that started in Acts 2. Jesus said it was coming in Acts 1:5. Prior to Jesus ascension, He said,

*"for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).*

There Jesus was speaking of the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit, by which the Spirit takes anybody in any part of the world who hears the gospel and believes it, and

connects that person with the body of Christ, regardless of their ethnicity, nationhood, gender, etc.

Paul develops it in 1 Corinthians 12:13. The baptism by the Spirit is what water baptism symbolizes. Notice the word "one" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,..." (1 Corinthians 12:13).*

Now, there would not have been one body had the Holy Spirit not been delayed in being given to the Samaritans. You would have had two bodies, the Samaritan body and the Jewish body, which would have been contrary to the purposes of God. So that is why there is this delay in the giving of the Holy Spirit.

*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).*

Paul describes this in Galatians 3:28. What is it in the body of Christ?

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).*

Now do not worry. You are still a male, even though you got saved. You are still a female, even though you got saved. You are still a Greek, even though you got saved. You are still a Jew, even though you got saved. But the societal divisions that those differences bring do not exist anymore in the body of Christ, because we are all part of the same body, Christ's body.

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).*

Paul explains this in the Book of Ephesians a lot. Ephesians 2:14 says,

*"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" (Ephesians 2:14).*

What groups? Hebrews and Gentiles who did not like each other. The Hebrews called the Gentiles dogs, and the Gentiles called the Hebrews arrogant. There is just intense dislike in the time of Christ between those two groups.

Paul says, "Well, if you all are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, that division just ended because you cannot have a division in Christ's body any more than you can separate your arm from your shoulder, or your knee from your foot. We are all part of the same body."

Any type of division between anybody on these grounds is artificial. I think what is happening here is that artificial division between the Samaritans and the Hebrews. If

you do not understand those seven years of hatred, go back a couple of lessons where we developed this. It is hard to understand Acts 8 unless you understand that background. Seven centuries of racial division would have continued right into the Church Age, and very easily you would have had two churches instead of one.

There is a wonderful book on this by my late professor J. Dwight Pentecost. It is called "New Wine: A Study of Transition in the Book of Acts." In this book he does not do a verse-by-verse commentary of the whole Book of Acts. What he focuses on are chapters like this where something is happening that is abnormal—something is happening that is atypical—something is happening that is uncommon—like the things happening in Acts 2 (the Christians are selling their property), the things happening in Acts 8, and other such occurrences in the Book of Acts.

So if you are looking for something that explains these transitions, that would be my recommendation. It is very important to understand this. We do not take the Book of Acts as a doctrinal book. We take the Book of Acts as a historical book, meaning that we acknowledge that there are some things taking place in the Book of Acts that are not normative today because it is a transitional book.

This puts us in a very different place of understanding the book than the modern-day Charismatic Movement, which basically places a total emphasis on the Book of Acts. There are even movements today called Acts 29—we are going to just continue living out the Book of Acts. And I am thinking, "Well, are you going to go get stuck in the ocean?" Because that is what happens in Acts 27. By the way, do you own a house? Because you should not own a house if you want to live out the Book of Acts. You should sell your house, because that is what they did in Acts 2.

Acts 8 is just another example of an abnormal occurrence that we should not necessarily emanate today. We do not accept the idea that people get saved and get the Holy Spirit later, although you can find an instance of it in the Book of Acts. It does happen in the Book of Acts, because the Book of Acts is historical and not doctrinal, in the sense that there are some things in the Book of Acts that are unique.

So if you are going to tell people that something is normative in the church, you cannot just build your case from the Book of Acts. You have to also build it from the epistolary literature, Paul's thirteen letters and then the eight general letters which are written to the church.

So, for example, the practice of communion—should we practice communion today? Yes, because I see it in the Gospels. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Yes, because I see it in the Book of Acts. They were breaking bread together from house to house. But I do not just stop in the Book of Acts. I also see it in the epistles. In the epistles, Paul (1 Corinthians 11) lays out the rules and ritual and ordinances and so forth for the Lord's Table.

So communion is a practice that I can say is normative in the church, because I found it in the Gospels, I found it in the Book of Acts, and I found it in the epistles. The danger is when you have people standing up as teachers saying, "If it is in the Book of Acts, that

is what is normative in the church." We believe that is an abuse of the Book of Acts, because the Book of Acts contains some non-normative activities, as Luke the historian is simply describing what happened rather than prescribing what we should be doing.

Acts 8:12 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).*

Acts 8:17 indicates,

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

So there is a pause between belief, then later baptism, then later receiving the Holy Spirit. That is not normative today. That is a transitional problem in the Book of Acts. What is normative today is found in the epistles. Romans 8:9, among many other passages, says,

*"...if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Romans 8:9).*

When I was in college, I was around a lot of really good people, but they were more of the Charismatic Pentecostal mindset, and they would tell me that "It is nice, Andy, that you are a believer, but you need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, because that is where the true power comes from." And they pulled out their Bible and they showed me Acts 8:14-17.

And I thought, "Well, it is in the Bible. It must be true." So I asked to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. I asked to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I asked for the gift of tongues. I asked for all kinds of things. And I never was really able to speak in tongues. They said, "Well, you need to prime the pump." So just start talking in a certain way and this language will come over you. None of that ever worked out for me.

I thought it could work out for me because it is right here in the Book of Acts. But when you get into the epistolary literature, Ephesians 1:3 says that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. There is no blessing that you need that God has not given to you already. It is just a matter of learning what you already have rather than going to God and begging Him, groveling before Him, for something additional.

There is nothing additional for the Christian. Everything that God wants you to have He gave to you at the point of faith alone in Christ alone. Your spiritual gift came to you at that point. The Holy Spirit came into you at that point. The new nature came into you at that point. The forgiveness of all of your sins, past, present, and future, came to you. Your relationship with God the Father, by which you can call him "Abba, Father!" ("Abba" [Ἀββᾶ] means "Daddy") came to you at that point.

Lewis Sperry Chafer identifies thirty-three blessings that we receive at the point of faith that we did not have before, and there are probably many others.


But what do you do with Acts 8:14-17, where the Samaritans believe and they do not get the Holy Spirit until later? Well, that is the Book of Acts. That is a transitional issue revolving around the Hebrew-Samaritan conflict. If you are going to say that what is happening in Acts 8 is normative in the church, then you have to find the same concept in the epistles, which you do not find.

So this relates to a proper understanding of the Book of Acts. I love the Book of Acts. I am not trying to devalue the Book of Acts at all. I am just trying to get us to appreciate its proper role in the life of the Christian, in terms of trying to establish something as normative in the body of Christ.

It is Peter and John that lay hands on these Samaritans. The Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit. This is a second example where Peter has taken the keys of the kingdom and opened them to the Samaritans. Now that the door is open to the Samaritans, it stays open, and any Samaritan that believes from this point forward is immediately indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

**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)**



So that unit is important, though it interrupts Simon's conversion and Peter's rebuke of Simon. At this point, Acts 8:18-25, we learn of Peter's rebuke of Simon.

D.

Acts 8:18-25  
Peter Rebukes Simon

1. Simon's request (18-19)
2. Peter rebukes Simon (20-23)
3. Simon's response (24)
4. Conclusion (25)



Simon makes an illicit request, Acts 8:18-19. Peter rebukes Simon, Acts 8:20-23. Simon responds with remorse, Acts 8:24. Then there is a conclusion, Acts 8:25. After all is said and done with Simon, Acts 8:25 says that as the apostles Peter and John went back to Jerusalem, they were preaching the gospel to many of the villages of the Samaritans. So the door that has been opened here stays open.

Notice, first of all, Simon's request, Acts 8:18-19. First, Simon makes an observation. Now, keep in mind that you are dealing with someone who has been steeped in paganism and satanic magic for a long time. Keep that in mind as you read the things Simon is wanting here.

1.

Acts 8:18-19  
Simon's Request

- a) Simon's observation (18a)
- b) Simon's financial offer (18b)
- c) Simon's ambition (19)



There are a lot of people like Simon in Christianity. They want some kind of position in the church or a place of influence within the church because they have some sort of psychological need for being important, being powerful. It could be that they got some kind of esteem need met like that on their job, so now they want it in the church.

It takes a lot of exposure to mature Christians and exposure to the Word of God over and over again to undo our thinking in that area. Just that you got saved does not mean the lust of the flesh suddenly disappeared, because you still have an old nature to contend with.

There is a teaching today that after you get saved, you do not have an old nature anymore. That is completely false. Your old nature is alive and well. It is just that now you can tell it, "No." You did not have the power to tell it, "No," as an unsaved person. You were a slave to it. Now you can tell it, "No," under the resources of Jesus and live according to the desires of the new nature.

Now, what does Simon know about that—the old nature and the new nature? He does not know anything about that. He has not been disciplined. In fact, most of the New Testament has not even been written yet. So it is no doubt that this guy coming out of paganism without his mind being renewed would still act like a pagan. He is interested in power because that is what he knew in his former way of life: power.

In fact, the Samaritans would all rally around Simon thinking he was someone great because of his black magic, Acts 8:9. Now he just wants a Christian version of this power. So this is an immature baby Christian at work here.

Acts 8:18 says,

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

He saw power at work, and, coming out of power encounters, he had a great interest in power. He just slapped a Christian coat of paint over it. But it was the same old fleshly desire which he had not reckoned dead yet. So this is where you get the whole idea of Simony, meaning trying to purchase things from God.

Acts 8:18 says that after Simon saw this power encounter, the apostles laying hands on the Samaritans so that they would receive the Holy Spirit, Simon wanted that power for himself.

*"...he offered them money," (Acts 8:18).*

"I will pay for it." And the reason he wants this (having had no time for progressive sanctification, or even for gaining an understanding of what progressive sanctification is) is that he has ambition. Obviously the man had a lot of ambition. He was used to everybody calling him great because of his black magic in Samaria. "Now I want to be great in Christianity."

(By the way, I keep using that word "Christianity," but the believers in the early church were not even called "Christians" yet until Acts 11, so I am a little bit ahead of myself.)

Simon's ambition is given in Acts 8:19.

*"saying, 'Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 8:19).*

He is on a power trip. Not to publicly out anybody, but—well, I will just go ahead and do it—have you ever watched Benny Hinn on TV? I was watching Benny Hinn very carefully, and he saw someone who was a mentor to him who had these Spirit-empowered abilities, so-called. I think they are demonic—you blow on people and they fall over and all that kind of stuff.

He saw that exhibited by someone called Kathryn Kuhlman earlier in the Charismatic Movement long before Benny Hinn became popular. Have you ever heard of that name? I remember listening to Benny Hinn when he saw this power working through Kathryn Kuhlman. I remember him specifically saying, "I want that power for myself." And I thought, "Well, that is Acts 8."

This is exactly what Simon wants, because Simon was used to power. So Simon essentially wanted apostolic authority that God only gave to the apostles. It was only to Peter that Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to. He did not just give them to anybody. And Simon saw the power associated with the keys of the kingdom—he may not have understood what the "keys of the kingdom" meant, but he wanted that apostolic authority and power.

Why did Simon want greatness? Because that is what he was used to. Acts 8:9 says that he was.

*"...claiming to be someone great;" (Acts 8:9).*

Simon wants to be great again. "Just give me a Christian version of it." It is a lust, really. A lust is a desire from the sin nature that God does not want gratified. We think of lusts as sexual—lusting sexually after someone you are not married to. That is a form of lust of the flesh. But it is not the only form of lust of the flesh.

Lust of the flesh can take place in terms of the appetite for wanting to be recognized, wanting to be powerful, wanting to be popular. This is the error.

I see Christians fall for this error all of the time. Somebody from the world who is very popular or very well-known gets saved. And I am not denying the authenticity of their salvation any more than I am denying the authenticity of Simon's salvation. But we are so happy they got saved that we want to put them on a pedestal in the church.

We want to put them on a platform. We want to jam a camera and a microphone in their face. We want to let them speak for us. And that is a complete and total mistake that never ends well.

In fact, Paul is pretty clear in 1 Timothy 3 that when you lay hands on someone appointing them to a position of leadership, he should not be a novice (talking about elders and deacons). He should not be a novice, a new Christian, lest he fall into the trap of Satan, which is "first comes pride, then comes a fall" (paraphrase, Proverbs 16:18).

Every time you take someone who is famous in the world and you want to promote him immediately within the church, you are setting them up for a fall because they have not

been disciplined yet. They probably have not even read the whole Bible yet. And they will take their lust of the flesh, which they had in the unsaved world, and they will just Christianize it and want that same lust of the flesh satisfied in the church.

Believe me, the church world is filled with these kinds of people. You would not believe the people that tell me, "Hey, I want to speak in your pulpit." Well, excuse me, I hardly know you. You have been here for two weeks.

It is a lust, a desire to be recognized. They think the pulpit is some kind of way for popularity. They do not have the foggiest idea of the criticism you set yourself up for the moment you step up into a pulpit and teach the Word of God. So they are totally unprepared for it.

But at their place of employment, they are recognized for being a public speaker or a famous writer. "Hey, I am a famous writer. I want to publish some journal articles. I want to go into Christian publishing. I want to get well-known."

So what they are doing is they are taking a lust of the flesh that they have not learned to crucify and reckon dead, and they are just transferring it into the Christian world and putting Christian fresh paint on it. But it is the same old lust of the flesh. That is what Simon is doing here. That is exactly what Benny Hinn did with Kathryn Kuhlman.

*"...Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands [see the repetition of "me," "my"—that is the flesh at work] may receive the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:19).*

The Christian is dual-natured. Simon has not learned to live according to the desires of the new nature, and reckon dead the desires of the old nature. So this leads to Simon's rebuke, Acts 8:20-23. In fact, this rebuke is so juicy. I need to read Acts 8:20-23 all together, which I do not have time to do right now. So we will stop here and we will be in the rebuking mode—in a Christian way, of course—next week.