

# Acts 047

## Believers' Consequences

Acts 8:20-25


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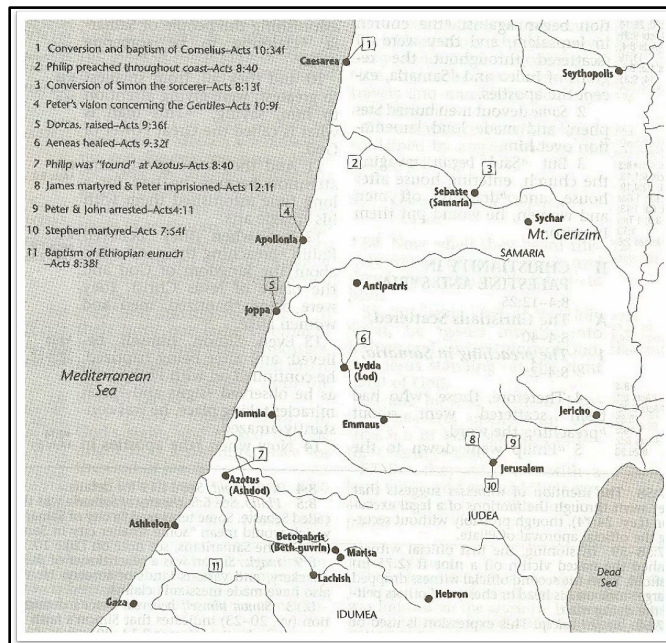
As folks are coming in, let's open our Bibles this evening to Acts 8:20. We are going to try to make it through Acts 8:25 tonight. I think we could do that. It is just five verses. Who thinks we could do it? You need a lot of faith sometimes for stuff like that.

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

- I. **Samaria (8:5-25)**
- II. **Judea (Acts 8:26-40)**



Acts 8, as you know, is the ministry of Philip. It basically has two parts to it. Acts 8:5-25 is Philip's ministry in Samaria, and then Acts 8:26-40 is his ministry in Judea.



Philip has left Jerusalem and he has traveled up north to Samaria. He has had ministry there in Samaria, and it is in Samaria that he has evangelized the Samaritans.

**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 has had his evangelization in Samaria, Acts 8:5-8. It has led to the conversion of Simon the sorcerer, Acts 8:9-13. It is at that point that the Jerusalem saints have to leave Jerusalem to really figure out if these Samaritans are saved, Acts 8:14-17. The Holy Spirit is actually delayed.

Normally the way it works is when a person believes they receive the Holy Spirit. But in this case, the Holy Spirit was delayed so that the Samaritans would recognize that they were part of Jerusalem and Jerusalem would recognize that they were part of Samaria, because in the body of Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

If that occasion, transitional issue, did not happen, where there was a brief abnormality in the outworking of God's purposes, there would have been two churches. Normally the way it works is you receive the Holy Spirit immediately upon belief. But if the Holy Spirit had not been delayed, given everything we know about the seven-hundred-year Samaritan-Jewish conflict, you would have had two churches right out of the gate. You would have had a church in Samaria and another church in Jerusalem.

The hostility of the Samaritans versus the Jews would have continued into the Church Age. That is why the Holy Spirit was delayed. So the Jerusalem apostles laid hands on the Samaritans who had already believed, and then the Holy Spirit came, at a later point [than usual]. That is not the way it normally works, but that is the way it worked here.

We have tried to make the case that Simon the sorcerer was actually a believer. In Acts 8:18-25, you have the story of Simon being rebuked by the apostle Peter. When the Holy Spirit came upon people—when the Jerusalem apostles laid hands on the Samaritans—Simon saw that transfer of power, Acts 8:18-19, and he wanted that power for himself. He actually wanted to pay for it.

In fact, you remember we looked at Acts 8:18-19 last time. It says,


*"Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands might receive the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 8:18-19).*

The thing to understand about Simon, who had clearly believed (Acts 8:13 tells us that) is that he had been steeped in magic arts for a long time (Acts 8:11). Through his magical powers that he had through Satan's influence, Simon had basically been the main man in Samaria. So here was a guy who was a believer who had no time to grow and be discipled. So he had a need for power.

That basically is a work of the flesh—the sin nature desiring power. Simon, having no opportunity to grow, simply had a coat of fresh paint slapped over the flesh, and he just brought his desire for power into his newfound Christianity. So that is why he wanted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit.

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)



What happens in Acts 8:20-23 is the apostle Peter now rebukes Simon the sorcerer, whom we believe is a baby Christian. In this rebuke you see Simon's consequence, Acts 8:20; Simon's heart, Acts 8:21; Simon's need: he needs to repent, Acts 8:22; and Simon's problem, Acts 8:23. This is all bound up in the rebuke (Acts 8:20-23) that the apostle Peter gives to Simon.

## 2.

### Acts 8:20-23 Peter Rebukes Simon

- a) Simon's consequence (20)
- b) Simon's heart (21)
- c) Simon's need: repentance (22)
- d) Simon's problem (23)



So first of all, notice Simon's consequence, 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).*

Now, a lot of people take that to mean, "Well, Simon is an unbeliever because Acts 8:20 says *"perish."*" After all, John 3:16 says,

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

*"Perish"* in Acts 8:20 is the same Greek word, "apollymi" [ἀπόλλυμι], that is used in John 3:16. So people say, "Well, obviously Simon was not a true believer, because Peter gave him this consequence: 'Because you have sought to purchase the Holy Spirit's power with money you are at risk of perishing' (paraphrase, Acts 8:20)."

But if you look at Acts 8:20 very carefully, first of all, it says, *"... 'May your silver perish with you,..." (Acts 8:20)*, which Simon tried to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit with (rather like Judas, who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver). Simon is trying to buy the power of the Holy Spirit, and Peter says,

*"... 'May your silver perish with you,..." (Acts 8:20).*

Now think about that for a minute. Can silver really perish? It is a metal. It cannot disappear. So Peter must be using the word "perish" differently from the way John 3:16 is using it. So what I think Peter is saying here to Simon is that there are a lot of things in the Christian life that are now not going to be available to you because of the deficiency of your character.

It is true that when a person gets saved, they are eternally secure. They are saved forever. But as Christians, we can do things in the sin nature which cause other benefits that we could have had to disappear. One of the things that can disappear is a person's reward at the Bema Seat Judgment.

Paul the apostle says in 1 Corinthians 3:15,

*"If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss [that is perishing]; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15).*

A person's reward can perish even though they are saved. I think that is the kind of thing that is being spoken of here related to Simon. Silver cannot perish, but there are other things in your life that can perish. Rewards would be an example.

At the Bema Seat Judgment, there will be five crowns either given or not given, awarded or not awarded, to believers. These crowns have nothing to do with salvation. These are rewards that believers have the ability to gain above and beyond salvation. They are crowns that can be gained and which can be cast at Christ's feet for all eternity.

Revelation 4:10 seems to indicate that we believers take those crowns that we have gained and cast them at Christ's feet every time that He is worshiped. So the crowns give a person an ability to glorify God to a greater extent throughout eternity. If a person does not merit a crown at the Bema Seat Judgment, that privilege perishes.

<b>Scripture's Four Judgments</b>				
Name	Sheep and Goat	Judgment of the Jews	<a href="#"><u>Bema Seat</u></a>	Great White Throne
Scripture	Matt 25:31-46	Ezek 20:33-44	<a href="#"><u>1 Cor 3:10-15</u></a>	Rev 20:11-15
Place	Earth, Jerusalem	Earth, wilderness	<a href="#"><u>Heaven</u></a>	Earth
Audience	Gentile Tribulation survivors	Jewish Tribulation survivors	<a href="#"><u>Church Age believers</u></a>	All unsaved
When	After Tribulation	After Tribulation	<a href="#"><u>After rapture</u></a>	After Millennium
Purpose	Saved Gentiles enter kingdom	Saved Jews enter kingdom	<a href="#"><u>Reward believers</u></a>	Degree of punishment in hell
Evaluation	Treatment of Christ's brethren	Passing under shepherd's rod	<a href="#"><u>Works taken through fire</u></a>	Not in the book; judged by books

There is the incorruptible crown for the believer that gains mastery over the flesh—not the believer that is sinless, but the believer that is sinning less (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). There is the crown of rejoicing for the soul winner (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20), the crown of life for the believer that endures trials (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10), the crown of glory for the believer that faithfully shepherds God's people (1 Peter 5:2-4), and then the

crown of righteousness for the believer that longs for Christ's appearing and is not in love with the world (2 Timothy 4:8).

These crowns would be an example of something perishing from Simon's life because he went into the flesh here and thought he could buy the Holy Spirit. He could have gained a crown right here, but he forfeited that. It does not mean that he cannot gain a crown in the future. But in this particular instance, that opportunity perished.

Paul the apostle was very concerned about forfeiting rewards for himself, because he writes here in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27,

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

Some of your English translations say, "...disqualified for the prize." The prize here is not salvation. If the prize here is salvation, then Paul contradicted everything that he spoke of elsewhere in his letters. He always taught that salvation was a free gift gained by way of faith.

You do not gain salvation by disciplining your body and making it your slave. What you can gain is an incorruptible crown, given at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ to the believer who gains mastery over the flesh (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). So Paul was worried that he, to the Corinthians, preached the opportunity for this crown, but he was concerned that he himself might be disqualified for the crown—not salvation, but the crown—having not disciplined his body and made it his slave the way he taught other Christians to do so.

That would be another example of something potentially perishing. Salvation can never perish, but the opportunity for rewards can perish. Second John 1:8 warns about such perishing. It says,

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

John wanted himself and his readers to be fully rewarded at the Bema Seat Judgment. So he says, "Watch yourself, or you are going to lose what we have accomplished" (paraphrase, 2 John 1:8). That is not salvation. That is a reward above and beyond salvation.

Jesus Himself (to the church at Philadelphia) taught the same truth in the Book of Revelation. He said,

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

So I think when Peter confronts Simon and rebukes him about the prospect of perishing, yes, *"perish"* (Acts 8:20) is the same Greek word used in John 3:16 ("apollymi" [ἀπόλλυμι]), but it is used in a different way. Peter is not telling Simon, "You are not a Christian." He is not telling Simon, "You lost your salvation." What he is telling him is,

"As long as you are venturing forward in the flesh and trying to acquire power for yourself, you are forfeiting opportunities for reward at the Bema Seat Judgment."

Rewards would be an example of something that perishes. Another thing that can perish as the Christian pursues a lifestyle of sin is leadership opportunities. Here at Sugar Land Bible Church, we are in the process of selecting leaders: elders and deacons. How does someone qualify to be an elder or deacon?

Well, all you have to do is read 1 Timothy 3:1-13. All of the attributes mentioned there other than one, "apt to teach"—it does not even say a gifting to teach; it just says "apt to teach" for the elders—other than that, all of the criteria that are mentioned there to qualify for leadership in the church relate to one's present character.

A person cannot be pugnacious. They cannot be double-tongued. They cannot be a type of person that is perpetually pursuing the flesh. To the extent that a person is like that as a Christian, what we would call a "carnal Christian" or a "backslidden Christian," their salvation did not perish. Once saved, always saved. But the opportunity to serve in the church perishes.

That is the kind of thing that Peter is telling Simon here. "There are all kinds of issues that will take place in your life that will disappear—ministry opportunities, opportunities to be fully rewarded at the Bema Seat—because, Simon, you have gone back to the flesh." So that is how I am understanding this rebuke by Peter in 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).*

It is not a statement that Simon is unsaved or lost salvation.

Every moment we as Christians spend in the sin nature in the flesh is a moment that could have been spent another way. We could have been maturing. We could have been growing. We could have been used by God. We could have been gaining crowns for His glory. And those become forfeited at that point. It is wasted time, in other words.

So I think that is what Peter is saying to Simon here. Peter rebukes Simon and he gives him this consequence, and then he makes a statement about Simon's heart in Acts 8:21. He says,

*"You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God" (Acts 8:21).*

In the first part of the verse, *"You have no part or portion in this matter,..." (Acts 8:21)*, what is Peter talking about? He is talking about what he was speaking of in the prior verse: ministry opportunities, the opportunity to be fully rewarded at the Bema Seat. "Those started disappearing, Simon, in your life." And then he makes this statement about Simon and he says,

*"...your heart is not right before God" (Acts 8:21).*

And this becomes the evidence that commentators use to say, "Well, Simon was not saved," even though Acts 8:13 clearly indicates that Simon believed. But the truth of the matter is that a believer's heart cannot be right before God at times. We can fall out of fellowship with Jesus Christ. Pastor Jim, as he was leading us earlier during the prayer time in 1 John 1:9, actually made reference to that.

So let me give you some examples of believers in the Bible whose heart was not right before God. Not that their position was altered, but they were not in fellowship with God. If I mistreat my wife, we are still married legally. That is our position. But my moment-by-moment enjoyment of her fellowship with her has been injured at that point, until I acknowledge to her what I did and it was wrong, and apologize.

That, in essence, is how 1 John 1:9 works in the Christian's life. When we sin, we do not lose our salvation. Our position is secure, but our moment-by-moment enjoyment and fellowship with God is injured until we exercise 1 John 1:9. So in that sense, it is completely and totally possible for a believer's heart to not be right with God.

This happened to the apostle Peter. Peter tried to talk Jesus out of going to the cross, and Jesus said to Peter in Matthew 16:23,

*"... 'Get behind Me, Satan!...' (Matthew 16:23).*

Now, was Peter saved? Of course he was. But because he was pursuing worldly thinking at that point, Satan exploited that. There was not a broken position between him and Jesus at that point, but broken fellowship. Another example would be Ephesians 4:26-27. It 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).*

So if I am harboring bitterness and resentment toward somebody, and I am in that position for a long period of time—I let the sun go down on my anger—then what has happened is Satan now can use that fleshly excursion not to possess me, but to influence my life for the negative. As long as I am allowing that to happen through catering to the sin nature—through anger, bitterness, and resentment—through not forgiving as I have been forgiven—my heart, in that sense, is not right before God.

The same kind of thing happened to Ananias and Sapphira a couple of chapters earlier in Acts 5:3. It says,

*"But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?'" (Acts 5:3).*

Now when we were in Acts 5, we dealt with what that sin was. It was not so much that they kept part of the proceeds of the sale for themselves. It is that they told the church, "We gave all the money from the proceeds of the sale to the church," when in reality they had not. So they misrepresented their generosity. Peter says that when they did that publicly, Satan filled their hearts.

I think it is pretty clear that Ananias and Sapphira were believers, because they were there in the church, first of all. And when they experienced maximum divine discipline—God killed them because they did this (in other words, took them home early)—the whole church was afraid, Acts 5:11.

It is hard for me to believe that a church of Christians would be afraid when an unbeliever was killed. But see, in this case, one of their own was killed, and it had a purifying effect on the church. So that is another example in the Bible where a believer's heart cannot be right before God. That becomes the significance of 1 John 1:9, as Pastor Jim said earlier.

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

That is not to get saved. John says, "we" (1 John 1:9), and then he calls his audience "little children" (1 John 2:1, and other verses). So John is writing to saved people. Well, if they are saved, why do they need 1 John 1:9?

They need it not for judicial forgiveness. They already had that. You have that the moment you trust Christ. But they need it for family forgiveness. If you do something obnoxious or sinful to your family, you are still in the family, but your enjoyment of your family is hindered. So 1 John 1:9 fixes that issue by way of fellowship.

First Thessalonians 5:19 says,

*"Do not quench the Spirit;" (1 Thessalonians 5:19).*

That is written to Christians. That means a Christian must have the ability to quench the Spirit, or else the command does not make any sense.

Ephesians 4:30, written to saved people, says,

*"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).*

Now, that verse, Ephesians 4:30, follows the anger and unforgiveness verses of Ephesians 4:26-27. Ephesians 4:30, which comes after Ephesians 4:26-27 in Ephesians 4, says,

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

So that means that as a Christian, I must have the ability to grieve the Holy Spirit which is in me, by harboring unforgiveness towards people.

These are all just examples of how Peter could say to Simon,

*"...your heart is not right before God" (Acts 8:21).*

It is completely possible for a Christian to fall into that circumstance, and it has nothing to do with the forfeiture of one's salvation.

One of the things that is interesting to note here is that Peter is growing in a particular spiritual gift. There is a spiritual gift, according to 1 Corinthians 12:10, called *"the distinguishing of spirits."* It is basically what some call "discernment." For whatever reason, Peter, as one of the key leaders of the early church, possessed that gift, I think.

Peter could actually look at Simon and tell that the things that Simon was saying were wrong, and Peter could actually look at Simon's heart and see that Simon's heart was not right before God.

I believe that the spiritual gift of distinguishing of spirits, discernment, is a spiritual gift of an edifying quality that is alive and well in the church today. We are all called to discern. But some people seem to be a little bit further along the curve than the rest of us. They can pick out false doctrine immediately, or they can immediately tell when someone or something is not exactly right.

I believe this is a spiritual gift that Peter possessed, and I believe that the Lord was training Peter in his use of that gift when the Lord used it on Peter, and said,

*"... 'Get behind Me, Satan!...' (Matthew 16:23).*

Peter made a statement, "Jesus, You should not go to the cross at this point" (paraphrase, Matthew 16:21-22). In fact, Peter did not just say, "Do not go to the cross." Peter took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him (Matthew 16:22). When Jesus saw Peter doing that—He discerned what was motivating Peter's statement—He said,

*"... 'Get behind Me, Satan!...' (Matthew 16:23).*

I think at that point, Peter was receiving tutoring in how the spiritual gift of distinguishing among spirits works, because Jesus knew that Peter would be using that gift in the Book of Acts. Peter now is using that gift in this whole issue related to Simon the sorcerer.

This rebuke by Peter to Simon involves a consequence, Acts 8:20, something which will perish; it involves an analysis of Simon's heart, Acts 8:21; and then in Acts 8:22, we see what Simon needs to do: he needs to repent. Acts 8:22 says,

*"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).*

"You need to repent."

Now, Pastor Dennis Rokser was here for three sessions, so you guys know what "repent" means, right? What does it mean? "Change of mind."

So Peter, talking to Simon, related to this ambition that Simon had to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit and to get his power needs met—Peter is basically telling Simon that "You need to change your mind about wanting this authority just for the sake of authority. You need to change your mind about this wickedness of yours. And then you need to pray that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you" (paraphrase, Acts 8:22).

Now, when Peter says, "You need to repent and you need to pray for forgiveness" (paraphrase, Acts 8:22), it is not judicial forgiveness. Judicial forgiveness was fixed the moment that Simon exercised faith in the Messiah (Acts 8:13). Simon was made God's child at that point. He was no longer an enemy of God. Romans 5:10 tells us that we are enemies of God before we get saved. But now Simon was God's child. At that point, God became his Father.

God becomes the Father of any human being that will trust in the finished work of Jesus for salvation. That fixes judicial forgiveness forever. God is no longer one's enemy, He is no longer one's judge, but now He is one's Father.

However, if you have an earthly father, although that cannot be altered, as children we can disobey our earthly father. So when that happens, your earthly father does not stop being your father. There is not a judicial issue. There is a family issue. There is a family friction issue. There is a family fellowship issue.

That is what Simon needs to get fixed here. This sin is not altering his salvation. This sin is altering his moment-by-moment fellowship with and enjoyment of God. Every moment he spends in that condition is a moment he could have been used productively for God. Ministry opportunities are perishing. Potential for reward is perishing.

A lot of people look at this word "repent," and they say, "Well, that is just for the unsaved. Only the unsaved repent." And it is true that the unsaved need to repent. They need to change their mind about Jesus (Acts 17:31).

The interesting thing about repentance, or change of mind, is that it is something that becomes, for the growing Christian, a lifestyle. There are many things, specifically as you sit under the teaching of the Word of God, that the Holy Spirit will surface in your mind and say, "Well, when you do this or do that, you are out of fellowship with the Lord."

So you might listen to a sermon on bitterness or unforgiveness, and the takeaway from that is not, "Well, I guess I am not saved." The takeaway is, "I need to repent of that, not to get saved again or to get more saved, (You cannot be more saved than what you are already.) But if I am going to walk with God and have fellowship with Him and not see temporal blessings perishing that He wants to give me above and beyond salvation, then I need to repent or change my mind about unforgiveness or bitterness."

I remember specifically in college, one particular weekend I was a little bit more gossipy or mouthy than I should have been. I know that it is a shock for you guys to see me in that light. But I could really get a good gossip thing going—a lot of sarcasm, a lot of criticism—that kind of thing. I was at my dorm doing all this kind of stuff.

I remember going home for the weekend in Orange County, California, going back under the pastor of the church that I was saved in. I remember he was preaching on James 3. If you know anything about James 3, it is about taming the tongue. Despite the fact that there was an auditorium full of people, it was almost as though the pastor was talking directly to me. And I thought to myself, "Well, who up at the dorm gave you the phone call and reported on me?"

So I am sitting there listening to this and I am thinking, "I really need to change my mind about controlling my speech and that kind of thing." It was not an issue of "I am not a Christian." It was an issue of "This really is not pleasing to the Lord. And I really want to walk in fellowship with the Lord and not have blessings disappear. So I need to change my mind about this."

That is how repentance becomes basically a lifestyle for the growing Christian. All the way through our Christian life, the Lord is going to go to point out things that are not right in our the way we are conducting ourselves, and we have to keep responding to the truth to continue to grow and say, "Well, Lord, I just ask that You change me in this area."

I do not think I was ever changed one hundred percent in the area [of controlling the tongue]. Even to this day I am certainly not one hundred percent transformed in this area [of controlling the tongue]. I certainly did not become sinless, but I was sinning less. That is called growth. And that is called, really, a lifestyle of repentance. So that is what Simon needs to do.

Now, notice this expression here:

*"...if possible..." (Acts 8:22).*

This confuses people. Peter says,

*"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 NASB1995).*

Even before we get to that, just to demonstrate that repentance is not just for the unsaved but the saved, remember what Jesus said to the seven churches of Asia Minor. Five of the seven needed to repent. The only ones that did not need to repent were Smyrna and Philadelphia. Every single other one of those churches needed to repent.

Well, why did Smyrna and Philadelphia not need to repent? They did not need to repent because they were being persecuted by a group of people called the "synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9; 3:9). It is interesting that when a church comes under persecution, they have a tendency to live more of a sanctified lifestyle.

But other than Smyrna and Philadelphia, every single one of the seven churches of Asia Minor needed to repent. These churches were filled with saved people. Even the worst of the worst, Laodicea, the church of which nothing good is said,—even the Laodiceans were saved. You say, "Well, how do you know that?" I know it because of Revelation 3:19, in which Jesus is speaking to Laodicea.

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

That is discipline. Discipline is only for the child of God. What God does for an unbeliever is He condemns. But for the child of God, He disciplines. What He does for the unbeliever is He judges. What He does for the child of God is He reprove and He disciplines.

What is the difference between judgment and discipline? Judgment is God pouring out His wrath on a person, which happens to all unsaved people when they die. Discipline is a totally different concept. Discipline is the introduction of momentary pain into the life of the child of God so that they will associate the sin with the momentary pain and stay away from the sin because they do not want to experience the pain.

It is like when your child runs across the street without looking. You discipline the child so that the next time the child is thinking about running across the street without looking, they will associate the pain of the discipline with the action of running across the street without looking, and they will be spared from being killed by an oncoming car. That is what divine discipline is.

And God only disciplines his children. In fact, Hebrews 12:5-13 indicates that the fact that we experience divine discipline proves that we are sons and daughters of God. You do not discipline children who are not your own, although you might be tempted to do that at times. You discipline your own children because they belong to you.

So the fact that Jesus is saying to the Laodicean church, the worst of the worst, *""Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline;..." (Revelation 3:19)* proves that the Laodiceans were saved.

So what I am trying to get at is that all of these churches addressed in Revelation 1-3 are filled with saved people, and five of the seven need to repent of things. So repentance is not just something for an unbeliever. Repentance is something that applies to the saved as well.

I bring this up because a lot of people say, "Well, Peter told Simon to repent. I guess Simon was unsaved." Well, that is nonsensical because as Christians we develop a lifestyle of repentance. There are all kinds of things we need to change our minds about after we get saved if we want to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

So getting back to the question I was asking before: what does it mean in Acts 8:22 when it says *"if possible"*?

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

Does that mean that maybe God is going to, fellowship-wise, forgive Simon, or maybe He is not? Is that what it means? Well, that cannot be the meaning, because 1 John 1:9 says,

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

When I am serious about repentance and I ask the Lord not for judicial forgiveness (I already have that) but for family fellowship forgiveness, then the Lord is faithful to forgive that sin and restore fellowship.

It is not like the Lord says, "Well, you know, today I will forgive you, but I am not going to forgive you tomorrow." That would violate 1 John 1:9, which says that God is faithful. Christianity is not like Islam. In the Muslim mind, Allah is a deceiver.

So when Muslims show up at the final judgment, where their good works have to allegedly outweigh their bad works for them to go to heaven and not go to hell (because they do believe in hell and they do believe in heaven—it is like what they are expecting to show up to is a scale: the good has to outweigh the bad), even in some cases where the good does outweigh the bad, Allah, the deceiver, can just say to a devout Muslim, "You know what? I am not going to forgive you anyway."

So the Muslims' god (little "g") is untrustworthy. How different Christianity is from that system. In Christianity, first of all, you are not going to show up at some final judgment, wondering, "Am I going to go to heaven or hell?" to see if my good works outweighed my bad works. The Bible gives you assurance of salvation. The moment you trust Christ, you are judicially forgiven, past, present, and future.

You do not have a situation in the Bible where God says, "Okay, I forgave that person and that person and that person, but not you, because I am fickle and I can change my mind at will. I am a deceiver." For God to do that would be to violate His character. He says in Malachi 3:6,

*"...I, the Lord, do not change;..." (Malachi 3:6).*

It would be for Him to violate His character if He were a liar. God cannot lie. Numbers 23:19 says,

*"God is not a man, that He should lie,..." (Numbers 23:19).*

Hebrews 6:18 says,

*"...it is impossible for God to lie,..." (Hebrews 6:18).*

Titus 1:2 says,

*"...God,...cannot lie,..." (Titus 1:2).*

So you cannot have a scenario where God says, "I will judicially forgive, but maybe I will not. I will forgive for purposes of fellowship, but maybe I will not," because it says here in 1 John 1:9 that He is faithful to forgive.

So if God is faithful, then why does Acts 8:22 say *"if possible."*

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

Well, *"if possible"* (Acts 8:22) relates to Simon, not to God. Is Simon going to respond to this rebuke and repent and ask God for the restoration of fellowship? Maybe Simon will. Maybe Simon will not. But if Simon chooses to do so, God will one hundred percent forgive.

So the *"if possible"* (Acts 8:22) really has no relation to God's character at all. It really relates to Simon's decision. What is Simon going to do? So I think that is the meaning of *"if possible"* (Acts 8:22).

Then you go down to Acts 8:23, and you see what Simon's problem is. What is really the problem? In Acts 8:23, Peter says,

*"For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity"* (Acts 8:23).

Now when Peter says, *"...I see..."* (Acts 8:23), what is Peter growing in here? The spiritual gift of distinguishing between spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). It is some sort of ability to pick up on false teaching, to pick up, almost, on false motives, and to see when something happening in the church is not right.

I do know people that have that gift. I have it related to being able to objectively identify false doctrine. I can see false doctrine coming a mile away. I do not have any ability to read people's motives, but I do know people that I think have that gift.

I have seen it in operation: they will say something like "What that person did, or what that person said, or what that person is doing is not right." And give a little time and it is exposed. They do something that unmask themselves. So I believe that this is an authentic spiritual gift.

I think that for people who have these kinds of gifts, it is not an easy row to hoe because you are seeing problems before they develop, and nobody likes that. Nobody likes to know that the Titanic is sinking when everything is fine, and we are enjoying dinner on the deck and they are playing music. Who wants to hear somebody say, "Iceberg!"?

People who have the gift of distinguishing of spirits are typically pushed to the side as a complainer, a troublemaker. But they are really not trying to cause trouble. It is just that they see what they see because the Holy Spirit gives them the ability.

So I believe Peter is operating in this gift. When the Lord rebuked Peter at Caesarea Philippi and said, "...Get behind Me, Satan!..." in Matthew 16:20-23, there is a lot more going on there than meets the eye. I think Jesus was actually training Peter in the use of this spiritual gift, knowing that Peter would exercise this gift in the Book of Acts.

So Peter, now operating in this gift, says,

*"For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity"* (Acts 8:23).

So notice that Peter points out Simon's problem: gall, bitterness, iniquity. Those put a person in bondage, because that is what sin does, right? Sin enslaves. Romans 6:23 says,

*"For the wages of sin is death,..." (Romans 6:23).*

A wage is a cost. There is a price to be paid when a Christian—or anyone for that matter, including a Christian—moves into sin.

Romans 6:12 says,

*"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts," (Romans 6:12).*

Again, that is a commandment that makes no sense to the Christian unless we have the ability to let sin reign in our mortal body. I still have a sin nature as a Christian, and I can offer the instruments of my body to that sin nature anytime I want to. I have that power. But when I do that, I put myself in a position of bondage, because sin brings a price tag.

Romans 12:21, written to Christians, says,

*"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).*

So when Paul tells the Christian, *"Do not be overcome by evil,..." (Romans 12:21)*, that means the Christian has the ability to be overcome by evil, or else why make the command? It would not make any sense.

So before I get saved, I am a sinner because I had to sin. When I get saved and I have the resources of Jesus in me, and I have a new nature, but the old nature is there until glorification—now, when I go back to the old nature, I do not do it because I have to. Before I was saved, I had to. Now I do it because I want to.

Every time I sin as a Christian, it is because I want to, not because I have to. And the wages of sin is death. Sin brings bondage into a person's life: psychologically, emotionally, financially—any way you want to count it.

So this is Simon's problem. He is a believer, but he is in bondage. Bondage to what? His sin nature that he is catering to. In this particular case, the lust for power—the power that he wielded in Samaria as an unsaved person. He has not learned to reckon that dead, as Paul tells us to do in Romans 6.

Simon is still living for that lust for power. He is just doing it within Christendom or Christianity. Now he has just put a Christian coat of wet paint over a sinful impulse. And Peter says, "As long as you keep doing this, your problem is that you are in bondage" (paraphrase, Acts 8:23).

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)



So then you see Simon's response to all of this, 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).*

Now this is remorse. And I think that is more evidence that Simon is saved. He is saved because of Acts 8:13: he believes. Philip thought Simon was authentic in terms of his faith, so Philip baptized Simon. Then when Peter confronts Simon because Simon was trying to buy the power of the Holy Spirit, Simon to me seems as though he feels bad about it, which is evidence of the Holy Spirit within him. It is evidence of his saved state.

I remember when I first got saved, I knew nothing about discipleship. I was about sixteen years old, and I went home and committed a sin not long after. But I felt really bad about it. I was thinking to myself, "Where did this guilt come from? I did not feel bad about it before I trusted Christ. Why do I feel so bad about it now?" Well, that is actually a good sign. That means the Holy Spirit is inside of you, convicting you of something.

Before you get saved, there is no conviction of the Spirit. You can sin up a storm. And a lot of times it does not bother you at all. But you get saved and all of a sudden you start feeling bad about stuff you did normally, and you feel really bad about yourself because you sin. But really, you ought to say, "Well, praise the Lord that I feel bad, because if I did not feel bad at all, that would mean the Holy Spirit was not in me at all."

I think the conviction by the Holy Spirit is what Simon is experiencing here. James 4:5, of the Spirit within us, says,

*"Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us'?" (James 4:5).*

In other words, once the Holy Spirit is inside of you, He is not really happy with a corner room in the basement. He wants influence over your whole life. To the extent that we resist Him and say, "Stay in the basement. I do not want you interfering with this other part of my life." is the extent that He becomes jealous and will start to convict us.

Simon was under conviction to such an extent that he did not even want to pray for himself. He says to Peter,

*"...Pray to the Lord for me,..." (Acts 8:24).*


Probably Simon did not feel worthy to pray for himself. So that is an example of Simon's remorse.

The whole story with Simon here ends with a conclusion, Acts 8:25.

*"So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans" (Acts 8:25).*

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

- I. Samaria (8:5-25)
- II. Judea (Acts 8:26-40)



So at this point these Jerusalem apostles are leaving Samaria and going back to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel. And here is something interesting to think about: how come the Holy Spirit was not delayed anymore as they went about preaching the gospel?

The Holy Spirit was delayed between belief and filling in Acts 8:14-17. How come, as the apostles were going from Samaria back to Jerusalem, they did not have to keep laying hands on everyone that believed in Samaria? Well, the answer is that Jesus gave Peter the keys to the kingdom (Matthew 16:19).

What do you do with keys? You open doors. Peter opened the gospel to the Samaritans by laying hands on the Samaritans so that they received the Holy Spirit after believing. The door now is open, the door is unlocked, and once the door is open, it stays open. So what is normative from this point onward is not some kind of delay in the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is their receiving the Holy Spirit automatically upon faith alone in Christ alone.

You will see Peter doing this constantly when he unlocks the door. He unlocked the door to salvation to the Jews, Acts 2, and when the door was open, it stayed open. He unlocked the door to salvation to the Samaritans, Acts 8, and when the door was open,

it stayed open. He has not done it yet in our study, but in Acts 10, he is going to unlock the door of salvation to the Gentiles. Cornelius and his household will be saved. Once the door is open, it stays open.

This reminds us of what Jesus said to the church at church at Philadelphia.

*"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David [a key is something that opens the door], who opens and no one will shut,..." (Revelation 3:7).*

So God is the one who used Peter with these keys to open these doors. And once the door is open, it cannot be closed by anyone other than God, because God is the one who gave Peter the keys to begin with.

*"...who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this [to Philadelphia]: "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name" (Revelation 3:7-8).*

So once the door is open to the Samaritans—they had to have some authentication of that through the trip from the Jerusalem apostles to lay hands on these folks to see if they really were saved or not, and the Holy Spirit came upon them—the door is wide open. And the Bible indicates that what God opens cannot be shut.

God opened the door because He is the one who gave Peter the keys to citizenship in the future Kingdom by opening this door. So now the gospel door is wide open to the Samaritans, just as it is wide open to the Jews. It cannot be closed. And in Acts 10 you know we are going to see the door open to the Gentiles.

## II. Ministry in Judea

Acts 8:26-40

- A. Angel directs Philip (26)
- B. Philip's obedience (27a)
- C. Ethiopian Eunuch's introduction (27b-28)
- D. Holy Spirit directs Philip (29)
- E. Philip's witness to the Eunuch (30-35)
- F. Eunuch's conversion & baptism (36-38)
- G. Philip's separation from the Eunuch (39)
- H. Philip's evangelization of the Coastal Plain (40)



So they go back from Samaria to Jerusalem—these Jerusalem apostles. They return and give their report that these Samaritans really are Christians. And then something really strange happens in Acts 8:26. Philip is in the midst of a revival. And in Acts 8:26-

40, the Holy Spirit tells him, "Leave the revival. Leave Samaria." Philip has no idea why he is supposed to leave.

You could see Philip saying, "I do not want to leave. I like what You are doing here. I like leading and being involved in this revival." But Philip does what he is told, even though he is not given the reason. The Holy Spirit knows what is going to happen, because along a road is going to come somebody from seeking the things of God, but not having a complete understanding. And Philip is going to be given the opportunity to teach this seeking Ethiopian the full perspective.

The Ethiopian, called the Ethiopian eunuch, is going to take that truth and take it back to Ethiopia, where Christianity would spread into Africa. That is why the Holy Spirit told Philip to leave Samaria and go stand on another road (I will show you exactly what road it is): because the Holy Spirit knew that there was something bigger at stake than enjoying a revival in Samaria, as wonderful as it was.

The gospel was now going to go into Africa. The Holy Spirit never told Philip why he had to leave Samaria. He just said, "Do it." So with all of that being said, if the Lord is impressing upon you to do something this week and does not give you the answer, my advice to you is to do what the Lord says, because even though you do not have the full picture, He has the full picture, and something absolutely fantastic might be waiting right around the corner.

So many times we do not walk by faith and we second guess God, and we miss out on blessings He wants to do in and through us. If Philip had disobeyed, I have no doubt that God in His sovereignty would have gotten the gospel to Africa somehow, because God loves Ethiopians and Africans just like He loves anybody else. But Philip would have forfeited the opportunity of being used by God.

It is like what it says in Esther 4:14. "If you do not do what you are supposed to do, Esther, help is going to arise from another place, but who knows? You could have been put in this position for such a time as this" (paraphrase). In other words, God's work is going to get done. But if you will not obey, then you are not going to receive the benefit or the blessing of being used by God." That is what is happening here with Philip in Acts 8:26-40, which I would encourage you to read for next time.