

Exegetical Notes, Acts 8:9-25

“You Can’t Buy It”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship

101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320

610-384-1375

charleshjensen@aol.com

Acts 8:9-25

Verses 9-11

Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great,¹⁰ and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.”¹¹ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery.

- In the city to which Phillip went (see Acts 8:5) following the persecution (see Acts 8:1), there was a man whose name was Simon. This man was a “sorcerer.” He practiced magic arts of various kinds and had successfully seduced the people into believing that he was a great man. The people called him, The great power of God. The people believed that Simon got his power from God.

Verses 12-13

But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.¹³ Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

- When the people of that city listened to Philip and saw the signs and healings that he did, they believed his message, accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord and were baptized.
- Even Simon believed in Jesus and was baptized. He was impressed by the signs and healings that Philip did.

Verses 14-19

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria.¹⁵ When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit,¹⁶ because the

Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸ When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹ and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

- News of the success of Philip's ministry reached the Apostles who had remained in Jerusalem. Peter and John were sent to the city where Philip was to encourage and affirm the new believers there.
- Peter and John discovered that the Christians in Samaria had not yet received the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor, 12:1-11) were not evident among the believers. So they laid hands on the believers and prayed that they would receive the Holy Spirit.
- When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, he wanted that power, the power to give the Holy Spirit of God to people as the Apostles did. He offered to give them money if they would invest him with that power.

Verses 20-24

Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³ For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

²⁴ Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

- Peter was infuriated by Simon's attempt to purchase the power to give people the Holy Spirit. He told Simon that his heart was not right with God and that he needed to repent and ask God to forgive him. Simon had believed that Jesus was the Son of God and even been baptized, however, he had not allowed his belief to affect the way he lived. His knowledge of who Jesus was had not his life. He was still a captive of sin (See James 2:18-19)
- It is difficult to determine if Simon's request for prayer in verse 24 is a genuine request or just an attempt to preserve himself. If his prayer was genuine, it indicates that he did as Peter instructed him to do.

Consequently, he would have been forgiven. If it was not genuine, it indicates that he continued to be bound by sin and was not affected by what he knew to be true.

Verse 25

After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

- After a preaching tour through Samaria, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem.
- The story ends without telling us if Simon was sincerely repentant or not.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *You Can't Buy It!* They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)