

“Examine Yourselves”
Acts 8:4-25

Introduction:

1. Last Week:
 - In Our “Journey Through Acts” - We Saw How:
 - The Blood Of The First Martyr:
 - Stephen - Became The Seed Of The Church:
 - As Christians Fled From Jerusalem:
 - And Spread The Gospel Wherever They Went!
 - And We See This:
 - Beginning In Acts 8:4:
 - Where We Will Begin Tonight!
 - So - Please Turn In Your Bibles There With Me!
 - Acts 8:4:
 - “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word!”
 - So - Wherever ***They Fled:***
 - ***They Spread - “The Word!”***
2. And So - Luke - The Author Of Acts:
 - Wants To Share With Us:
 - Just One Example Of The Gospel Seed:
 - Taking Root In A Rather Surprising Place:
 - And In A Surprising Way!
 - The Place:
 - Would Be:
 - In Samaria!
 - And The Way:
 - Would Be:
 - Through Another Deacon:
 - Who Served With Stephen - Even If It Was For A Short Time!
 - But - Being Emboldened By The Confidence & Courage Of His Friend:
 - 8:5 - “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them!”
 - We First Met This Philip:
 - In Acts 6 - When He:
 - Along With 6 Others - Being “Full Of Faith & Of The Holy Spirit” - Were Chosen To Help Serve The Church!
 - Later In Acts - We Learn That This Same Philip:
 - Was Also Given Another Gift & Role In The Church:
 - And Became Known - In Acts 21:8 - As “Philip The Evangelist!”
3. And This All Began:
 - In What Could Be Better Translated Here:
 - “***A*** City Of Samaria!”
 - There Was A City - ***Called*** Samaria In Those Days - But It Was Full Of Greeks, And Very Few Samaritans!
 - The City Philip Traveled To:
 - Was Likely The Same City Or Town:
 - Where Jesus Himself Visited In John 4:4-5 - When, We Are Told - “And he must needs go through Samaria. / Then cometh he to ***a city of Samaria***, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph!”
 - It Was Here - Where Jesus:
 - Met With A Woman At “Jacob’s Well” And:
 - Who Eventually Believed & Testified:
 - “He Told Me All That Ever I Did!” (4:39)
 - So - It Seems That:
 - There Was Already A Seed Sown:
 - In Samaria - By The Lord Jesus Himself!
 - And Philip When Into That Same Field That Was “White Already To Harvest!” (4:35)

- And So - The First Thing We Discover:
- In Samaria Is:

1. A New Opportunity For The Church!

- And The Lord Blesses Philip For His:
 - Faithful Preaching & Teaching Of The Gospel!
 - Because - In 8:6-8 - We Read About:
- Great Success With The Samaritans!
 - “6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. / 7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. / 8 And there was great joy in that city!”
 - “Great Joy!”
 - Now - There Certainly Was “Great Joy” For:
- The Good Accomplished:
 - By The Hand Of Philip!
 - As God Granted Him The Gift Of Performing Miracles - To Confirm The Truth Of His Words!
 - But - Their Joy Became Even Greater Because Of:
- The Gospel Affirmed!
 - Because - As Philip - 8:5 - “Preached Christ Unto Them” - They Believed!
 - The Success Of The Gospel Was Great!
- And - It Seemed To Be Even Greater - Because Of The:
- Great Success With [A Man Called] Simon!
 - 4:9-13 - “But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: / 10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. / 11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. / 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. / 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done!”
 - This Man, Simon - Known In History As:
 - “Simon Magus” - Had Great Influence Among The Samaritans In That Day!
 - And - Before He Met Philip - He Was:
- A Man With Great Power!
 - Using Sorcery & Magic To “Bewitch” Or To “Impress & Astonish” The People!
 - And So - He Became:
- A Man With Great Prominence!
 - 8:10 - “To Whom They All Gave Heed!”
 - And They Even Ascribed To Him:
 - The Attributes & Actions Of God Himself!
 - Which He Did Not Deny! So - He Was Also:
- A Man With Great Pride!
 - 4:9 - “Giving Out That Himself Was Some Great One!” & Accepting Their Acclaim That:
 - 4:10 - “This Man Is The Great Power Of God!”
- But What Happened To Simon?
 - As The People:
 - “Believed” In The Message Of Philip About Jesus:
 - And Were “Baptized!” (8:12)
 - So - Simon:
 - “Believed Also” & “Was Baptized!” (8:13)
 - But - Even More - The Devotion Of Simon Seemed Stronger & Fuller! Because:
 - 8:13 - “He [Even] Continued With Philip!”
 - And - At First Glance:
 - This Appears To Be A Great Victory:
 - And A Great Triumph For The Gospel!
 - Not Only Did Many Samaritans Trust In Christ, It Seems That Simon Did Too!
- And As The News Of This:

- “Great Awakening” Reached The Ears:
- Of The Apostles In Jerusalem - It Also Became:

2. *A New Opening For The Church!*

- Because - When Jesus Had First Commissioned His Disciples:
 - Back In Matthew 10:5-6 - We Read - “These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: / But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!”
 - And - Because Of The National & Natural Prejudices The Disciples Had As Jews:
 - They Would Have Happily Complied!
 - But - Now - Things Were Different!
 - Not Only Did Jesus Change His Commission To Them:
 - In Acts 1:8 - To Include Samaria:
 - Now - There Was Clear Evidence Of God At Work In Samaria:
 - Through The Preaching Of Philip!
- And So - 8:14-17 - We Read:
 - “Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: / 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: / 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) / 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost!”
 - Now - When Peter & John Went Down To Samaria, The Visible Gifts Of The Holy Spirit:
 - Were Not Yet Evident!
 - However - It Is Clear That The Holy Spirit Had Already Been At Work!
 - After All - It Is The Holy Spirit:
 - As The Spirit Of Grace - Who Enlightens & Regenerates & Sanctifies Us:
 - And Brings Us To Faith In Christ!
 - But All That Work:
 - Is A Secret & A Hidden Work:
 - That Is Done Deep In Our Hearts!
 - It Is Not Something That Is Immediately Visible & Discernable To Others!
 - And So - It Seems That At Certain Times In The Early Church:
 - This Special Outpouring Of:
 - The Power & Gifts Of The Holy Spirit:
 - Was Necessary - To Confirm The Truth & To Establish The Church!
 - What Jesus Said About The Work Of The Holy Spirit:
 - Still Applies! John 3:8 - “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit!”
 - Why Hadn’t The Samaritans Received The Holy Spirit When They Believed Or Even When They Were Baptized?
 - We Just Don’t Know!
 - But - Perhaps - As We Will See In A Moment:
 - It Was Part Of God’s Sovereign Plan:
 - To Withhold The Holy Spirit From Those New Believers:
 - To Show That True Salvation Does Not Come By Just Agreeing With The Truth Of The Gospel!
 - But That There Must Be Regeneration In Your Heart:
 - First & Foremost!
 - That - In Order For Faith To Be Effective:
 - You Must First “Be Born Again” Which Is The Work & Gift Of God Alone!
- You See - The Goodness & The Grace Of God:
 - That Is Evident In The Gospel:
 - Is An Attractive Thing!
 - And It May Even Cause Some To “Believe” In Its Truth - At Least To Some Extent! But Not All Faith Is Saving Faith!
 - James Describes This In:
 - James 2:19 - “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble!”
 - And So - There Are Many Reasons:

- Why A Person Might “Believe” In The Truth Without Fully “Receiving” The Truth In A Saving Way!
- And Simon Magus Is An Example Of This!
 - Some May Make A Profession Of Faith:
 - Out Of Convenience!
 - Or - Because It Is The “Thing To Do!”
 - We Get A Hint Of This Back In 8:12-13 - When *After* The People Believed & Were Baptized:
 - “*Then* [And Only Then] Simon Himself Believed Also!”
 - But - What Did He Believe In?
 - It Is Clear In 8:12 - That The People Responded In Faith To Philip’s Preaching “Concerning The Kingdom Of God, And The Name Of Jesus Christ!”
 - But - It Is Not So Clear For Simon!
 - While The People’s Focus Was On Christ:
 - Where Was The Focus Of Simon?
 - 8:13 - “When he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done!”
 - This Shows Us That:
 - Some May Make A Profession Of Faith:
 - Out Of Curiosity!
 - Simon’s Faith Was One Of His Mind & Not Of His Heart!
 - But - There’s Something Else We Can Learn From Simon’s Faith, And That Is That:
 - Some May Make A Profession Of Faith:
 - Out Of Covetousness!
 - Out Of Ambition - And What They Can Get *Out Of* God!
 - Because - In 8:18-24 - We Learn About:

3. *A New Obstacle For The Church!*

- Because - The Kind Of Faith Simon Had:
 - Is Revealed Through:
- An Ambitious Request!
 - 8:18-19 - “And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, / 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost!”
 - Note - Simon Didn’t Want The *Gift* Of The Holy Spirit:
 - He Wanted The Power To *Give* The Holy Spirit - Who Was Not His To Give!
 - Instead Of Desiring The Holy Spirit’s Gifts To Help Him Serve, He Wanted The Holy Spirit To Be At His Service!
 - And He Even Thought That He Could *Buy*:
 - This Spiritual Power For Himself!
 - Even Today - The English Word “Simony” Is Used When Someone Tries To Buy Some Kind Of Office Or Privilege In The Church!
 - And Through This Request:
 - The Faith Of Simon:
 - Was Revealed To Be Defective!
 - And The Heart Of Simon:
 - Was Revealed To Still Be Hard!
 - And So - Peter & John Provide:
 - A Serious Response!
 - 8:20-23 - “But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. / 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. / 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. / 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity!”
 - The Fruit Of Simon’s False Faith & Conversion:
 - Had Ripened Quickly - And So - Peter Was Able To Discern & Declare Simon’s True Condition!
 - 8:21 - “Thy Heart Is Not Right In The Sight Of God!”

- Simon Was Still Unsavd!
- But This Is Not All Peter Said!
 - Even Though His Words Were Serious & Severe:
 - He Still Called On Simon:
 - To Repent Of His Sin!
 - Peter Still Wished For Simon's Salvation, Not His Condemnation - Which Is Why He Said:
 - 8:22 - "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee!"
 - Hope Was Laid Out Before Simon!
 - "Repent" & "Pray!"
 - What Would Simon Do?
 - In 8:24 - We Read About:
- An Unfortunate Reply!
 - "Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord *for me, that* none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me!"
 - Now - We're Not Sure Of Simon's Tone:
 - When He Said These Words - And He Might Have Been Very Sincere!
 - But He Did Not Do What Peter Told Him To Do, Did He?
 - Peter Said That He Needed To "Repent" Of His "Wickedness!"
 - But There Is No Clear Sorrow For Or Repentance From His Sin!
 - He Does Seem A Bit Alarmed About The Consequences Of His Sin! And Rightfully So!
 - But He Was Not Willing To Admit His Wickedness Nor Abandon His Sin!
 - Also:
 - Peter Said That He Need To "Pray God" For His "Forgiveness!"
 - But Instead - Simon Told Peter To Pray *For* Him Instead!
 - At First - This Might Seem To Be A Humble Reply - But His Disobedience Proved His Own Hubris & Pride!
 - Albert Barnes - "Sinners Will Often Ask Others To Pray For Them, When They Are Too Proud, Or To Much In Love With Sin, To Pray For Themselves!"

Conclusion:

1. And This Reveals To Us:
 - The Missing Element In So Many So-Called "Professions" Of Faith!
 - True Repentance & Confession:
 - Of Sin!
 - True Faith Will Reveal Itself Through:
 - A Personal Conviction Of Sin!
 - A Recognition That What You Have Done:
 - Is, In Fact, "Wickedness" Before A Holy God!
 - Sin Is No Light Thing!
 - It Is Serious! And Requires The Severe Consequences & Just Judgment Of God!
 - True Faith Will Reveal Itself Through:
 - A Personal Confession Of Sin!
 - Not Merely Asking *Others* To Pray For You:
 - But Praying To God Yourself:
 - For Your Own Need Of Grace & Forgiveness From Your Sin!
 - Because - 2 Corinthians 7:10 - "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death!"
 - True Faith Will Reveal Itself Through:
 - A Personal Call To The Lord!
 - Romans 10:13 - "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!"
 - And This Kind Of Faith Is The Evidence:
 - Of The Holy Spirit's Work In Your Heart!
 - Which Is Why Jesus Himself Initiated This Message In Mark 1:15 - By - "Saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel!"
2. This Is The Last We Hear:
 - About Simon Magus In The Bible!
 - But - Early Christian History Records For Us:

- His End!
 - According To Justin Martyr, Who Was Born & Grew Up In Samaria, And Lived From 100-165, Describes How Simon Became An Enemy Of The Apostles & The Early Church!
- He Even Took Many Christian Truths:
 - And Distorted Them:
 - For His Own Advantage & Following!
 - He Even Presented Himself As A Triune God! He Taught That He Was:
 - The Father Of The Samaritans!
 - The Son To The Jews!
 - And The Holy Spirit To The Rest Of The World!
- As Far As We Know:
 - Simon Remained:
 - 8:23 - "In The Gall Of Bitterness, And In The Bond Of Iniquity!"
- 3. But What About The Church?
 - The Mission & The Progress Continued!
 - 8:25 - "And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans!"
 - The Door To The Hearts Of The Samaritans:
 - Remained Open - Even Though:
 - They Found In Simon A New Adversary!
 - But - As 1 John 4:4 Reminds Us:
 - "Greater Is He That Is In You, Than He That Is In The World!"
- 4. So - What About You Tonight?
 - In 2 Corinthians 13:5 - Paul Wrote:
 - "Examine Yourselves, Whether Ye Be In The Faith!"
 - This Is Necessary, Because False Conversion Is Such A Serious & A Dangerous Reality!
 - Has There Been:
 - In Your Own Life:
 - A Personal Conviction Of Sin?
 - A Personal Confession Of Sin?
 - A Personal Call To The Lord:
 - For His Mercy!
 - Remember What Jesus Said:
 - About The Publican In The Temple?
 - In Luke 18:13-14 - "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. / I tell you, this man went down to his house justified!"
 - True & Saving Faith:
 - Will Reveal Itself:
 - Through Repentance Of Sin!

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