

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE SAVIOR NOT HIS POWER

ACTS 8:9-24

INTRODUCTION:

The Great Magic trick – (Set it up) – leave it and get to the Word..

In this passage of scripture Luke tell us about the Samaritans and Simon

He tells us about Simon to give us a warning.

And he tells us about the Samaritans to give us an invitation.

Next time we will talk about the Samaritans and the Invitation

Today we talk about Simon and the warning.

It's a warning for people who are seeing or want to see supernatural signs and wonders.

Not a warning that signs and wonders are bad

But a warning that a person can think and feel about signs and wonders in a way that is very destructive.

Simon saw the signs that Philip was doing.

He saw that they were better than his own magical signs.

He got excited about them.

He followed Philip around and wanted to imitate them.

But he never recognized that the purpose of those miracles were to point people to Jesus

Further

He never saw his own sin,

He never saw His need for repentance, AND

He never saw His Need to receive the gospel

TRANSITION

Luke talks about Simon in order to warn us

This morning I will show you four ways he is warning for us.

1. First of all what you need to see is that Simon believed in the message preached,

BUT There is a "believing" that does not save, Even though it rises in the presence of true preaching and true miracles.

Verse 12 says that Philip was preaching good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

Verse 13b says that Philip was doing "signs and great miracles

Further, "Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized, he continued with Philip."

But then something happens that shows this "belief" to be false.

The apostles come down and lay hands on the Samaritans so that they receive the Holy Spirit.

Then beginning in verse 18 here's what happened:

[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."

[20] 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. Perhaps he will 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."

FOR THE APOSTLE TO SAY

"You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God."

It is pretty clear that Simon was not truly Converted

He still needs to repent.

Because He is still enslaved to SIN.

All of church tradition confirms this

Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Jerome, all say that Simon went on to become a heretic and not a true Christian

They called him Simon Magus – or Simon the Magician

THE POINT I DRAW OUT OF THIS IS THAT

There is a "faith" or a "believing" that does not save,

even though it rises in the presence of true preaching and true miracles.

The same thing is found in John 2:23-25,

Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. [24] But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. [25] He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

This "faith" or "believing" was not genuine and Jesus could see into the heart and knew that it wasn't.

The same kind of "faith" is seen in the parable of the four soils. In Luke 8:13

Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

Paul taught the same possibility in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2

1 Cor. 15:1-2

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. [2] By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

Simon's "faith"-- is not a saving faith but a false faith,

- dead,
- barren,
- Empty.

That's the first step in Luke's warning to us.

TRANSITION

There is a faith that can rise in the presence of true preaching and true miracles.

But it's false

2. THE SECOND PART OF LUKE'S WARNING CONCERN THE OBJECT OF SIMON'S FAITH—

What does Simon put his faith in?

He believes in the miracles - But not Jesus Christ

Simon was a sorcerer.

Before he ever heard Philip preach or ever heard of Jesus Christ.
He dealt in supernatural power

He used his magical arts for a long time in Samaria and amazed the people.

So when Philip came to town and not only preached but performed signs by healing people and casting out demons (Acts 8:7),

**Simon knew the power was real,
and that it was stronger than his power.**

So he was ready to switch sides.

**SO THE OBJECT OF HIS FAITH WAS THE POWER OF
SIGNS AND WONDERS.**

This is what he believed in —

He believed that Philip was a real miracle worker.

He didn't doubt it.

He was not a skeptic.

He was ready to leave his own magical arts to join Philip and use this new power.

What had happened?

Philip had stretched out the finger of signs and wonders to point to the glory of Jesus,

and Simon had fixed his faith on the finger.

He believed in it.

He wanted to be able to point like that.

But he never turned his head to look at Jesus Christ,

Jesus was not the object of Simon's faith.

And therefore it was not true saving faith.

What was it?

2. THE THIRD STEP OF LUKE'S WARNING IS THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF SIMON'S "FAITH" WAS SIMPLY AMAZEMENT—

Amazement at Philip's signs,

Not brokenness for sin

Not trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Luke makes this plain to us.

He uses the word "amaze" three times. (vs. 9,11,13)

- In verse 9 he says that **Simon had "amazed" the nation of Samaria** with his magic (sorcery).
- Then in verse 11 it says again that **Simon had "amazed" them for a long time** by his magic.
- Then in verse 13b, after Philip had shown the power of God, it says, "And seeing signs and great miracles performed, **he (Simon himself) was amazed.**"

IN OTHER WORDS

What Simon had been producing in the Samaritans by his sorcery,

He was now experiencing in himself when he saw Philip's miracles,

AMAZEMENT

Unfortunately,

Believing that supernatural power is present and being amazed by it so much that you want it, is not an experience of true faith.

WHAT WAS MISSING?

Peter says to Simon,

Acts 8:22

Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

What was missing was a recognition of sinfulness and a turning to Jesus for forgiveness.

Amazement and excitement about signs and wonders is not saving faith.

Signs and wonders are the finger pointing to Jesus.

Until we turn to the Lord himself there will be no true faith.

4. THE FINAL STEP IN LUKE'S WARNING IS THAT THE ROOT OF SIMON'S FALSE FAITH IS A CROOKED HEART.

Acts 8:21

You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.

(literally: Not straight)

At the root of Simon's false faith was a heart problem.

And that is the way it is with every one who does not know GOD

His heart was not straight before God,

it was crooked.

His heart needed to be changed.

HE FIXED HIS EYES ON THE POWER OF GOD

**BECAUSE DEEP DOWN HE STILL WANTED TO BE A
GREAT POWER**

CONCLUSION

So there it is: Luke's warning to us:

- THERE IS A FALSE FAITH THAT DOES NOT SAVE;
- ITS OBJECT IS THE POWER OF SUPERNATURAL SIGNS AND WONDERS, NOT JESUS
- IT'S NATURE IS AMAZEMENT, NOT BROKENNESS FOR SIN AND TRUST IN JESUS
- ITS ROOT IS A CROOKED HEART.

Let's not misapply the warning.

Samaria was saturated with magical arts and the occult.

Acts 8:11 says that "for a long time Simon had amazed the people."
They were all caught up in and seeking after the supernatural

And into that situation came Philip

He preached Jesus

AND performed supernatural signs and wonders

And one man - Simon - didn't get it.

Some would look at that situation and say

Signs and wonders are too dangerous

It leads to people getting the wrong idea

Isn't the preaching of the gospel really enough

I want you to think about all the ways we try to point people to Jesus

- Sermons
- Special Music
- Drama
- Harvest festivals
- Human Video
- Bible Study
- Worship
- Healings
- Prophecies and messages in tongues with interpretation
- Words of knowledge and wisdom
- Casting out demons

In all these things we are trying to point people to Jesus

Which of these attract least attention to themselves?

And most to Jesus?

THE TRUTH IS every form of Christian witness has within it the ability to point souls in the wrong direction

WHICH MEANS that whether we preach or sing or act or heal

We must be utterly and desperately dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit to straighten crooked hearts

And cause people to look away from us

To Jesus who can save them.