

## **Heart Check**

Simon the Sorcerer Tries to Buy the Power of the Spirit

### **The Empowered Church Series (Acts) - Part 14**

Acts 8:4-25

April 22/23

#### **Introduction**

- **2023 is the Year of Power at Bridgeway**
- **Power can be not only attractive, it can be intoxicating.**
- **When the Holy Spirit moves and we partner with Him:**
  - His presence changes things
  - Miracles break out
  - You've never felt closer to Him.
  - Things become real and your faith is built up.
  - We get filled with boldness
- **It intentionally draws you in** – God-Stuff is important, valuable, incredible and captivating. We are supposed to be drawn to it. We are supposed to want to remain as close as possible and partner as much as possible. Unfortunately, too many of us want to stay in for the wrong reasons.

#### **MOTIVE Matters**

- **Recap – Last 2 Weeks**
  - **We watched the first official Christian Martyr, Stephen go head to head with the Jewish religious authorities, be falsely accused and stoned. We learned:**
    - **Spiritual Warfare** - A whole bunch about Spiritual Warfare and the Supernatural realm
    - **That we have 3 enemies:** World, Flesh & Devil
    - **That ministry makes us a target** – when we do Jesus stuff, it draws the attention and fire from the enemy.
    - **We need to be ready** for God's call to share the gospel and our testimony.
    - **That Christian persecution exploded** and drove many Christians from Jerusalem.

#### **Lesson**

- **Prince Philip**
  - **Philip Goes to Samaria to Minister**
    - *Acts 8:4-8 – “Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. <sup>5</sup> Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. <sup>6</sup> And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. <sup>7</sup> For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup> So there was much joy in that city.”*
      - **Those who were scattered** – who are these people? In our last story we read that not only did the Jewish Supreme Court authorize another murder to shut

down Christianity, but that a young zealous man, named Saul of Tarsus, was a significant leader in a newly charged persecution movement that was driving Christians out of Jerusalem. They scattered into the area around Jerusalem (Judea), and up north in Israel (Samaria).

- **The scattered...preached** – they took the gospel wherever they went. This is critical. There's no point in Christians being scattered all over the place if they aren't going to be Christians. God wanted the good news preached beyond Jerusalem. This is one the ways that He did that.
  - **Preaching through more than words** – it's not just our words that matter to share, although those are really important, but it's also our actions and our attitudes that spread the gospel.
- **Philip** – who's this guy? We will talk about him extensively next week but just for him now we'll remind ourselves that like Stephen he was one of the first Deacons (the 7 that were brought in to help the widows). He is part of that next level of leadership. He is not an apostle.
- **The City of Samaria<sup>1</sup>** – The northern REGION/part of Israel was called Samaria and that was because the capital of the north for a very long time was the CITY of Samaria. When the kingdom split in two, North and South, after Solomon died and his throne went to others, the South was called Judea and the North was called Samaria. The northern capital was the city of Samaria, and the South capital was Jerusalem. It was during the 'exile' (when the people of Israel were deported into other parts of the world by enemies), that some of the remaining Jews mixed with other nations that had moved into Northern Israel and that mixed group were called the Samaritans (i.e. Good Samaritan).
  - **Went Down?** – it seems weird to read that Philip went DOWN to Samaria when it's up on the map. And that shows how we are so oriented by a certain type of map. We are on a ball/globe/earth, so there's not really an up and down, so we made one. We call one North and the other South. So we orient our maps that way and we see things up on the map and down on the map. But in the Bible it's not talked about that way. So many of the stories are launched from Jerusalem and Jerusalem was UP on a low level mountain. So anyone leaving from Jerusalem would be going down to somewhere else.

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<sup>1</sup> Between the populations of Judaea and Samaria there was a longstanding cleavage, going back to the isolation of Judah from the other tribes of Israel in the settlement period (cf. Deut. 33:7). This cleavage found notable expression in the disruption of the Hebrew monarchy after Solomon's death (c. 930 B.C.). In spite of attempts to effect a reconciliation in postexilic times, the cleavage was widened when the Samaritans were refused a share in the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple and erected a rival temple on their sacred hill Gerizim. The temple on Gerizim was destroyed by the Hasmonaean ruler John Hyrcanus I (134–104 B.C.) when he conquered Samaria and added it to his own realm.<sup>23</sup> With the Roman conquest of Palestine in 63 B.C., the Samaritans were liberated from Judaeian domination, but the New Testament and the writings of Josephus bear ample witness to the unfriendly relations which persisted between the two groups. It was thus a bold movement on Philip's part to preach the gospel to the Samaritans. The Samaritans did, however, share with the Jews the hope of a coming deliverer whom they envisaged in terms of the prophet like Moses of Deut. 18:15–19; at a later time, if not at this stage, they described him as the Taheb or "restorer."<sup>25</sup> Philip would be able to build on this hope when he "began to preach Christ to them": Jesus, it appears, was already identified by his followers in Jerusalem, both "Hebrews" and "Hellenists," as the promised prophet like Moses. It is uncertain which city of Samaria was evangelized by Philip. The ancient city called Samaria had been refounded by Herod the Great and renamed Sebaste, in honor of the Roman emperor, but it was a Hellenistic city, and the impression given by our narrative is that the people to whom Philip preached were genuine Samaritans. Another suggestion is that it was Gitta, which (according to Justin Martyr) was the home town of Simon Magus.<sup>27</sup> Most probably we are intended to think of a place in the neighborhood of Shechem. According to the Fourth Gospel, both John the Baptist and Jesus had been active for a period in this area (John 3:23; 4:4–42); their activity could have provided a foundation on which Philip built." NICNT (New International Commentary of the New Testament), F.F. Bruce.

They were thinking elevation, not geographic directions. So we see Philip leaving Jerusalem and going DOWN to Samaria, which is North.

- **Philip Preached the Gospel** – ONE of the things that Philip did (and we should do) is proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. He opened his mouth and shared truth and love. We need to do that as well.
  - **What Gospel?** - The **ESSENCE** of the Gospel (good news) is that God loves His people and made a way to connect with Him. The **CONTENT** of the message of the good news/gospel depends on how much of a foundation the audience has. If they are completely unaware of a God, the good news is that God is real and wants to connect with them. If they are religious with other gods, the good news is that the One True God wants to connect with them, and they need to turn from the other fake gods. If they are Jewish and familiar with the Messiah concept then the good news is that the Messiah showed up and His name is Jesus Christ and died for our sins. SALVATION comes from surrendering to God and crying out to be saved based on whatever revelation God gives to you.
- **The Crowds Listened** – The crowds of people listened strongly to what Philip was talking about. Why?
  1. **They heard his message** – whether he was a good preacher or not ultimately doesn't matter. No one is saved apart from the drawing of the Father and the presence of the Holy Spirit. But he preached. And that is a message to all of us. Whether we mess up or not, the gospel is being preached and **God can get a lot done with a little**. He was preaching the good news that God is near.
  2. **They saw the signs (miraculous works) he did** – This is the argument again (and will repeat in the book of Acts) that **Power Evangelism is critical to ministry**. Power Evangelism means that the supernatural works of God advance the kingdom of God. In other words, when we operate in the miraculous more lives are touched and more openings are given for the gospel to save people.
- **Miracles by a Non-Apostle** – Just like I highlighted with Stephen, Philip is not an apostle. Yet he is doing great miracles too. This is further indicator that all of us can operate in the supernatural, not just the 'big dogs.'
- **What Kinds of Signs and Wonders Did He Do?** – Remember signs and wonders are the same event but two sides of it. The 'wonder' is the shocking miracle (supernatural occurrence) and the 'sign' is what it all means and points to (Jesus).
  1. **Demons were cast out** – Demons are real. They are the rebellious and judged heavenly host that partnered with Lucifer to take over heaven. They failed and now they are bound here on Earth, and they are really angry about it.
    - **What's an 'unclean spirit'?**<sup>2</sup> - It calls them unclean spirits. What does that mean? Ultimately it means unholy. It means no longer fit for the service

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<sup>2</sup> "169. ἀκάθαρτος *akáthartos*; gen. *akathártou*, masc.–fem., neut. *akátharton*, adj. from the priv. *a* (1), without, and *kathairō* (2508), to cleanse. Unclean... (IV) Unclean as applied to the devils who are frequently called unclean spirits in the NT because, having lost their original purity, they are become unclean themselves and through their solicitations have polluted mankind with all uncleanness and every abomination which the

of God. The fallen angels sealed their fate when they rebelled. Ever since they have been spreading their uncleanness by distorting the things of God.

- **Came Out?<sup>3</sup> (Possession, Oppression)** – The phrase, ‘come out’ means to literally exit somewhere. We will talk about deliverance and exorcism ministry much later in this series (part 23 is the plan) but for now let me hit a couple quick questions that everyone wants to know:
  - **How did they get in there?** – How or why all demons select their hosts is a mystery. We have a number of behaviors and situations that invite demons that we can point to like being involved in the occult, trauma, drug addiction, etc. But we don’t know how it all works. Usually the Bible talks about them being in there and getting them out, not so much about getting them.
  - **Where do they live?** – There is a great debate in Christian circles about the difference between possession and oppression and whether a Christian can have a demon. **At Bridgeway we have taken the posture that although Christians cannot be possessed, and we take that to mean that they cannot be wholly controlled by demons if they have the Holy Spirit, that they can be oppressed, and demons can reside in portions of the life of a Christian as they bully us and mess with our heads. Therefore we do have a Deliverance ministry here at Bridgeway that does spiritual warfare and sets people free.**
  - **Do we have them?** – As I mentioned above, we have both a Deliverance ministry and an Inner Healing prayer team that helps people be set free from the bondage of the enemy. **Do some of us struggle with demonic attacks and oppression? Yes, we do. Is there hope and help? Absolutely.**
  - **Why were they so noisy?** – It says they came out with a loud voice (like a bunch of the scenarios, not just one)
- 2. **Healings** – it says that MANY (how many? I don’t know. All? I doubt it since it doesn’t say all) were healed. Healed of what? It’s pretty specific but I think it’s just two examples of conditions that were healed: paralyzed or crippled.<sup>4</sup> It’s likely those were the common healings so that they would be outward signs that people could see and experience rather than internal wounds.

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Lord hates (Mark 5:2, 8, 13. See also Matt. 10:1; 12:43; Mark 1:23, 26, 27; 3:11, 30; 6:7; 7:25; 9:25; Luke 4:33, 36; 6:18; 8:29; 9:42; 11:24; Acts 5:16; 8:7; Rev. 16:13).” NICNT

<sup>3</sup> “1831. ἐξέρχομαι *exérchomai*; fut. *exeleúsomai*, 2d aor. *exélthon*, from *ek* (1537), out, and *érchomai* (2064), to go or come. To go or come out of a place... (B) With an adjunct of person, “out of” or “from” whom, as of those out of whose bodies demons depart; followed by *ek* (1537), from, with a gen. (Mark 1:25, 26; Luke 4:35); by *apó* (575), from (Matt. 12:43; Luke 4:35). Used in an absolute sense as in Acts 16:18. Of those from whom or from whose presence one goes forth with authority, i.e., to be sent out by someone, followed by *apó* (575) with a gen. (John 13:3, “from God he came out” [a.t.]. See John 16:30; Sept.: Gen. 4:16; Ex. 8:12); by *pará* (3844), from, with a gen. (John 16:27; 17:8 [cf. Sept.: Num. 16:35]). Generally, to depart from someone, i.e., from his presence, intimacy (Luke 5:8; 2 Cor. 6:17).” NICNT

<sup>4</sup> “As usual in the record of Acts, the beneficiaries of the works of healing were paralytics and lame people. As in the ministry of Jesus himself and of his apostles, so in the ministry of Philip these works of mercy and power were visible “signs” confirming the message that he proclaimed.” NICNT

Were these demon possessed people who were healed or was it separate healings? I can't be certain, but it seems that it was two different groups.

- **There was MUCH Joy in That City** – What was the joy about? People were being helped. When we are in distress and that is alleviated we become joyful. It may not fix everything in our lives (life is still difficult) but it really helps. It also brings hope to the people. They realize that ONE who is greater has come and is setting people free so what else will God do? That hope brings joy.
  - **Do Christians bring joy today? Do we, personally?** – Again, we see that the Early Christian Church grew rapidly because they were winsome and provided something that the world wanted: Freedom, joy, peace, hope, love. It was only the established organizations like Roman worship structure and Jewish leadership that opposed Christianity severely. Other people loved having Christians around. They made life better.
- **Simon the Sorcerer**
  - **Philip's Ministry Captivates a local Magician**
    - **Acts 8:9-13** – *“But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic<sup>5</sup> in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. <sup>10</sup> They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” <sup>11</sup> And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.”*
      - **But** – Interesting beginning to this next portion. There was a lot of Joy and Philip was doing great ministry,...BUT...
      - **Simon<sup>6</sup>** – who is this guy? He is oddly complicated as you will see. He is known in church history as Simon Magus.

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<sup>5</sup> 3096. μαγεύω *mageúō*; fut. *mageúsō*, from *mágos* (3097), a sorcerer. To practice magic, sorcery, used intrans. (Acts 8:9)... 3097. μάγος *mágos*; gen. *máγou*, pl. *mágoi*, masc. noun. Magi, the name for priests and wise men among the Medes, Persians and Babylonians. Great, powerful men (see also *mégas* [3173], great, derived from the same stem). Magi specialized in the study of astrology and enchantment and thus were known as enchanters, magicians (Dan. 1:20; 2:2, 27; 5:7). The Chaldeans called them wise (*sophós* [4680]) (Dan. 2:12, 18, 24, 27; 5:7, 8 [cf. 5:11, 12]). In the NT they represent the name of the Magi, wise men from the East, most probably from Persia or Arabia, who came to salute the newborn Messiah (Matt. 2:1, 7, 16). Also spoken of a magician, sorcerer, diviner (Acts 13:6, 8).” NICNT

<sup>6</sup> Simon Magus plays an extraordinary role in early Christian literature. The word “magus” originally denoted a member of the Median priestly tribe, but it came to be used in an extended sense of a practitioner of various kinds of sorcery and even quackery, like Elymas, the sorcerer of Paphos in Cyprus, whom we meet later in the narrative of Acts (13:6–11). The “magi” or “wise men” from the east (Matt. 2:1), who saw the rising star of the newborn king of the Jews, were evidently astrologers. This Simon is depicted in postapostolic writings as the father of all Gnostic heresies. Justin Martyr tells how he secured a following of devotees not only in Samaria but in Rome, to which he went in the time of Claudius.<sup>31</sup> In the apocryphal Acts of Peter (4–32) he is said to have corrupted the Christians in Rome by his false teaching and made the authorities ill-disposed toward them, but to have been worsted at last in a magical contest with Peter. But it is in the pseudo-Clementine Recognitions and Homilies that the Simon legend is most curiously elaborated: in them he not only appears as the untiring adversary of Peter but seems, to some extent at least, to serve as a camouflage for Paul, reflecting anti-Pauline sentiments among some of the Ebionites and similar Jewish-Christian groups. It has been thought by some scholars that the heresiarch Simon, founder of the Gnostic sect of the Simonians, was originally a different person from the Simon of Acts, but that they became confused in later tradition.<sup>34</sup> More probably they were the same person: Luke knows more about Simon than he records; in this account he relates only what he judged relevant to his purpose. At any rate, the Samaritan Simon impressed his fellow-countrymen greatly with the exercise of his magic powers, so much so that they accepted his own account of himself and regarded him as the grand vizier of the supreme God, the channel both of divine power and of divine revelation.” NICNT

- **Previously Practiced Magic** – what does previously mean? What does the Bible mean by ‘magic’? Is it the same as magicians today? The word Magic in Greek is *magos*<sup>7</sup> and it’s the same name for the magi who delivered presents to the infant Jesus. It was originally used for wise men and enchanters, but then it grew to mean those who practiced the black arts and magic. The bottom line is that although some ‘magicians’ in the Bible were considered charlatans (fakes), some were not and used real supernatural power. The problem is not that something supernatural happened but the source from where it originated. If it’s not from God, it’s considered illegitimate.
- **Simon Amazed People** – this means he captivated them, and they not only were in awe but it seems they respected him and gave him a sort of authority and power. This is influence and that isn’t great when it’s just a human being who is selfishly doing his own thing. It says from the least person to the greatest, they paid attention to him. That’s a lot of sway.
  - **Their Belief: Simon is the power of the GREAT GOD** – they didn’t just like him as an entertainer, they worshiped and trusted him as an authority. This means that it was quasi-religious. He was a religious figure to follow and that made him anti-Christian since he wasn’t advancing the kingdom of God but the kingdom of either self or the devil (knowingly or unknowingly).
- **A New Ministry in Town: Philip (Clash)** – A new power came into town through the Holy Spirit via Philip. That meant there was going to be a clash of powers: that which empowered Simon and that which empowered Philip.

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<sup>7</sup> Although the term “magician” (μάγος, *magos*) originally referred to a Persian priest, it developed into a label for a variety of healers, diviners, and other ritual specialists. Accordingly, “magic” (μαγεία, *mageia*) refers to the practices of these ritual specialists. The related verb “practice magic” (μαγεύω, *mageuō*) also appears in the New Testament (e.g., Matt 2:1; Acts 13:6). The term “sorcerer” (γόης, *goēs*) refers to a charlatan, folk healer, street performer, or worker of harmful magic (e.g., 2 Tim 3:13). “Sorcery” (φαρμακεία, *pharmakeia*) is an ambiguous term for the use of: 1. medicinal potions; 2. Poison; 3. magic involving herbs and potions. Related words include “potion” or “poison” (φάρμακον, *pharmakon*) and “sorcerer” or “poisoner” (φαρμακεύς, *pharmakeus*; φάρμακος, *pharmakos*) (e.g., Gal 5:20; Rev 9:21; see also Graf, *Magic in Ancient World*, 20–60). **Biblical Relevance** - Ritual acts that fit modern understandings of magic were common in the ancient Near East and in Graeco-Roman society. Magic appears in the Bible in three contexts: 1. Illicit ritual practices among those who do not worship the God of Israel; 2. Illicit ritual practices by unfaithful Hebrews and Christians; 3. Legitimate ritual practices that Hebrews or Christians performed and that the Bible never explicitly labels as “magic”... *Magic in the New Testament* - Like the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament considers magic unacceptable for those who worship the God of Israel. Accordingly, magic functions in the New Testament as a means of discrediting rival wonder-workers and their practices (Ricks, “Magician as Outsider,” 139–140). • In Acts 8:18–24, Peter rebukes Simon Magus, a new Christ follower and former magician, when he attempts to purchase the ability to bestow the Holy Spirit on people (Bruce, *Acts*, 183; Witherington III, *Acts*, 286). • In Acts 13:6–12, Paul rebukes and blinds Elymas, a Jewish magician (μάγος, *magos*). • In Philippi, Paul exorcises a deceptive Greek divinatory spirit from a slave, who works as a mediumistic diviner (Acts 16:16–18; Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 65–67; Trebilco, “Paul and Silas,” 51–73). • In response to a failed exorcism by the seven sons of Sceva, the Ephesian Christ followers confess that they have practiced magic and burn their magic books (Acts 19:17–20). The quotation of Joel 2:28–32 in Acts 2:17–21 implies that the miracles performed by Christians result from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The magical characters, however, perform their wonders by some other power. The Christians’ successes against magical characters prove that the Christians are the true representatives of God and that the gospel is the true message of salvation (Marguerat, “Magic and Miracle in Acts,” 100–124). However, despite the negative portrayal of magic and magicians in the New Testament, several of the wonder-working activities of Jesus and the Christians within the Synoptic Gospels and Acts appear magical, at least to the casual observer. Hull and Smith identify several of Jesus’ actions that may have caused some firsthand observers to consider Him a magician, including (Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and Synoptic Tradition*, 50–51, 76–81; Smith, *Jesus the Magician*): • Jesus’ exorcisms (e.g., Matt 12:22–30; Mark 3:22–27; Luke 11:14–23); • Jesus’ use of the healing touch (e.g., Matt 8:3; Mark 1:41–42; Luke 5:13); • Jesus’ use of spittle for healing (Mark 7:33–34). In addition, it may have appeared magical in Acts when Peter’s shadow and Paul’s clothing caused healing when they came into contact with the ill and possessed (Acts 5:14–16; 19:11–12). However, Simon Magus is the only Christian that the New Testament explicitly describes as having practiced magic, and this practice is strongly condemned by Peter (Downing, “Magic and Scepticism,” 97; Porter, “Magic in Acts,” 119–20). This suggests that, as with the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament associated magic with illegitimate ritual and wonder-working (Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 107, 125–26).” NICNT

There is always clashes of power when supernatural experiences are involved.

- **People got saved & Baptized** – they heard the gospel and agreed with it. They responded by getting baptized as an outward sign of surrender to Jesus Christ and repentance for their sin. In this revival movement Philip in essence was likely planting the first Christian church here in Samaria.
- **Men & Women** – why mention men AND women? It seems that Luke is trying to highlight something here. Usually the Bible records just the male portion of things like all the ancient documents, but once in a while you will see that they were highlighting the inclusion of women and giving them the honor of being included in the narrative.
- **He preached the Kingdom of God** – he didn't just preach the 'good news' of the core gospel about salvation from sins, he proclaimed the Kingdom of God which means all the **benefits from having a new King leading us. It's about fullness, wholeness, joy, hope, grace, healing, freedom, etc.** We need to not just preach forgiveness but the fullness of the Kingdom of God as well.
- **Simon Believed and got Baptized too**<sup>8</sup> – This is significant. Normally we would rejoice at that and say, 'yay, another one secured in the Kingdom of God and as a child of God' but wait until we hear what Peter says later and it puts everything in a new perspective.
  - **Simon Followed Philip** – it says that Simon was wowed by what God was doing with Philip and that he kind of became Philip's disciple. That is another good sign. He is now convinced of the gospel, baptized and a disciple. BUT...
  - **Why did he follow Philip?** – The Bible says,..."*And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.*" So, what are we learning about his **motivation** for following Philip? It seems very much tied to pursuit of power and experience. Right?
  - **There's nothing wrong with mixed motives UP FRONT** – lots of people initially followed Jesus for His miracles, His healing, His demon casting, and His food. Some of those people got saved along the way. Everyone gets closer to God with mixed motives because we are coming from a selfish, spiritually dead place. **We only have mixed motives.** There's nothing wrong with **secular** people following something Christian because it's cool or it really helps them, even if they don't fully believe in Jesus. It continues to draw them in so they can hear the gospel and see a transformed life. BUT, **at some point it has to transform from selfish motives to God-based motives** in order for it to be legitimate salvation and discipleship.

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<sup>8</sup> "The proclamation heralded by such an envoy must be accepted with respect, and Simon "believed." The nature of his belief must remain uncertain. No doubt it was sincere as far as it went, but it was superficial and inadequate. Jesus himself, we are told in John 2:23–24, attached little value to the faith that rests on miracles alone." NICNT

- **Great miracles** – I would assume that all true miracles are amazing, but I love that the Bible keeps highlighting that there are miracles and GREAT miracles. It seems to be saying that **the Holy Spirit is doing incredible things that are blowing people's minds**. I love that.
- **The Validation Crew**
  - **Peter and John Come to Check out Samaria Ministry**
    - **Acts 8:14-17** – *“Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,<sup>9</sup> <sup>15</sup> who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup>”*
      - **The Apostles were in Jerusalem** – in our last story we found out that when the Christians were scattered by the fresh persecution, the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. They had a very specific calling and that was initially to the Jewish people. God, through Abraham (covenant) set it up that Jews would be privileged first and then Gentiles. They were following that mandate.
      - **Notice that Samaria had a revival going on** – People were getting saved, miracles were breaking out. It was awesome. God was doing great things.
      - **Peter & John go to check it out<sup>11</sup>** – Why Peter and John?<sup>12</sup> Peter and John were the defacto leaders of the apostles. Why? It's debateable but they were. They were sent as authorities to go see if this Samaritan revival was legit. If they deemed it legit, everyone would deem it legit.
      - **John's last time in Samaria** – The last recorded event when John (along with his big brother James – sons of Thunder) was in Samaria it didn't go great. In Luke 9 it says that when Jesus was doing ministry with them in Samaria and they found out that Jesus was primarily here for the Jews, they got mad and rejected Christ. James and John were livid and asked if Jesus wanted them to call down fire from heaven and burn them all up. Jesus of course said, 'c'mon guys, relax. It's all good.' And rebuked them. It makes me laugh to think that this time if any of the Samaritans remember that, they may not want John to pray over them. 😊
        - **Luke 9:52-55** – *“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him, who*

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<sup>9</sup> “This is the last occasion on which John plays any part by name in the narrative of Acts; here, as before, his role is a silent one alongside Peter’s. John, with his brother James, had once suggested that fire should be called down from heaven on a Samaritan community for its inhospitable behavior to their Master (Luke 9:52–55). It was with a different attitude that he now set out for Samaria with Peter. The earlier ban on the apostles’ entering any city of the Samaritans (Matt. 10:5) had been rescinded by the unlimited commission of witness laid on them by the risen Christ, in which Samaria was one of the areas explicitly mentioned (Acts 1:8).” NICNT

<sup>10</sup> “It is clearly implied that their reception of the Spirit was marked by external manifestations such as had marked his descent on the earliest disciples at Pentecost.” NICNT

<sup>11</sup> “No question seems to have been raised about the propriety of baptizing Samaritans: even if Samaritans were excluded from the scope of the original mission of the Twelve, they were indubitably “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5–6).” NICNT

<sup>12</sup> “In the earlier years of the Christian mission, the Jerusalem apostles seem to have regarded it as their duty to exercise a general supervision over the progress of the gospel wherever it might be carried (cf. 11:22). Peter and John, the two leaders of the apostolate, carried out this mission.” NICNT

*went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.<sup>53</sup> But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.<sup>54</sup> And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?"<sup>55</sup> But he turned and rebuked them.<sup>56</sup> And they went on to another village."*

- **P&J laid their hands on the Samaritans, and prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit and they did** – Remember the laying on of hands concept is the principle of Impartation. Impartation is transference from one person to another. The apostles had the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, so they were touching them to put it off onto others to receive a portion of what they had. Although the Holy Spirit brought fresh fire, the concept still stands: Transference.
  - **What's the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?** – I talked about that extensively in [Part 2](#) of this series (you can go back and listen to it). **Bottom line is that it means empowerment by the Holy Spirit to do supernatural ministry.**
  - **The Holy Spirit (He) had not fallen on any of them yet** – Why? It says that they had the gospel (Truth & Good News) and Jesus baptism (partnership in His ministry), but not HS baptism (partnership in His ministry) **[complete]**
  - **Is laying on of hands necessary to get the Baptism of the Holy Spirit today?** – No. There are times, like later in Acts when Peter simply is preaching and the Holy Spirit falls, that don't have laying on of hands as a part of the process. It's not necessary, but it's beautiful.
    - **Do we need a second baptism?**<sup>13</sup> - I do not believe that we do. I believe that Acts is a clear story of unifying the new fledgling Christian church and that the Holy Spirit held off on Samaritans and Gentiles (and John's disciples) until the Jewish Jerusalem apostles could get there and be a part of the experience so there wouldn't be multiple churches but one. He doesn't need to do that today. When we receive Christ at conversion, we get the holy spirit and His empowerment.
      - **We do need multiple fillings of the Holy Spirit** – going back to my explanation in part 2 of this series, there are multiple fillings or multiple fresh empowerments of the Holy Spirit's supernatural power that we may receive. It's not a 'baptism' but a refilling.
      - **Does it need to be an apostle?** – some in other Christian streams that claim apostolic succession authority, claim that the Holy Spirit is only

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<sup>13</sup> "In general, it seems to be assumed throughout the New Testament that those who believe and are baptized have also the Spirit of God. In the present instance, some special evidence may have been necessary to assure the Samaritans, so accustomed to being despised as outsiders by the people of Jerusalem, that they were fully incorporated into the new community of the people of God. It was one thing for them to be baptized by a free-lance evangelist like Philip, but not until they had been acknowledged and welcomed by the leaders of the Jerusalem church did they experience the signs which confirmed and attested their membership in the Spirit-possessed society. "The imposition of hands is then," in the words of G. W. H. Lampe, "primarily a token of fellowship and solidarity; it is only secondarily an effective symbol of the gift of the Spirit; it becomes such a symbol solely in virtue of being a sign of incorporation into the Church of the Spirit." Luke presents the Samaritan mission as the first important advance in the Christian mission. The record of a Samaritan "Pentecost" implies that a new nucleus of the expanding community has been established, so that the gospel could now "radiate outwards from this new centre of the Spirit's mission." Moreover, "the new Israel of the Church of Jesus Christ had succeeded in bringing the whole kingdom of David under the sway of his Son's sceptre, something the Jews had tried, with much less success, by force of arms during the last five hundred years." NICNT

given through an apostle or someone directly in succession to an apostle. There is no Biblical evidence of this.<sup>14</sup>

- **Colossal Miss**

- **Simon Tries to Buy the Holy Spirit's Power**

- **Acts 8:18-25** – *“Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money,<sup>19</sup> saying, “Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”<sup>20</sup> But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!<sup>21</sup> You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right<sup>15</sup> before God.<sup>22</sup> Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.<sup>23</sup> For I see that you are in the gall<sup>16</sup> of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”<sup>24</sup> And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”<sup>25</sup> Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.”*

- **When Simon Saw What the Apostles Did** – when he saw Peter and John lay hands on the people and they received the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for supernatural ministry, he was astounded. It’s what he was looking for and following Philip to figure out.

- **The Holy Spirit (person) GIVEN by Apostles?** – It’s tempting to read it like that, right? But is that what it’s saying? Did the Holy Spirit allow the Apostles to dictate who He would come upon? Kind of. Yes, the Holy Spirit followed the Jesus plan of using the Church as a means of doling out heavenly blessings, but no, He, the Holy Spirit, is not bound or commanded by mankind. The actual phrase, at least in the ESV is, *“the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands”*. It seems that it wasn’t the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence that was given by the power of the Spirit (simplified to one short phrase, ‘the Spirit’), THROUGH the laying on of the apostles hands. This means that **the Holy Spirit waited to bestow power until the apostles followed His directions. The same is true of prayer power today.** God could do it all Himself alone, but He uses us. He waits to bestow some miracles and freedom to be hinged upon the prayers of the saints. That makes us have an honest and true partnership in the ministry of Jesus Christ. If we don’t do it, it may not happen soon.

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<sup>14</sup> “If confirmation by an apostle were necessary for the reception of the Spirit, one might have expected this to be stated more explicitly in one or more of the relevant New Testament passages. But no such thing is hinted at, even in passages where it would certainly be introduced if there were any substance in it. It is not suggested by Paul when he speaks in 2 Cor. 1:21–22 of Christians’ being anointed, sealed, and given the Spirit in their hearts as a guarantee; he does not include the power of thus imparting the Spirit among the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12:4–11, and when he thanks God that he did not baptize more than a handful of his Corinthian converts (1 Cor. 1:14–16) the whole force of his argument would disappear if we had to suppose that, even so, he confirmed them all. In other places in Acts, too, there is no hint that apostolic hands were laid on converts before they received the Spirit. Nothing is said about this being done to the Pentecostal believers at Jerusalem (2:38–42) or, later, to the household of Cornelius at Caesarea (10:44–48). The only near parallel to the present occasion is the exceptional case of the Ephesian disciples in 19:1–7.” NICNT

<sup>15</sup> ““Your heart is not straight (ἐυθεῖα),” Peter tells him in v. 21 (similarly Ps. 77 [MT 78]:37, LXX).” NICNT

<sup>16</sup> “That is, a bitter fluid secreted by the liver; bile.” NICNT

- **He offered them Money<sup>17</sup>** – Oops. That’s not going to go well. So, why did he do it? He is doing what he always knew. It made sense to him. He had been given money for power his whole life so he in turn offered it to someone more powerful than he. It was wrong, but it makes sense. I don’t blame the guy at all. But Peter did.
- **Peter Unloads on Simon** – Peter seems really upset. Check out what he said. Either this was a serious offense<sup>18</sup> or Peter was having a really bad day.<sup>19</sup>
  - **May your silver perish with you** – what does that mean? It’s a rough way of saying, ‘take your money and die.’ Sheesh.
  - **Because, you thought you could buy the gifts of God** – Why is this so bad?<sup>20</sup> Honestly, I don’t really think that Peter’s response was appropriate, but I trust that the Holy Spirit knew exactly what was going on. It’s highly likely that Peter, the leader of the apostles was tracking on something that I am not, although he does get in trouble here and there and is out of line at times.
    - Ga 2:11–14 – *“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.”* <sup>12</sup> *For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.* <sup>13</sup> *And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.* <sup>14</sup> *But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”*
  - **You have neither part nor lot in this matter** – what matter? What’s a part & lot? What’s he saying? You don’t get any part of our ministry because you are not in the right place. Your heart is off and your motives are off. We don’t do this for money, we do this because it’s God’s will, period. How could you be so selfish? How could you be so ignorant to think that God is driven by money? That’s dishonoring!
  - **Because your heart is not right before God** – to what degree? Does this mean that he wasn’t saved? He accepted the gospel and even got baptized and followed Philip. What more can he do? Tradition says later that he was a Christian but kind of a messed up one that caused problems.

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<sup>17</sup> “If only they could be associated with the imposition of his hands, what an access of authority and prestige would be his! So, regarding Peter and John as extraordinarily gifted practitioners of religious magic, he offered to buy from them a share in their secret power. It is this act of Simon that has given the term “simony” to our religious vocabulary.” NICNT

<sup>18</sup> “Simon’s idea that God’s free gift could be bought and sold showed that he had no appreciation at all of the inward character of the gospel or the operation of the Spirit.” NICNT

<sup>19</sup> “Arnold Ehrhardt felt that “the Church lost a man here, who might have been saved; St Peter trampled down the new plantation of St Philip.” Others will judge the situation differently... Luke himself, for all his sympathy with Philip’s Hellenistic mission, seems to approve of Peter’s stern reproof of Simon. In his eyes Simon embodies the Hellenistic concept of the θεῖος ἀνὴρ, the divinely possessed or divinely illuminated man -- the only such person in Acts 8, “and Luke does not approve of him” (C. K. Barrett, “Theologia Crucis—in Acts,” in *Theologia Crucis—Signum Crucis, Festschrift für E. Dinkler* [Tübingen, 1979], p. 80).” NICNT

<sup>20</sup> “Simon had believed Philip’s message and been baptized, but he still manifested the signs of his old unregenerate nature. The poisonous root of superstitious self-seeking had not been eradicated from his heart; his soul was still held fast in the “fettters of unrighteousness.” It was doubtful, in Peter’s eyes, if Simon had experienced the grace of God in any real sense. Simon interpreted all that he saw and heard in terms of his own standards, but the gospel belonged to a completely new dimension, to which he remained a stranger. In this realm he clearly had “neither part nor share.” NICNT

- **Repent therefore of this wickedness** – What does repent mean? We always think about repenting as owning up to our garbage and changing. Which is pretty well true, but the Greek concept of repentance actually means ‘changing your mind.’ It’s turning from the mindset that allowed you to sin and realign with God’s perspective.
- **Pray so that MAYBE (if possible), your heart intent can be forgiven** – Dang this is brutal. What is Peter saying? Peter is so mad that he’s talking like it’s up in the air whether or not God will forgive Simon. We all know that God’s heart is one to forgive. What Simon did is not beyond forgiveness. Peter was being extreme.
- **I see that you are in the gall of bitterness** – What? It’s really the ‘bile of bitterness’ (the bitter stuff secreted by the liver). The idea of bitterness being a root and a poison shows up in Deut 29:18; 32:32; Heb 12:15. Apparently Peter was saying either that Simon was bitter at God for not getting the power when he asked, or that Peter was saying that Simon’s secular attitude was a poison that was going to ruin him and others.
- **I see that you are in the bond of iniquity** – What? The word for iniquity in Greek means that which is wrong, unjust. That’s one of the words we use for sin. Peter is saying that Simon is still bound, tied to, sin in his life.
- **Simon’s Response** – Oh shoot. Oh No! Please don’t let this happen to me. I’m sorry!<sup>21</sup>
- **Pray for me to the Lord** – He may not listen to me, but I know that He will listen to you.<sup>22</sup> I desperately need Him to hear my repentance.
  - **Do we need other people to pray for us?** – are some people’s prayers more heard than others? Do we need pastors to pray better than regular saints? Is there benefit to getting more people to pray for you? Simon is new so he thinks that the apostles, whom he just saw do incredible miracles, have more power and access to God so he asks for them to intercede. He could have prayed himself and that’s what Peter told him to do but in his fear he messed it up a bit. There is a benefit to have others pray for us but it’s not like God will only hear the super holy. He hears all of his kids. BUT, there is a difference between the prayers of unbelievers and those of the children of God. The bible says that God’s ears are attentive to His kids in a different way.
  - **That no one of that would happen** – He is scared and rightfully so. Peter just talked about his demise and God being made at him.

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<sup>21</sup> “Simon was terror-stricken. That he should have incurred the displeasure of men who apparently had so much power at their command was an awful thought; the Western text which tells us that he kept on weeping all the time Peter was speaking may be true enough to the facts, if Simon was the emotionally unstable type of medium who is not unknown in our own day, although the picture does not agree so well with the Simon Magus of later tradition.” NICNT

<sup>22</sup> “Peter had told him to pray for forgiveness, but to Simon’s way of thinking the prayers of such wielders of power as Peter and John would be more prevalent than his own, so he begged them to pray for him.” NICNT

- **And Scene...** - How weird that there is no closure on this. We assume that Peter or John helped him out, after all he's knew. But there's no closure. There's no ending to the story. What happened?<sup>23</sup>
  - **What Tradition Says** – tradition varies but the gist is that although Simon later is called a Christian and has a group that followed him, they were a huge pain in the church. They have been called everything from gnostic leaders to attackers of Peter and Paul, but no one seems to talk about them in a favorable way. Interestingly some scholars blame Peter for not being nicer and turning this guy on the wrong path, but others say that Peter helped them dodge a bullet.
- **Peter and John Finish up Minister and go home**<sup>24</sup> – it says they preached the gospel to many Samaritan villages. This is a HUGE deal. They expanded their ministry from Jerusalem which was their primary calling and home base.

### Conclusion

- **I Believe** - God is going to move at Bridgeway in unprecedented supernatural ways. I see significant indicators that it's rising up. We've prayed for it for years.<sup>25</sup>
- **Be Prepared in heart** – I am not interested in a show. I'm interested in us being soaked in the presence of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit so that we might be transformed and go out into the world and transform others by that same power.
- **Effective, Not Fancy** - This is not about being fancy, this is about being effective.

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<sup>23</sup> "Later records of his activity give the impression that either they did not intercede for him or else their intercession was ineffective. Even so, Simon and his followers continued to be known as Christians, as Justin Martyr admits—a tribute, perhaps, to what Simon learned during the short time he spent in the company of Philip." NICNT

<sup>24</sup> "After what Peter and John had seen of the work of God in Philip's temporary mission field, they had no hesitation in evangelizing other Samaritan communities as they took the southward road to Jerusalem." NICNT

<sup>25</sup> and saw some fits and starts of it in 2014. But we are a different congregation now. We are more aligned to partner with Him and with each other.