

A Faith That Does Not Save

by Danny Bond

The sermon explores the concept of faith that does not save, using Simon the sorcerer as a cautionary example.

Duration: 44:51

Scripture: Matthew 7:13-14, 2 Corinthians 13:5

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Simon the sorcerer and how he had a faith that did not save him. The preacher identifies four reasons why Simon's faith was not genuine: he had a wrong view of himself, salvation, the Holy Spirit, and sin. The preacher references Matthew 13:24-30, where Jesus teaches about the difficulty of distinguishing between the real and the fake in the kingdom of heaven. The preacher also refers to Matthew 7:13-14, where Jesus emphasizes the narrow path that leads to life and the broad road that leads to destruction.

Transcript

Let's pray, shall we? Father, we thank you, Lord, that we can worship you this day. O God, how we thank you for the Word. Make it alive to our hearts, Holy Spirit.

Make us alive to you. I pray that we would become, by your power and by your Word, all alive and always alive, Father. Bless this time to the energizing of our souls.

May your saving grace be present in our midst in this message. Work your saving work, Lord, in every heart. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Coming here through the book of Acts to chapter 8. Last time we studied Philip and his evangelism as he went up to Samaria. Now, revival broke out.

Many people were saved. There was in this area a man by the name of Simon. Now, you may come across him in your reading of literature that's not in the Bible as Simon Magus.

Simon Magus. And you may wonder where the Magus part comes from. Here in the text, Simon the sorcerer is how he is referred to.

And in the Greek, the word is basically Magus. And so that's brought over to us as sorcerer. Maybe in your Bible, if you have a new American Standard, I think it's a magician, something like that.

But the word in the Greek is Magus. And so bringing it across to the transliterated to make it part of his name, historians refer to him as Simon Magus. There's much to learn about this man.

And today, the main thing we are going to learn that there is such a thing as faith that does not save. One of the reasons that I love teaching the Bible verse by verse is that it causes you to go through the word of God as God laid it out. God said what he meant.

He meant what he said. Then he anointed and inspired the writers, in this case, Luke, to write it down as he said it. Thus, we must study it as he said it in the process.

What that does for us is it brings about what you could call full orbed Christian growth so that you end up studying the whole counsel of the word of God. What that does is it eliminates lopsided Christian growth where you only study the things that you like to study. Every preacher basically has his hobby horse, the things that he likes to talk about, likes to teach on.

Expository preaching going verse by verse forces the preacher to stay away from his hobby horses and stick to the text and thus give the people the benefit of full orbed Christian growth. And that is very much the case here as we arrive in Acts 8 today. And we're going to talk about a faith that does not save.

Now, this is a subject that some people perhaps have never thought about. Maybe you've never thought about, but it is here in the text. I want you to pay close attention and you need to be honest with yourself as we go through it and ask yourself, is this me we are talking about? Because going to church doesn't save you.

Coming to Jesus Christ saves you. This is the thing we're going to be looking at today, and it is very much needed in our day. These things are not taught enough.

One of the most fearful realities in all of scripture is that some who think they are saved will in the end be eternally lost. Some who think they are saved will be eternally lost. It is possible to think that you are saved and going to heaven and yet still be lost and not going to heaven.

That's what I'm saying, and the Bible testifies of that. Hold your place here in Acts, and I would like you to turn to Matthew 7. We need to look at a few things before we get going. Matthew 7 in verse 13.

Jesus is here teaching in the Sermon on the Mountain. He says, Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction. And notice his terminology.

And there are many who go in by it. Many. Verse 14.

Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life. And there are few who find it. So in verse 14, on the path that leads to life, there are few who find it.

Verse 13 on the road, broad road that leads to destruction. There are many who go in by it. Many on the broad road, few on the narrow road, many who go to destruction, few who go into eternal life.

Now, when Jesus talks about the broad way in verse 13, what is that? It is to put it in the context of his day. It would be the way of the scribes and the Pharisees, the religious leaders of that day, the way of their religion. He called them the blind leading the blind.

He said, When you're done discipling people, you make them twice or five times the child of hell as you. Their caricatures of you and you are ungodly. The broad road that leads to destruction, to take it from that context and put it into ours, is the road of religion.

The road of religion as opposed to and in contradistinction to a relationship with Jesus Christ. So that the broad road has at its beginning all the false prophets lined up, holding up their signs, saying this is the way to heaven. And the narrow road has Jesus Christ standing there say, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.

No man comes to the father except by me to go to church on a given Sunday and sit in church and leave it at that. Never to come to Christ in a saving personal relationship leaves you going to church on the broad road that leads to destruction. Are you with me on that? And there are many in church today around the world who are on the broad road that leads to destruction.

And they think they're going to heaven because they are in church. And the sad reality of that is that so many of the leaders in so many churches today that do not preach the centrality of Jesus Christ. They do not preach that you must be born again to go to heaven.

So many of those leaders are patting people on the back and giving them the impression they're going to heaven because they're in church. And that is a sad and tragic thing. And the broad road that leads to destruction is the road of religion and human achievement.

The day is coming when Jesus is going to have all individuals stand before him. And those that were on the broad road of religion yet did not know him are going to find that out. And they're going to be shocked.

Look down in the chapter in Matthew 7 to verse 21. In that day, Jesus says, not everyone who says to me in that day, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven. But he who does the will of my father and he says, and I will declare to them, I never knew you depart from me.

You who practice lawlessness. Now, he says that to all these people who are standing in front of him, listing off all the things that they did in church. And they're calling him Lord.

They're going to come before Jesus and stand before him and say, hey, Lord, it's me. And they're going to be smiling and ready to go into heaven because of all these great works that they did. And he's going to say to them, I never knew you.

And they are going to be shocked. And the sad thing is that shock is going to last forever. The Greek in Matthew 7, 23, when he says, I never knew you, the Greek is not now nor at any time.

Did I know you, even though you did all these things and you used my name? So to their horror, they will discover too late. The entrance to hell is at the very edge of the gates of heaven. Pretty radical.

So there's such a thing as a faith that doesn't save. And we see that unfolded more and more as we go now. Whenever the gospel is truly preached, it inevitably will produce two reactions.

One is a true saving faith and the other is a false faith. True saving faith comes from preaching the gospel and the other is a false faith. In the Bible, you find that the seed of the word will fall on good soil and it will bring forth fruit and it will fall on bad soil.

And there's no lasting fruit there in the parable of the sower. You find in the Bible that there are branches who abide in the vine and there are branches that are cut off to be burned. There will be those with a working faith, as James called it, and those with demon faith, devil faith.

James chapter two, where he says faith without works is dead. The devils believe and they tremble, but they are obviously not going to heaven. There are those to whom Jesus discloses himself and those to whom he will not entrust himself.

It's a very overlooked verse set of verses in the gospel and we'll see it. There are those who have faith to the preserving of the soul in the word and those who shrink back to destruction. You see that in the book of Hebrews.

This all happens as the word of God is preached. When Paul was writing his second epistle to the Corinthian church and they were beginning to turn away after false teachers, he wrote this. He said in Second Corinthians 13, five, examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith.

Test yourselves. Do you not know that Christ is in you unless indeed you are reprobates or disqualified or fooling yourself? And so he tells them to examine themselves. And every man, woman and child needs to do that to examine yourself.

What am I, the real thing? Do I really believe in you or am I just going along with this? Jesus very carefully and specifically taught there will be what he called wheat mixed with tares. And I'd like you to look at Matthew 13 on that teaching. And then we're going to go back to Acts, Matthew 13, verse 24, and the teaching of Jesus, especially in Matthew.

You always find him in his parables talking about the real and the fake, the real and the fake, the real and the fake. And here we are again, Matthew 13, 24. Another parable he put forth to them, saying the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. Now, they were an agrarian society and they understood that tares look like wheat until the harvest. And then the wheat turns basically white and the tares.

And you can tell the difference at that point. And so he said the enemy came in, sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. Then verse 26.

But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares? And he said to them, an enemy has done this. The servant said to him, do you want us then to go and gather them up? But he said, no, lest while you gather up the tares, you uproot the wheat with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest. And at the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, first gather together the tares and bind them in bundle bundles to burn them. But gather the wheat into my barn.

And then Jesus went on to explain it, because as usual, the disciples didn't understand it. They were slow to learn like we are. And so the tares are the fake.

They are people that sit in church and look like Christians. They you can learn Christian vocabulary. You can get a Bible and go to the Christian bookstore and get a nice cover on it and look even more Christian.

Like not only am I a Christian with a Bible, look at my cool cover and do all those things and talk the lingo and get involved in everything else so that you look like a Christian. But in the end, you're not truly born again. You're not truly a Christian in the eyes of God.

You are in the eyes of people. He alone knows the heart. Back in Acts eight, we have the first known satanic attempt to sow a tear in the church.

His name is Simon. Here is Simon, the sorcerer. Now, Simon appears to be a genuine believer.

Follow this so much so that even one as discerning as Philip baptized him. And then he continued on with Philip for a while. So he illustrates the difficulty of telling the tears apart from the wheat.

It's very difficult. That's why the Lord said, don't really try to, because unless God shows you, you can't really tell. They look so much like the real thing.

Now, in the end, Simon believes, but he does not have a faith that saves him. How does that work out? How does that happen? Four ways, four things in this man's life lead to that reality. One, he had a wrong view of himself.

Two, he had a wrong view of salvation. Three, he had a wrong view of the Holy Spirit. And four, he had a wrong view of sin.

And that will leave you with a faith that does not save wrong view of himself. Salvation, the spirit and sin leads to a faith that doesn't save. Let's talk about this wrong view of himself.

In verse nine, Simon claimed he was the great power of God. So we know that he was not humble. For starters, right? And that's a serious thing when it comes to salvation.

Verse nine, you have all these great things going on in this revival. There is great rejoicing in the city as Luke records. And then there's sad and tragic word.

Verse nine. But all this great stuff going on. But there was this certain man called Simon.

We're going to switch tracks entirely now. This is sad and tragic. In contrast to the great joy.

But there was a certain man called Simon. In contrast to all that were being delivered, there was a certain man called Simon. In contrast to all that were truly being saved, there was a certain man called Simon.

And in contrast to all those that had demons cast out of them, a certain man called Simon. We read who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people even out beyond the city. The people of Samaria.

What does it say? Claiming he was someone great. And verse 10 says to whom they all gave heed. This is so comprehensive.

It says from the least to the greatest saying this man is the great power of God. Simon had the most heretical view of self that's possible. He saw himself as the great power of God.

The early church fathers recorded in their writings that Simon actually went around after all this happened. Claiming that he was a form of God incarnate. He even fabricated another teaching on the doctrine of the Trinity in which he included himself.

This man. When you read that he claimed he was someone great and you see the people recognize him as someone great. And from the least to the greatest.

Verse 10. They say he is someone great. He is a man of tremendous power and influence.

You have to see that he has affected as one man. And he has affected the lives in all of this city and beyond the city throughout Samaria. So that if you.

Here's the picture. If you were to travel to Samaria and you were to meet some people and spend some time with them. Only a few minutes would go by before they would say to you.

Have you. Have you seen Simon. He's incredible.

Everybody in the city and all of Samaria. We all know about Simon. He is the dominating influence.

And have you seen him. He's the great power of God. That's how it would be.

He was on the lips. He was a household name is a part of everybody's life. OK.

You have to see that. So that Simon made his living that way. A big living.

It was a big great guy in his eyes and in their eyes. So he didn't change from that position. And a faulty view of man of self keeps people out of the kingdom.

He had a faulty view. He was not humble. He thought he was an offspring of God himself, a form of God to the people.

And that is certainly wrong. But how many people today have a false view of themselves to say, how about this one? You witness to somebody about the Lord Jesus Christ and their need for salvation. And they say, well, you know, I don't really see myself as a sinner.

I'm a little bit bad, but I'm not as bad as the people down the street or the people I see on TV. I believe that man is basically good. And then if you strip it all away, you'll find out he really is basically good.

And certainly our correctional institutions subscribe to that belief. And that is why the prisons are as much of a mess as they are today in the judicial system. But people who think that man is essentially good then add it to their belief, this that they can bring along some good works.

Usually the same people will immediately point to the things they do. I'm a good person. I'm not really a sinner.

I do this. I do this and I do this. And they come to this radical leap of faith in their thinking.

I believe that when I get to heaven, assuming they're going there, that God is going to say to me, come on in. And he's going to review all the good things I did. And he's going to say, you know, you were better than almost everybody else because you did all these things.

You're the kind of person I want in my kingdom. That's their thinking. You ask the average person on the street, are you going to heaven? And they'll say nobody thinks they're going to hell.

And they'll say they might think others are, but they'll say, well, yeah, probably. And you say, well, why? Well, because I'm doing my best. That's not good enough.

See, even your best. Let's take the finest, most polished terror. Bible cover stuff inside.

Memorize scriptures, incredible Christian vocabulary, no theological words and everything. Take that person. They do great things.

They give money to charitable institutions and so on and so on and so on. You take a person like that, even that person. God says even that person, when he looks at whatever righteousness they can offer him through their works, he says in Isaiah 64, six, it is filthy rags in my sight.

So that the Bible tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And everything we do as a result without Christ is polluted with sin. And that's what makes it dirty.

And you can't bring it to God to buy salvation. Those who fail to see themselves as sinners and need of God and his savior, Jesus Christ, will never come to that savior for salvation. You have to see the need.

And Simon really didn't see his need on that level. He saw a need, but he didn't see his need on that level. He claimed he was the great power of God.

And he had all the people in this area under his spells and influence so that many, you recall, early in the chapter were demon possessed. Because when Philip came, as the Holy Spirit came into their lives, he cast out those demons. This is the area where Simon practiced his magical arts and sorcery for so long.

The result of it is many are demon possessed and they're freed when Philip comes with the gospel. So he had the people under his spell. Verse 9. A certain man named Simon previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished all the people, claiming he was someone great.

They all gave heed from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorcery, not for a day, not for a week, for a month, but for a long time. He is a long way from what Jesus talked about in Matthew five, when he said, Blessed are the poor in spirit.

He said, For theirs is the kingdom of God. And in saying that he was painting the picture that was very familiar to all of them in that day of a beggar destitute who could do nothing more. And this is the way they did it.

Nothing more than beg. And the way they did it is they would put one hand over their eyes and look down and stick the other hand out with a cup or something in it to receive alms. It's crouching down, sticking out the hand, totally broken and destitute, begging.

That's the picture he's painting with the language he uses. Blessed are those that are destitute, bankrupt, poor in spirit, reaching out to God because those are the ones he will give the free gift of salvation to. Simon is a long way from that.

He is not poor in spirit. So we come to understand his wrong view of himself. Let's go to the second thing.

He had a wrong view of salvation. He had a wrong view of salvation to begin with. He thought salvation was gained by believing the facts, just believing the facts intellectually.

Look at verse 13. It says, Simon himself also believed. And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip and was amazed, seeing the miracles and the signs that were done.

Simon believed in his head, but not in his heart. Hold your place. Turn to James chapter 2. I just want you to see this with your own eyes.

James chapter 2, verse 19. James is talking about basically all these same issues, different language. He says, faith without works is dead.

If you claim that you have faith without works, I'll show you my faith by my works. And he's not saying you earn your salvation by works. He's saying that where there is the life of God and the soul of a man, there will be fruit in the life.

James' point is where there's no fruit in the life, there's no right to claim redemption. That's his point. And that's biblical.

So that he underscores it by going out to the extreme in verse 19, chapter two of James. He says, you believe there is one God. Great.

You do well. But even the the demons, the devils believe and tremble. So you're no different than they are.

They believe you believe it's easy to believe it's possible to believe. Simply believe the facts. And leave it at that.

That doesn't save you. To believe in that way doesn't save you. Jesus encountered people like that.

And I do want you to turn and look at this verse. I'm not going to have you go everywhere in the Bible today. But turn to John, chapter two, verse 23.

Jesus encountered a lot of people like Simon. They believe the facts about him. But that was it.

John 2, 23, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast. Many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did. John 2, 23.

Many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he did. Look at verse 24. But Jesus did not commit himself to them.

Why? Because he knew what was in men. He knew what was in their hearts. He knew that they believed the facts.

And that was it. He does not give himself to you when you leave it at that. There is no relationship there when you leave it at that.

There's no new birth there that issues forth in a life of intimacy when you leave it at that. So Simon thought salvation was gained by believing the facts. He's not alone.

There are others in the Bible like that. Go back to Acts 8, 13. Another thing that he had wrong about salvation is he thought salvation was joining up with the group.

And how many people think that? I'm going to church. I'm a good person. Now back off with the stuff about being born again.

I go to church. I'm a good person. Hey, that's a view of salvation that says if I join up with the group, I'm going to heaven.

Well, that is not how you get to heaven. Acts 8, 13. Simon himself also believed.

And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip. So he joined up with the group. They were all getting baptized.

We read that earlier. Acts 8 earlier in the chapter. And he was amazed seeing all the signs and wonders that were done.

Why did he follow Philip? He continued with Philip. Luke doesn't write. He continued with Jesus.

Luke writes. And he's a man of detail. He's a doctor with an eye for detail.

He writes he continued with Philip. Why does he write that? He's amazed. He's dazzled.

He continues with Philip because by following Philip, he was able to make contact with his former audience that he had lost when Philip came to town, preached the Gospels. They had their demons cast out from them. They start.

They got baptized. They were following Christ. Now they were not following Simon anymore.

He's lost them all. So he looks at how am I going to get these people back? Well, I'll just have to join up with them and follow along with them. I'll speak well of Philip.

Look at this guy. He's great. Have you ever seen signs and wonders like that? And isn't he wonderful? And everybody's all Simon is with us.

So, wow, we could have Simon and Philip, Simon and Philip and Jesus. Can't you just see the potential of what is here? The whole problem with Samaria was that they had Jehovah God and Baal and all their other gods. We read last time that they feared Jehovah and served other gods.

They are running the risk right here by Simon joining up of going into the same direction of blending Jesus Christ with idol worship and everything else. And it will go on the way it's always been. And certainly that was Satan's design.

So he joins the group because he wants to maintain contact, figure out a way to get them back. There are others in the Bible that are like that. One of the most frightening is Demas.

Let me just read this to you. Colossians 4:14. Paul writes, he says, Luke, the beloved physician is here with me.

He greets you and Demas is here with me and he greets you. He's there with Paul. He's a fellow worker with Paul Demas.

What a guy, you think? And then in Philemon, you read Mark, Aristarchus, Luke, my fellow labors, and right in there with those words as fellow labors is Demas. But then you come to Second Timothy 4:10 and Paul writes, for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. And he's departed for Thessalonica.

You see, Demas was there with him. Demas was there laboring with him. Demas, in the end, however, left and deserted him because he loved the world.

John wrote in his one of his epistles, he said in the first epistle, he said, whoever loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. Demas loved the world. He joined up to company with them to get salvation.

He thought he would have it by joining the group in the end. He figured it all out. And in the end, because his heart wasn't converted, he couldn't stay away from the magnetism of the world.

Listen, you can join a group, but if your heart isn't made new by Christ in true salvation, you cannot resist the power of the world. And ultimately, terrors will manifest themselves by caving in to the temptation of the world. That is why as you go to church for years and love the Lord and follow him, that is why along the way so many people disappear, they disappear.

And you say, well, what happened to so-and-so and so-and-so? And so over the years, you can think of hundreds after a while. Where are they? Somebody says they're backslidden. Well, some of them are true believers who have gone back, got caught in sin, but many of them were never true believers.

They were terrorists and they went back to the world like Demas. So he had a wrong view of salvation. So did Demas.

How about this? So did Judas. Judas Iscariot was with Jesus Christ for three years. He was so trusted by the group, they made him the treasurer.

Wouldn't the treasurer be the most trustworthy guy around? And yet we read in the gospels that Judas was a thief and he used to dip into the bag. See, and then he betrayed Jesus and he went to his own place when he died. He was not saved.

So you have Judas, Demas, Simon. There's a faith that does not save. Intellectual assent to the facts doesn't save anyone.

Demon faith. So, wrong view of self, wrong view of salvation. Let's go to another thing here.

Third thing, he had a wrong view of the Holy Spirit. Simon saw the great power of God given through the apostles and he was dazzled. Acts 8.14. Now, when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.

Who? And they had come down. Prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Now, pay very close attention here.

This is important. Prayed for them they might receive the Holy Spirit. Well, why? Wasn't Philip there preaching already? Didn't they get baptized? Aren't they saved? Why do they have to come from Jerusalem? Ah, verse 16.

For as yet, he had fallen on none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus through Philip. So, they came down.

Verse 17. They laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. What's that all about? Well, just mark it.

File it away. We're going to come back to it. Very important, though.

Simon saw the great power of God through the apostles. They were able to give the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. So, Simon saw that and he basically, he sees his way back.

I'm here going along with Philip and the group and the crowd. They're also here. They see me with everybody.

I'm one with them. We're all together. We're still here.

This is it. The demons that indwelt these people, that helped me to control them over all these years, were cast out when they came to Christ. Well, now there's a new power.

The power that cast them out can be given through the laying on of hands if you're just the right kind of a guy. And obviously, Peter and John are those kind of men. Now, he sees them as sort of a glorified version of him.

In his mind, this reveals he's not regenerated. He's not born again. In his mind, they're like glorified sorcerers.

They're like top notch. Ooh, where have these guys been? White magic. You know? I'm black magic.

They're white magic. Ooh, it's even more powerful. So, Simon wanted to buy that power like he bought all the other powers he had in his sorcery.

A sorcerer in that day was basically one who was as scientific as you could be in that day. He was one who was schooled in astrology. He was one who was very skilled in divination, like a medium.

Conjure up spirits, talk to spirits. And he was skilled in the art of potions, opium, drugs. So, he was also skilled in demonic secrets, magic arts.

That's what the Greek says. It's all those things. Drugging.

It's all those things. So, Simon was effectively a combination of a medium, a witch doctor, and a drug dealer. He made a lot of money off these people.

You understand why he doesn't give up so easy, huh? So, he wants to try to get this power like he bought all those other powers. Excuse me. In Acts 8.18, when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me this power.

Give me this power also, so I can know Christ intimately. No. So that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit and I'll be back in action.

You guys can leave town. I'll take over for you. Simon wanted to add this to his life.

He effectively, if you look at the whole picture, wanted to simply add Jesus to his life. My heart breaks over people that are like that. They simply want to add Jesus to their life.

Whether it's a bumper sticker, a button, a baseball cap, or a golf shirt. They just add Jesus to their life. If you spend any time with them, you find they don't have a passion for him.

They don't really love him. They've just added him to their life like they add other things to their life. That's all Simon was doing.

Wrong view of the Holy Spirit is something you add to your life rather than God. And so he wants to buy this power. He is like all those that ultimately reject the true witness of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, The Spirit testifies of me. In Matthew chapter 12, verse 24, the Pharisees were watching Jesus. And he was preaching and he was casting out demons.

And because they couldn't deny it, they tried to twist it. So they said, This fellow doesn't cast out demons by God. He casts out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of demons.

They were ascribing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. What did Jesus say to that? In Matthew 12, verse 28, he said, If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come to you. Therefore, I say to you, Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven men.

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, me as a man, not me as God, but me as a man, that will be forgiven him. Like look at his tattered robe, this guy from Galilee. Those things will be forgiven.

But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or the age to come. There is one and only one sin for which a man cannot be forgiven. It is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, which is to reject the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ is the one true God, our Savior, made man, died and rose again.

That is the witness of the Holy Spirit, to reject that for one reason or another, to deny that, to push it away. Simon did it, these people did it, the scribes and Pharisees. That is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

That is the one thing that will render you unable to be saved, because that's the only way you can be saved, to receive the witness of the Spirit that Christ is your Savior, and then to receive the free gift of God, forgiveness, salvation, as you receive that work of the Spirit. That's how you get saved. You reject that and you can't be saved.

That's where Simon is. Wrong view of the Spirit, wrong view of salvation, wrong view of self. One last thing, wrong view of sin.

Acts 8.20, Peter told Simon he was going to perish, which is scriptural language for be lost forever. Peter said to him, your money perished with you, because you thought the gift of God could be purchased with money. You have neither part nor portion in this matter of the kingdom.

Your heart is not right and God sees it. Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Verse 21, you have neither part nor portion in this matter of salvation.

So he told him he was going to perish. Then Peter told Simon he would receive forgiveness by repentance. Verse 22, repent, he says to him, the very thing he hadn't done.

Repent, he says to him. Repentance is this. It's a change of mind about God and yourself and sin.

It is sorrow of heart about the whole thing. And it's tangible proof as you turn from your sins and follow Christ. It is change of mind, sorrow of heart, tangible proof.

That's repentance. So he says, repent of this your wickedness and pray to God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. Repentance brings forgiveness.

Simon, you need to repent. So Peter told him he could receive forgiveness by repentance. Further, Peter told him he was still bound in sin, unforgiven, unsaved.

Verse 23, for I see you are poisoned by bitterness. His bitterness of losing his whole clientele through his sorcery to Christ. They came to Christ.

You are poisoned by bitterness and you are bound by iniquity, by sin. You're still bound. So he tells them, repent and you can be forgiven and get out of this.

He refuses to repent because he thinks he can be saved by someone else's prayer for him. Acts 8, 24, Simon answered and said, pray to the Lord for me. And I bet he even said, Lord, really weird.

People that don't know him say, Lord, really weird. Pray to the Lord for me. Just that weird, well, we know the good Lord feels this way about things.

The man upstairs, pray to the Lord for me that none of these things which you have spoken may come upon me. Peter says, you pray to him yourself. You repent.

He'll forgive you. He says, no, you pray to the Lord for me. But he thought he could hitchhike his way into heaven.

There's no hitchhikers going to heaven. No, God doesn't have any grandchildren. He only has first generation children that know him personally.

You have the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Immediate, instant, holy longings when you are born again. You begin to long from the depths of your being for God as your father.

And you long for him for the rest of your life. When the life of God comes into your soul in salvation, he comes to stay. Jesus said, I will give you the Holy Spirit.

He will abide with you. How long? Forever. He said, if you come to me, I will in no wise cast you out.

It isn't hard to be saved if you'll be humble and turn from your sins and follow Christ. Take him as your Lord. But if you won't be humble, if you're proud, you have a wrong view of yourself and all these other things, then it's impossible.

It's beyond hard. And in the end, it's a free gift to those that are humble enough to come and take it from the Lord. Simon refused to repent.

And, you know, the sad thing is Simon did not go away. Simon did not go away. Ever heard the term Simoni? Simoni is a word used to describe the whole process in religious circles of being able to buy forgiveness, indulgences, whatever.

You pay money and you can get forgiven. You pay money and you can get a certain office in the church. When Constantine came to Christianity in the Roman Empire, he made it the official religion of the Empire.

You could buy an office as a bishop or a cardinal or whatever else. And in the process, Christianity was totally defiled. And the whole process of Simoni just really took off and it has never gone away.

You can buy forgiveness, buy an office, buy favor with God and so on. That has been given the name Simoni and it comes from Simon right here. We have that term with us to this day.

You can probably find it in any dictionary. Simon is the father of all that. He didn't go away.

He went on to become one of the greatest heretics in the history of the church. And many of the early church writers say that he was the father of Gnosticism, which is the belief that all that matters and is important is the spirit. The material thing is evil, the body and all of that.

That can never do anything for you. So you ignore the body and you concentrate on the spirit and learning. Gnosticism comes from the Greek word gnosis, means to learn knowledge.

And so the Gnostics are always into the deeper knowledge that you don't find really in the Bible. You find it by someone else's help. And it's the deeper life club, I call it.

And it's been around since the beginning. And Simon is the one the early church fathers, Justin Martyr, Uranus and others ascribed to having been to having been the one who started it. He didn't go away.

He didn't repent. He didn't go away. You know something, terrors in the church are very dangerous.

They really are. In the end, they must be left for God to deal with. Only he can deal with them.

Only he can manifest them. And we just need to make sure each one of us that we're not a terror. We really know Jesus Christ.

Now, that does leave some critical issues like why didn't the people receive the Holy Spirit when they came to salvation and they got baptized? Why did the apostles have to come down from Jerusalem and lay hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit? And does that mean they came from Jerusalem to Samaria to bring them the baptism of the Holy Spirit? These are serious questions, don't you think? And we don't have any more time. So you have to come back next time. And we will answer them in great detail.

Let's pray, shall we? Father, thank you for salvation in Jesus Christ. It's rich, it's full, and it's free. Lord, we pray you'd work your saving work in every heart here today.

If you don't know Jesus Christ truly and personally, humble yourself before him today. Ask him to forgive you of your sins. Confess you are a sinner.

Believe upon him as your Lord and your Savior. Ask him to fill you with his Holy Spirit and lead you and guide you and take you to heaven when you die. It's really that simple.

If it's real, he will save you. Lord, thank you for saving us. Thank you for new life in Christ.

Thank you for your Holy Spirit. And thank you for the great hope of heaven. This life is not all there is.

And thank you, Lord, that in Christ we are rich. Rich with the life of God. Lavish with the grace of God.

And we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ in heaven to come. May we live like it, Lord. Empower us now, Father, to go forth and to love Christ and leave the things of the world that are bad for us, that are sinful and dark.

Let us walk in freedom. Lord, may we be free as you set us free and make us free indeed. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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