

I'll Buy That ***Acts 8:18-25***

I heard a story about a man who went into an antique shop in San Francisco, and on the floor, he noticed what appeared to be an ancient Chinese vase.

Upon closer inspection, it turned out to be a priceless relic from the Ming dynasty. He thought, *"The owner has no idea about the value of this vase, because a cat was drinking milk out of it."*

The man was hoping to buy the vase for a fraction of its value.

Instead of asking about the vase, he said to the owner, *"That's an extraordinary cat you have. How much would you sell her for?"*

"Oh, the cat's not really for sale," said the owner. *"She keeps the store free of mice."*

The man replied, *"I really want her". "I tell you what--I'll give you a hundred dollars for her."* The owner said, *"She's not really worth it, but if you want her that badly, she's yours."*

The man said, *"I need something to feed her from as well. Let me add ten extra dollars for that saucer she's drinking from."*

"Oh, I could never do that. That saucer is actually an ancient Chinese vase from the Ming dynasty, and it's priceless. Funny thing, though; since we've had it, I've sold 17 cats."

As Christ-followers, we can easily deceive ourselves, living for selfish pursuits while believing we are actually serving the Lord.

The motives and intents of the heart regarding the choices we make must be understood, so we must examine ourselves and ask why we do what we do.

Please open your Bibles to *Acts 8*

Last time, we learned that Saul persecuted the early Christians, causing them to flee, and to go out and preach the Gospel!

Philip, one of the original deacons mentioned in *Acts 6*, fled Jerusalem due to persecution and eventually settled in Samaria.

Philip was able to cast out evil spirits and heal people of many different illnesses. Philip presented the Gospel, with signs and wonders, so *there was great joy in that city*.

Then we met one of the most notable people from Samaria, a man named Simon, a sorcerer who had bewitched the city, declaring himself to be someone great.

Philip preached the Gospel, and Simon professed to be a believer and was baptized. Peter and John went from Jerusalem to Samaria to pray for the believers to receive the Holy Spirit.

This scattering of believers led to the spread of the Gospel and Christianity to other areas of the world.

As we make our plans, we need to be sure and seek the LORD and His will, so we are obedient to the call He has for our lives.

I. A self-serving request.

Read *Acts 8:18-19*

The magician Simon noticed the extraordinary power of Peter and John, which was given to them by the Holy Spirit, and he began thinking of ways he could selfishly use those gifts.

Simon thought that the power of the Holy Spirit was similar to his magic and that it could be bought or sold for **personal** gain.

The LORD's power and grace are not things to be bought or earned; even the Old Testament prophets realized that.

Isaiah 55:1 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. NKJV

Simon was afraid he had lost his Super Star status, but then the opportunity to gain power and position presented itself, and he jumped at the chance.

Notice what Simon wants as he says, ***"Give me this power."***

Simon was one of the first power brokers in the early church; he even offered to buy his way into the position.

When a person is given a position for any other reason than the call of God upon their lives, it will not go well for the church.

Early in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, there was something known as **penance**, which was supposed to be an act of contrition or a public display of remorse to atone for sin.

Before the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church offered indulgences, basically pardon for sin, in exchange for donations.

Ironically, the dictionary defines the word **Simony** as the buying or selling of ecclesiastical privileges, like pardons.

Simony can refer to the inappropriate exchange of temporal (material) things for **spiritual** benefits, which is practiced in some churches today that employ a **give-to-get** mentality.

But Paul teaches in *Titus 3:4, But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,*

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, NKJV

Financial giving is a part of our response to the LORD; however, we should give because the love of Christ **compels** us to give, not to buy forgiveness or expect something in return.

When a Christian gives, they are giving to the LORD, so when someone puts strings on their giving and tries to control what happens to the money, it is no longer an offering to the LORD.

In the Bible, every exhortation to give is addressed to believers.

Giving is part of our worship. The Old Testament saints had to approach the LORD with different sacrifices as a contribution.

In the New Testament, we have the freedom to approach the throne room of God anytime with boldness, so now our giving is a sacrifice offered as worship and thanksgiving.

Many of the early churches modeled generosity in giving.

Even though they were poor, they gladly gave from a heart of gratitude to the LORD and love for their brethren.

Paul said in *Acts 20:35*, ***“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” NKJV***

Jesus spoke of the stewardship of His people in terms of money, especially seen in the parable in *Luke 16*. We should give to the LORD our first fruits of time, talents, and treasures.

1 Corinthians 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. NKJV

Jesus demonstrated how giving is an investment. He encouraged to ***“Lay up treasure in heaven”*** to further the Gospel!

II. Simon’s correction.

Read *Acts 8:20-21*

Notice the harsh correction from Peter because this was such an outrageous request from Simon, thinking he could buy the gift of God with money.

People who want to either get rich by misusing the Gospel or try to purchase God's favor are an outrage. We receive the gift of God by grace alone, through faith alone, in **Christ** alone.

If we have truly received the gift of God, it will affect what we do with money, but we do not try to earn God's favor with money.

What we receive from God will affect what we do with our money, but we can't **purchase** the gifts of God with money.

Unfortunately, there are many people who try to profit using religion and faith. The Bible is clear that those who serve vocationally in the ministry are worth their wages...

But the men and women who try to exploit or pervert ministry as a way for business gains are an abomination to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are some Christian owned businesses that do great things with their profits, but Churches or para-church organizations that seek to fleece God's people for personal gain are terrible.

Notice Peter said, "***Your money perish with you!***"

J.B. Phillips' translation of the Bible says in *Acts 8:20*, "***But Peter said to him, 'To hell with you and your money! How dare you think you could buy the gift of God!'***"

Then Peter said, "***You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.***"

Remember, we said there are three types of people in Church:

1. The **Spirit-led** believer (not perfect, but surrendered)
2. The carnal Christian (born again, but led by the flesh)
3. The **non-believer** (never really born again)
4. This rebuke from Peter brings us back to my question from last week.

Did Simon have a genuine moment of faith and become born again, or was his profession of faith simply lip service?

Earlier in *Acts 8*, we read that Simon gave some evidence of conversion, at least outwardly.

Simon professed belief after Philip preached the Gospel, Philip baptized Simon after his initial profession, and Simon continued on with Philip after his initial profession.

However, **Philip** could not see into Simon's spiritual heart and know for sure if Simon was sincere about his faith.

This is one of the reasons why, when we baptize someone here, we ask them if they believe in Jesus with all their heart and leave the question of their authenticity of faith up to the LORD.

Once the **Apostles came** from Jerusalem, **Peter** told Simon, "***You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.***"

Some say *Acts 8:21* is evidence that Simon was not a true convert due to a lack of repentance with his profession of faith.

James Boice said, *“This is a warning to anybody who thinks that just because he or she has made a profession of faith or has gone through certain motions expected of Christians that he or she is right with God for that reason. That is not the case.”*

Some say the words from Peter to Simon, “***Your money perish with you,***” are proof that Simon was **headed** towards hell.

Notice Peter told Simon in ***Acts 8:21 You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. NKJV***

“Heart” denotes the center of all physical and spiritual life, the vigor and sense of physical life, and the center and seat of **spiritual** life. (Strong's G4937)

In the Old Testament, the "***heart***" included the entire inner person, the mind, will, and emotions. It is the source of thoughts, intentions, desires, and moral character.

III. The cure for the poison of sin.

Read ***Acts 8:22-23***

Repentance means “a turning from sin”; it means to make a U-turn, turning from sin and heading towards the LORD.

Here in this verse, to ***repent*** means to change one’s mind.

The Bible tells us that true repentance will result in a change of mind as well as a change of **actions** for the follower of Christ.

Notice in vs. 22, *pray to God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.*

The *Book of Hebrews* tells us that the LORD knows our thoughts and the intents of our hearts.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. NKJV

Jesus showed His deity in the *Gospel of Luke* when He healed a man on the Sabbath Day and angered the religious leaders.

Luke 6:8, But He knew their thoughts and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Arise and stand here." NKJV

Why did Peter tell Simon to pray for forgiveness? Peter saw that Simon was poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.

How was the desire to misuse and purchase the gift of God considered poison and bitterness?

Thayer's Greek lexicon states that being "*poisoned by bitterness*" means Simon had extreme wickedness.

Peter told Simon to *repent therefore*, to *pray to God*, and to deal with *the thought of his heart*.

Here again, the question can be raised whether or not Simon was a true believer in Christ at this point.

Some say Simon was a believer but was still struggling with some old sins of his flesh.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.

1 John 2:17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. NKJV

Some say pride prevented Simon from having a genuine belief in Jesus at this point. Proud people have an outward appearance of faith, but in their hearts, they can still fail to submit to Jesus.

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

Jeremiah 17:10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. NKJV

Paul said ***2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified.***

IV. Fruit of repentance.

Read *Acts 8:24-25*

Why did Simon ask Peter to pray for him instead of doing as Peter told him to do, by praying to the LORD himself?

Different commentators have different opinions about this verse.

Some say instead of humbling himself before the LORD, Simon asked Peter to go before the LORD, to pray that he might be spared from the **consequences** of his sin.

Albert Barnes said Simon was being hypocritical with this request while asking Peter to pray for him.

Gareth Reese believes Simon was sincere in his request because he realized the danger he was in with this severe sin.

The language in **vs. 24** seems to say, “*You pray for me too*”.

Hebrews 4:16 says we can boldly enter into the throne room of grace and receive help in our time of need.

Psalm 51:17 says the Lord will not reject a person who comes to Him in repentance with a contrite heart. But there are times even Paul asked others to pray for him.

2 Thessalonians 3:1 *brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you,*

2 Thessalonians 3:2 *and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. NKJV*

As bad as Simon’s sin was, as long as he was alive, he could still *repent, therefore of this his wickedness and pray to God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.*

Of course, we remember the narrative of the thief on the Cross next to Jesus, who made a deathbed confession with repentance, and Jesus promised him that he would go to paradise with Jesus.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. NKJV

We cannot be sure what happened in Simon's **future**, whether he truly repented and got saved, or if all of this was lip service.

Certain Church traditions say he ended up going crazy and became a heretical false teacher among the early Christians.

But it is possible that he did repent, got his heart right with the LORD, and is in heaven now. We will know when we get there.

C.S. Lewis said there would be three surprises in heaven: who's there, who's not, and the fact that you're there.

Then notice, ***“When they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem”***

Peter and John returned to Jerusalem after having a fruitful ministry in Samaria, but Phillip still had some work to do in Samaria, and we will learn about that ministry next week.

V. Conclusion.

Remember the story we started with about a man who went into an antique shop in San Francisco.

He noticed what appeared to be an ancient Chinese vase.

Upon closer inspection, it turned out to be a priceless relic from the Ming dynasty. The man was hoping to buy the vase for a fraction of its value.

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Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. NKJV

The LORD uses the Word to expose our hearts and to enable us to see our sin and unbelief in our hearts. The Word enables our hearts to obey God and claim His promises.

This is why each believer should be diligent to apply himself to hear and heed God's Word.

The Bible imparts truth to know ourselves better, trust His will, and obey Him. All this possible by the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. NKJV

Our High Priest Jesus took the Cross in our place.

Jesus offered Himself once for all for our sin atonement, to satisfy the Law of God, for the forgiveness of our sins.

Boldly does not mean proudly, or arrogantly, but it means with confidence. The throne of God is a throne of grace, and we have full access because we are children of God, because of Jesus.

In light of the finished work of Jesus, we see mercy and judgment reconciled into one throne of grace.

Grace does not ignore God's justice; it simply claims God's justice and penalty **paid** in full in light of the Cross.

The LORD always provides help for His kids in our time of need.

We cannot purchase the gift of God, but we can boldly enter in if we have a relationship with our High Priest.

We must guard our hearts and constantly make sure our motivation is to follow Christ and not to elevate self or make a profit from God's people.