

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

An Almost Christian Exposed

Acts 8:9-24

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: Acts 8 describes the fleeing Church out of Jerusalem. And as the people fled they kept the gospel upon their lips. Luke now focuses on two recipients of the gospel, Simon the Magician and the Ethiopian Eunuch. And it doing so he shows the two way the gospel impacts individual lives. One is only almost a Christian and the other is a genuine Christian. Today we look at the almost one.

I. Introduction.

A. Read 8:9-24.

1. There was a book written in the 1600's by a preacher named Matthew Mead. He entitled the book, *The Almost Christian Discovered*.
2. He speaks of the fact that a person can have much knowledge of the things of God without ever having the grace of God that saves him.

B. Almost Christians are often dangerous, but not always.

1. An example of one positive example is found in Acts 18:24-28.
2. However, the list of those who appeared to be genuine believers and followers of Jesus Christ is something easily found in scripture.
 - a. We have Judas as a prime example, lying and loving money all the while claiming a love of Jesus.
 - b. Demas in 2 Timothy 4 is a man who ultimately loved this world and abandoned the faith.
 - c. Hymenaeus and Alexander are described as blasphemers who shipwrecked their faith in 1 Timothy 1.
 - d. The book of Jude and 2 Peter are directed almost exclusively to the subject of apostates.
 - e. Hebrews is filled with warnings of apostasy—the falling away from the faith.

C. Today we have a story placed before us by Luke to show us what it looked like as the people fled from Jerusalem and its persecution.

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II. An Almost Christian Exposed.

A. Simon introduced (9-11):

1. He is described as a worker of magic. You could call him a Magi like those who visited the young Jesus.
2. He claimed to be a great man and through his use of magic he was able to keep the attention upon himself.
3. In fact he was essentially deified.
4. Vs 12 gives the content: the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus.
 - a. First, the good news about the Kingdom of God.
 - (1) This message of the Kingdom of God is tightly connected to the “name” of Jesus.
 - (2) It is the fact that God’s kingdom is being established. That the promises of the Old Testament prophets of a coming king who would make all things right is found in the person of Jesus.
 - (3) But this is also shown through the miracles that Philip is performing.
 - b. Second, the name of Jesus Christ.
 - (1) The idea of the “name” of Jesus is not some magic utterance like you see in so many events. So-called faith healers love to declare loudly that in the “name of Jesus” a demon of blindness is to come out or a bad leg is to be healed. Many treat it like a magic charm.
 - (2) It speaks of Jesus as the King, the promised one of the Old Testament. That God was on the move to set all things right through and by the authority and power of Jesus Christ.
 - (a) There is a well known passage in the gospels where Jesus says, “. . . *If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.*”
 - (b) Listen to what Jesus says in John 12:25-26, “*He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life*

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in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”

- B. Simon believes (13):
1. The people of the city turned from worship in the ways of Simon . They hear the message that was being preached by Philip and they converted to Jesus Christ.
 2. Note that the description here is very simple and brief. Little detail given because it is not the focus of the story.
 3. Then Simon believed. And this too was very briefly described.
 - a. Was baptized.
 - b. Continued with Philip.
 - c. Amazed at the power of Philip doing miracles.
 4. So we saw Simon introduced, we saw Simon believe....
- C. Simon sees:
1. Parenthetical statement about apostolic visit by Peter and John (14-17). Why?
 - a. This is the first news of non-Jews responding to gospel. What is so unique here is that it was Samaritans who were coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Again, words cannot describe how despised they were by the average Jew.
 - b. This required visit and verification. Claims are cheap. And there will be reactions by the church back in Jerusalem about these reports.
 - c. They had not yet received the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) Not normative, but this is Acts. A time of transition.

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- (2) This is actually the first of three accounts as the gospel spreads to include Samaritans, and soon, Gentiles as well. Fellow partakers of all blessings.
- (3) As Ephesians 2:13 says, “you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”
- (4) Jewish believers had a hard time shifting their thinking to include Gentiles.
- (5) Now, note that this act was accomplished through the apostles **only**.

- (6) In 10:44 we see this happening to the Gentiles with the apostle Peter present.
- (7) And in 19:1 we read of it happening with the apostle Paul.

D. Simon bribes:

1. But then the story begins to take a new, unexpected direction.
 - a. Note vs 18. What we see there is that then Simon observes of giving of the Holy Spirit to the people through the apostles. And the reaction is one of amazement. . . and a sinful desire.
 - b. He sees something and wants to do it. He recognizes that the apostles have an authority he does not possess. And he wants it.
 - c. And now his heart is revealed. He offers money to them, thinking that this is a commodity to be purchased.
2. And in this simple act we see what was the hope of Simon.

E. Simon hardens (20-24):

1. Peter’s response is quick and harsh.
 - a. We tend to read this story and think that perhaps Simon was just a bit misled or off a little. Just show him a bit of grace. He merely needs a little bit of instruction.

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- b. Not Peter. “Your silver needs to be cast into hell with you.” That is the idea going on here.
 - c. He goes on to say that Simon has no part in this whole work of God through Philip and the apostles.
2. So in vs 22-23 we see the kindness of Peter in calling him to repent.
 - a. Here we see again that the fundamental problem with Simon is a heart problem.
 - b. His heart, and therefore his desires, are wicked. He must turn his back upon this way of thinking.
 - c. Pray earnestly that God would be willing to forgive him.
 - d. Peter speaks to him the truth and it is not pretty and it is not good (23).
 3. And so we see how he hardens his heart in vs 24.

III. Conclusion.

- A. The love of money and power often corrupts the soul.
 1. Paul talks about “sordid gain” and so does Peter in relation to leaders in the church.
 2. Paul says that there are those who suppose that godliness is a means of gain (1 Timothy 6:5). What sort of person is that way? He calls them men of depraved minds.
 3. Hear the words of Peter in 2 Peter 2:1-3.
 4. Today we hear of how to send in our seed offerings to people and supposedly will receive an anointing from God if we do so.
 5. We learn about how to monetize our ministries so as to maximize our impact.
 6. So called shepherds who abandon the church to go to bigger, greener pastures. So called people of God who abandon a faithful church in search of something fancier, something with a wow factor attached to it.
 7. But all of it ultimately will be shown to be as bankrupt as Simon’s heart.
- B. Beloved, as you share the gospel you will get all sorts of responses. Do not let that control you.
 1. Some will truly believe and it will be a point of joy.

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2. Some will laugh and mock and reject.
3. And some will claim to believe and then, sometimes years later, will shed Jesus Christ like they shed dirty clothes at the end of the day.
4. You have no control over that. You are to be like Philip and the apostles, calling people to repent and believe and warning those who appear to be wandering from their profession of faith.

Benediction

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing the good news of Jesus Christ, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen