

Sports & Rec Plus
THE BOOK OF ACTS
Lesson 21: Simon the Sorcerer
Acts 8:9-25 (NIV®)
Rev. Rick Mitchell and Rev. Rod Morris

Welcome to the teaching ministry of **Sports & Rec Plus (S&RP)**. S&RP is a worldwide church planting ministry serving the Lord in ninety countries with an emphasis of taking the Gospel to unreached people groups. We do these using sports, recreation, leisure time activities, and life skills training to open doors for us so that the Word of God can be shared. As God's Word is shared, relationships are begun, Bible studies are started, people get saved, then as the Lord leads churches are established, and church leaders are trained.

This message today is part of a series from the book of Acts. You can listen to all of our messages by going to our website: sportsrecplus.org and clicking on the media tab. There you will find the remainder of this series plus over two hundred other messages from the Bible.

INTRODUCTION

In our Sermon today we will be introduced to Simon the Sorcerer. Sorcery or witchcraft is the use of supernatural powers of magic often for evil purposes. A witch is a practitioner of witchcraft or sorcery. Traditionally, "witchcraft or sorcery" means the use of magic or supernatural powers to inflict harm or misfortune on others. This remains the most common and widespread meaning.

These and similar practices are forbidden by God: **Deuteronomy 18:9-14**

Moses gave a strict injunction not to copy, imitate, or do what the polytheistic Canaanites did. Moses mentions nine detestable practices of the Canaanites. In addition to "witchcraft or sorcery" these practices are also called the "Occult." Occult means something that is hidden and is a belief in the action or influence of supernatural powers.

Occult Practices

9When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. 10Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord; because of these same detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. 13You must be blameless before the Lord your God. 14The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the Lord your God has not permitted you to do so.

Here is a summary of the nine detestable practices of the Canaanites that Moses told them to not do.

1. Child sacrifice, (Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire. This is child sacrifice.). This is wrong and should be avoided.

2. Who practices divination, (Divination is the widespread practice or belief that involves using rituals or practices to gain insight into a question or situation. It can also be defined as the art of predicting future events or discovering hidden knowledge through omens, supernatural powers, or other techniques.) This is wrong and should be avoided.
3. Sorcery, (Sorcery is the use of powers gotten with the help of or by the control of evil spirits. These powers are intentionally used for harmful purposes.) Sorcery originally referred to the practices of the Medo-Persians: a mixture of science and superstition, including astrology, divination, and the occult. This is wrong and should be avoided.
4. Interprets omens, (An omen is an event regarded as a foreshadowing or prediction of good or evil.). This is wrong and should be avoided.
5. Engages in witchcraft, (Witchcraft is the use of magic or supernatural powers to inflict harm or misfortune on others. These powers may be gotten through an agreement with evil spirits. This power may be exerted on others without their knowledge.). This is wrong and should be avoided.
6. Casts spells, (A spell is an incantation, a charm, an enchantment, or a bewitchery. It is a magical formula intended to trigger a magical effect on a person or objects. The formula can be spoken, sung, or chanted. A spell or incantation can also be performed during ceremonial rituals or prayers. This is wrong and should be avoided.

NOTE: This philosophy is often seen in the contemporary idea of “you are what you think.” You are what you speak to and of yourself. Incantations can help you recondition your mind and with repetition, you can begin to develop new empowering thoughts, resulting in a new empowering you. You will often see and hear this in the “health and wealth” preaching of many. This is wrong and should be avoided.

7. Who is a medium (A medium is one who stands between two ideas or things and interprets the one to the other. A medium is a “go between.” A medium is often thought of as someone who brings evil things, forces, or spells from one person or object to another. The one who brings, throws, or casts these magical powers.). This is wrong and should be avoided.
8. Spiritist (A spiritist is someone who claims to speak with or for the spirits of the dead. Spiritism is the belief that the living can communicate with spirits, and the practices used to try to do so. These beliefs encompass mediumship, healing, and seances). This is not from God and should be avoided.
9. Who consults the dead. (Consulting with the dead is expressly forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). To speak with the spirit of the dead is prohibited and the punishment for such practices was death (Leviticus 19:26b, Leviticus 20:27).

Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord; because of these same detestable practices the Lord your God will drive out those nations before you. Why? ***“You must be blameless before the Lord your God.***

Note: these Occult practices were found among people long before Yahweh was worshipped. These were the worship/religious practices of pagans who were totally living for Satan even though they did not know it because they had not yet heard of the one true living God.

The occult is a category of esoteric or supernatural beliefs and practices which generally fall outside the scope of organized religion and science, encompassing phenomena involving a **'hidden'** or **'secret'** agency—hence the

name “**occult.**” This is magic and mysticism. It can also refer to paranormal ideas such as extra-sensory perception and parapsychology. This is all wrong and should be avoided.

Today—those who live this way are living as though they have never even heard of the one true and living God.

There is only One True and Living God and He owns the entire universe. There is not one molecule in the entire universe at which the One True and living God does not look at and say, “It is mine.”

We are to worship Him only.

I remember one time when my wife and I were missionaries in the Philippines many of our students, college and high school, told us they were afraid of ghosts, demons, and the types of powers I had just mentioned. They were afraid to go in the dark and they believed many of these things and various superstitions. They then asked us aren't you afraid of these powers that are from the devil? We both told them no and then we used this illustration with them.

If you had a room and in one part of the room all the powers of the devil, the demons, the witches, the evil people, Satan, mediums, monsters, Dracula, those who engage in witchcraft, sorcerers, spiritists, and those who did child sacrifices were over there. They even included some particularly Filipino “monsters” such as molto, white lady, and the aswang. In the other corner of the room was just God and you—just the two of you.

Then we asked them, who would be stronger? The side of the room filled with all the devils and powers of the devil, darkness, and evil or the other side of the room where it is just God and you. After a split second of thinking they replied to us; they and God are stronger. That is right we said so don't you worry about the powers of darkness. We worship the one true and living God and He has all the power, and He will never leave us. Matthew 28:18-20.

When he saw them, they worshiped him; But some doubted. ¹⁸ then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority [power] in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age [world].” Matthew 28:18-20.

We now begin with today's text in Acts 8:9-25

Simon the Sorcerer

⁹Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, ¹⁰and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” ¹¹They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. ¹²But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. ¹⁵When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

²⁰Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! ²¹You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. ²³For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

²⁴Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

²⁵After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

Rick's Part Acts 8:9-17

Simon the Sorcerer

Simon was a fake, fraud, swindler, counterfeit, charlatan, liar, and a pretender. He interests us not only because of the part he plays here in the book of Acts, but because he keeps turning up over and over again in the history of religion.

He is a trickster. Magic is man's attempt to change the natural course of events for his own benefit. It is the imposition of man's will upon a higher will—the Will of God. In Simon's case, as in every other case, it is self-centered. His feats of magic glorified himself. By them he tricked people. He had a large following as these counterfeits often do. These types of people are from the devil. His magic was done to make people think he had special powers. But he had nothing except what Satan would let him have in order to trick people and send them to Hell. A Christian should have nothing to do with these types of people or their belief and/or practices.

8:9 Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great. This man Simon practiced sorcery and he amazed many people. He told them that he was really someone great.

People with deluded, hidden, or secret knowledge often have a puffed-up idea of themselves. They lie and people are often willing to believe a lie.

8:10 and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God." They all were tricked by him and gave him their attention and said that he is rightly called a Great Power of God. They gave up what truth they knew about God and allowed themselves to be tricked into thinking that a Great Power of God, one greater than God, was among them.

8:11 They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. They followed him because they allowed him to trick them with his sorcery (Sorcery: magic, witchery, witchcraft, conjuring—trickery).

8:12 But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. But when Philip came and proclaimed the good news of Jesus the people realize they have been tricked, believed and trusted in Jesus, and became Christians. They were baptized, both men and women. When they heard the truth they were no longer tricked into believing lies.

8:13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. Simon also believed and was baptized. Simon followed Philip everywhere and he was astonished at the great signs and miracles he saw. Simon was astonished at the signs and miracles, not at the message of Philip.

8:14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When word reached the apostles in Jerusalem and heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God and salvation had come to them, they sent Philip and John to Samaria to see for themselves what was happening.

8:15 When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit. When Peter and John arrived in Samaria they prayed for the new believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit as they had before at the day of Pentecost.

8:16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon these new believers they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

8:17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. This expression **placed their hands on them** also described what Jesus did when He healed someone. It also sometimes indicated being taken as a prisoner. In the Old Testament, the offerors or givers of sacrifices laid their hands on the animal as an expression of identification. But in the symbolic sense, it signified the affirmation, support, and identification to someone and his ministry.

Rod's Part Acts 8:18-25

8:18-19 ¹⁸ **When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,** ¹⁹ **and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."**

Simon who had a position somewhat of fame because of his sorcery, recognized that what the Apostles, Peter and John had was far greater than his own personal abilities. He was used to learning the tricks of the occult by having to pay someone. Now is his mind, if he could simply pay these men he too could learn how to lay his hands on someone to perform these impressive miracles (specifically people receiving the Holy Spirit simply by laying hands on them).

But Simon's greatest mistake here was thinking that you could buy the power of the Holy Spirit for personal gain. His sin was a desire to possess this spiritual power for personal ends. He didn't understand that the Holy Spirit was not a power that could be bought or sold and could be wielded at will. Rather, this power was from the third person of the Trinity who indwells the believer and works in them as He rules and directs their life.

The word "*Simony*" is a word that describes the sin of buying or selling church offices or privileges. Church offices and privileges are never for sale without sin being involved. It is God alone who calls a man into the ministry by placing a pure desire of service into his heart. God cannot be bought.

Notice that Simon doesn't just ask but demands that the Apostles give him this ability. Simon is quickly going to learn the fact that the Holy Spirit is not for sale in the next four verses.

8:20-23 ²⁰ **Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!** ²¹ **You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.** ²² **Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.** ²³ **For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."**

Peter's rebuke towards Simon is plain and clear and to the point when he said:

- **20 May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!**
 - God cannot be bought.
 - God is righteous, holy and pure.
 - Simon was essentially tempting God to sin

- **21 You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God.**
 - Peter's words here remind me of Christ's words when He said in Matthew 7:21-23 when He was talking about true and false disciples, "²¹ *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.* ²² *Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?'* ²³ *Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*"
 - These words by Jesus are the saddest words that anyone could ever hear. Simon is listening to a preview of them here.
 - Only a preview but could one day become his reality.
 - But God, speaking through Peter shows His mercy in verse 22.

- **22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.**
 - As long as we have the breath of life, we have the opportunity to repent of our sins.
 - Simon is hearing about the infinite love of God.
 - That all giving agape' love which only God possesses.
 - A love which draws men to God.
 - A love that gives us eternal life through the death of Christ on the cross.

- **23 For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."**
 - Now Peter is getting down to nitty gritty as he tells Simon what his sin is.
 - He is full of bitterness
 - Bitterness is a poison in the heart.
 - And bitterness can grow into other sins if it is not stopped.
 - Bitterness is the root sin that led Cain to kill his brother Abel. He was full of anger and disappointment when he thought he was being treated unfairly by God.
 - The result of bitterness is that you become captive to sin.
 - Being captive to sin is not unique to Simon, it is true for everyone.
 - Sin is a trap of deceit that holds us in bondage
 - Only God is able to release us from its grip as we repent of our sins.
 - Notice that Peter didn't attempt to cast the bitterness or iniquity out of Simon. Instead, Peter called him to repentance, to prayer, and to righteousness as he dwelt with **the thought of his heart.**

8:24 Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

- Here we see the power of the spoken Word of God.
- Peter speaks the truth to Simon, and he responds with contrition in his heart, fearful of the end result that he has offended God.

8:25 After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

- Peter and John didn't stop and bask in the victory of one sinner. No, we read here that they continued preaching the Gospel throughout Samaria as they returned to Jerusalem.
- John 4:35 is a reminder that there are more people who need to hear the Gospel, "*Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!*"
- In the world today there are approximately six billion people living without Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.
- Just as the Apostles never stopped **preaching the Gospel**, neither should we.

My challenge to you today, are you preaching the Gospel? Do you realize that the fields are white unto harvest? I hope so.

Let's close in prayer.

Conclusion

Our prayer here at Sports & Rec Plus for you is that every message we send out is an inspiration and blessing in your personal walk with the Lord. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about this or any of our messages. And take a few minutes to visit our website and see how we can come alongside you, as you take the gospel to your community and the world. Here is our contact information:

Website: sportsrecplus.org
Phone: 571-278-5987
Rick's email: sportsrecplus@cs.com
Rod's email: coloradoredbird@gmail.com