False Faith, Part 2

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[0:00] You remember we left off with Simon the magician and we'll continue on with his story.

We'll read through verse 24. But there was a man named Simon who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the power of God that is called great. And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.
But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed. And after being baptized, he continued with Philip.
And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them, and that they might receive the Holy Spirit.
[1:21] For he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. They laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.

But Peter said to him, May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.
Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you, for I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.
And Simon answered, Pray for me to the Lord that nothing of what you have said may come upon me. So if you remember last week, we talked about Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares.
If you remember in your notes, I gave you a picture of wheat and tare right next to each other, and you guys failed miserably at that test of being able to distinguish what was what, and with intention, right?
[2:32] That was the purpose of Jesus giving that parable, is to show people just how it is in the church, that amongst believers, Satan has placed unbelievers within congregations, and that it's hard for us to know, to distinguish who they are, who is the real thing from the imposter.

And as a matter of fact, as we talked about too, on the day when Jesus judges all men, when He separates those on the right and the left, I think there will be people who are going to be saved, who will be shocked by, and there will be people who aren't going to be saved, that we will likewise also be surprised by.
We don't know, but Jesus certainly always knows. God is never fooled. He knows who are truly His and who are not, who are the imposters. As a matter of fact, another example of that is Judas Iscariot.
We talked about him as well last week, how to the eyes of the world, even to His fellow disciples, He was one of them. As far as they were concerned, He was a follower of Christ, He was a believer, and even when Jesus at the Last Supper said, you know, one of you will betray me, they were all asking Jesus, is it I, Lord? Is it I, Lord?
They weren't pointing the finger at Judas because they didn't know. And so again, Judas shows us how close a person can get to Christ without truly believing in Him, without truly being saved by Him.

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[4:02] And there are other people like Him, and again, those tares who are among the congregation of the Lord's Church even today.

And it's heartbreaking when someone you know who you thought was saved, who maybe you saw come forward on a Sunday, and then you saw them baptized, and then soon after or years later, they depart from the church, and they seem to depart altogether from the faith.
And it's heartbreaking whenever you see somebody do that. And again, it's not because they were saved and they lost their salvation, it's that they never truly were saved to begin with.
And again, we see examples of Judas and others where we can be easily deceived and tricked into thinking somebody is saved when in reality they never truly were.
And so here we have the story of Simon the Magician, and he gives us a deeper insight into what motivates false converts and how we should respond to them should they be exposed to us.
[5:10] And that happens sometimes as well. We realize, obviously, of course, if somebody is not bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives, that's a significant indicator that that person never truly was saved.

And so the main idea of the text that we've read is this. When the gospel is preached, it will produce genuine saving faith in some, and at the same time, it will produce a false sense of salvation in others.
When the gospel is preached, it will produce genuine saving faith in some, and at the same time, it will produce a false sense of salvation in others. And so we'll review here quickly.
There were four motivations that we see from this text of a false conversion. The first two from last week, the first one was that false converts have an incorrect understanding of their own goodness. They have an incorrect understanding of their own goodness. This would be somebody who would say something like, I'm somebody who God should save, right? Because I'm basically a good person.
[6:12] We know that the Bible says that we're not basically good people, right? That we are born under the curse of sin, that we are spiritually depraved, that none seeks for God, that we have all fallen short, way short, as a matter of fact, of God's glory.

And so this person has an incorrect understanding of their own goodness, thinking that I'm somebody who God should save. Second, false converts have an incorrect understanding of salvation.
Again, this relates to the first. They have a false or an incorrect understanding of salvation, basically saying, and since I am such a good person, I should be saved based upon my merits, right? Based upon all these good things that I've done. We know that salvation doesn't work that way. Let's look at Ephesians 2, 1-5 and see from God's Word why that's the case.
Ephesians 2, 1-5. And there it talks about our spiritual condition prior to conversion. And there the Apostle Paul says, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.
[7:40] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. And then he brings this truth home, punctuates it by saying, By grace you have been saved.

Right? Not because you were good, not because you deserved it, but all because of God and His amazing grace. And so now we see the third here, incorrect understanding, and that is that false converts have an incorrect understanding of the Holy Spirit.
They have an incorrect understanding of the Holy Spirit. So let's read verses 14 through 19 again. There again it says, Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for He had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.

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So the Holy Spirit is often the forgotten member of the Trinity, and that's typically because Christians don't have as firm a grasp on Him and what He does as they do with God the Father and God the Son.
[9:09] The Holy Spirit is much more mysterious and unfamiliar to them, and so what's happened as a result of that is that many in the churches either don't reference the Holy Spirit very much or not enough, or they attribute things to Him that He isn't responsible for doing.

So it's usually one way or the other. In verses 14 through 15, there are three reasons why Peter and John were sent to Samaria.
Actually, yeah, there are three. First, they came to aid Philip, right? Many Samaritans were hearing the gospel, and many of them were being saved, and Philip is one man, and so he needs help with them, with the reaping of the spiritual harvest that is taking place there, and there is no better helpers for Philip than Peter and John at this point in time, right?
Two powerful men of God, two powerful apostles. So they came to help, to give him aid. Second, they came to sanction and bless the work that Philip had been doing there in Samaria among the Samaritans.
I guess this would be something like when the president comes and he gives an endorsement of a candidate who's running for office, right? This is a guy who we support the work that he's doing, and so they're going there to sanction, to bless the work that Philip had been doing.
[10:33] And then third, they came to affirm that the Samaritans were included in the church of Jesus Christ and to welcome them and that they would also receive the Holy Spirit.

Now, these verses have caused and are still causing a great deal of confusion for many in the church, though that shouldn't be the case if we're digging into God's Word and we're looking for a clear understanding of what exactly is happening here.
Many have read this and have come to the conclusion that Christians receive the Holy Spirit after they've been converted. So there is a group out there that says and uses this text as their proof that you're saved first and then later you receive the Holy Spirit.
They say, again, here is a clear example of people who are saved, yet they have not received the Holy Spirit yet. So when we come to confusing or difficult passages of Scripture such as this, what we need to do, what we must do, is turn to the rest of Scripture to interpret what this Scripture is saying.
So you might hear, you've probably heard somebody say before, Scripture interprets Scripture. So when we come to these confusing or passages where we're not certain, we don't go within ourselves to what our own opinions are, right, or to somebody else's opinions, we go back to the Bible.
[12:05] When we read what the rest of the Bible has to say about whatever issue is being discussed there, and we allow God's Word to interpret God's Word for us.

That's always what we should do with difficult passages of Scripture. And again, if we do that, we would see that that opinion cannot be. Look at Romans 8, 9.
It says there, You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.
So there it says, If you're saved, if you're truly saved, then you receive the Holy Spirit at your conversion, not sometime later. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, then Paul is saying, then that means that you're not truly saved.
2 Corinthians 6, 11. There it says, The Holy Spirit is the agent of salvation's transformation. There it says, But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.
[13:09] So what is going on here? Was there some deficiency in the Samaritans' water baptism? Did the Holy Spirit's delay in coming upon the Samaritans indicate that their conversion was not genuine?

Well, first of all, there was nothing improper with their water baptism. There was no violation of Jesus' command, right? Remember in Matthew 28, the Great Commission, to go and to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
That's what had happened here already in Samaria. So there's no violation taking place there.
Second, the subsequent baptism of the Holy Spirit indicates that the conversion of the Samaritans was genuine and that He'd already been active in their salvation.

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Right? So why is the Holy Spirit going to be able to be received by them in this way unless they've truly already been saved, which was the case for them? R.C. Sproul preached a sermon that we've actually watched here on Monday night, and that's Undervaluing Pentecost is the title of it.
It's a good message, certainly, to listen to. And he delivered that at the Strange Fire Conference, so he actually wasn't there in person. He delivered it by a satellite, but you know what I mean, and that's a detail that really isn't all that important.
[14:30] But you can check it out, and I think that you should. There he points out that there is something more crucial happening here than we realize.

That is that the gospel had crossed over into a new ethnic group, and one that the Jewish believers of the church would have found very difficult to accept at the time.
because as you remember, Jews had no dealings with Samaritans back during this age.
Samaritans were a part of the Northern Kingdom, and to Jewish people of the Southern Kingdom, they remember the Assyrians came in and took them over, and then they intermarried, and so they viewed them as being unpure.
And there's other issues about places of worship, and so there's just a lot of animosity between these two groups of people. That's why it was such a big deal when Jesus goes and visits with the woman at the well because she's a Maritan.
Not only did he step foot in Samaria, which back in that time, again, the Jews would do anything not only to avoid Samaritans, but to avoid Samaria, the country.
[15:44] They wouldn't even step foot in it because they thought it was so beneath them and Samaritans were so beneath them. So not only is he in the country, but he's actually talking to a Samaritan, and not only is he talking to a Samaritan, he's talking to a woman, and of course you know her past.

And so it's a pretty amazing thing what Jesus does, but there he's preparing, right? Or they should have realized that this was Jesus' plan all along, from the very beginning, actually, to make one church of many nations.
So they were upset with the Samaritans, but now they're seeing that the gospel is going to the Samaritans, it's reaching to the Samaritans, and that they are believing it, and that the gospel has crossed over and reached a new ethnic group.
The pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the Samaritans powerfully demonstrated their equality with the Jerusalem Christians, and again, their full participation in the church.
And it was appropriate that this symbolism occur at the hands of the leaders of the church. As God had declared his presence among the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem at the first Pentecost in Acts 2, so he affirmed his near list to the Samaritan believers here, and what R.C. Sproul says is the second Pentecost, and he actually says there's four in Acts.
[17:07] There's four different people groups. There was the Jews, and we have Pentecost there happening in Acts 2. Then there's the Samaritans, which we see here in Acts 8.

There's the God-fearers who are Gentile converts to Judaism, and that's in Acts 10. And then finally, the Gentiles in Acts 19. So we see in each of those cases where the Holy Spirit is received in this way, it's because the gospel is reaching a new ethnic group and bringing that group into the church, or people from that group, I should say, into the church.
All four people groups received their own Pentecost, and that established the church's unity. To demonstrate the unity, it was imperative that there be some replication in each instance of what had occurred at Pentecost with the believing Jews.
By delaying the Spirit's coming until Peter and John arrived, God preserved the unity of the church. The apostles needed to see for themselves and give firsthand testimony back to the Jews in Jerusalem that the Spirit had in fact come upon the Samaritans as they had experienced back in Acts 2.
The Samaritans also needed to learn that they were subject to the apostles' authority. The Jewish believers and the Samaritans were thus linked together in one body, as we've already discussed.
[18:34] The God-fearers and the Gentiles would soon be brought in as well through a similar demonstration of the Holy Spirit. The Great Commission was being fulfilled.

The gospel was going out into the nations, and the church was being established. Not a church made up of one nation or of one ethnic group, but a church that would be comprised of people from all tribes and all peoples and all tongues.

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The same thing that happened at Pentecost in Acts 2 was happening here, and as Simon witnessed it, he became overwhelmed by what he was seeing, and he was consumed with a desire to wield this kind of power for himself.
And so, he offers to pay the apostles for this power, right? He wants to be able to call down the Holy Spirit upon people as well.
He completely misunderstands the Holy Spirit, right, and what is going on here. He treated Peter and John as if they were fellow practitioners of magic. He must have thought in his eyes, you know, the way magicians work now is similar to the way they worked back then.
[19:49] They saw a trick, and they were impressed by it, and if they couldn't figure out how to do it themselves, they would pay their fellow magician to reveal the secrets to them, and that still happens today.

And so, in Simon's way of thinking, Peter and John were doing something that he couldn't replicate, and so he thought, I'll pay him to be able to get access to the Holy Spirit that they have.
But again, we see here that nothing that God has, that nothing God has, I should say, is for sale. Nothing God has is for sale, and certainly not the Holy Spirit.
Again, there is nothing that sinful man has to offer God. The only thing that sinful man has to offer God is what? His sin. Yeah, that's the only thing we have to offer God, is our sin, and nothing else. Salvation and spiritual blessings are poured out freely from him. Thank God for that. So, as you are up late at night, if that's you, and you're surfing through the television, and you see these tele-evangelists come on, and they start saying things to you like, well, if you just send X amount of dollars to me, I can heal you, or I can cause you to prosper.
[21:21] A term that, if you hear it, should automatically throw up a red flag is seed money. Okay? Anytime you hear seed money, turn the channel, or turn off your TV for that matter, and pray and go to bed, right?

But don't give your money to these guys because they're false teachers, they're corrupt, and they're going to take advantage of you, and they cannot, they do not have access to the Holy Spirit, and they can, you know, pour out him in some miraculous way.
If you would just give them enough money, right, they'll make you be able to walk. If you're paralyzed, cure you of cancer, whatnot. You've heard it all. These guys are scam artists, and, you know, you, in a way, fear for them for their day of judgment that they're going to have to stand before the Lord and give an account for what they have done.
One of these guys that I always remember is a guy, he actually called himself an apostle, the apostle Don. Don Stewart, I think, is his name. It's been a while since I saw him last, but his big deal is the prayer rags, the prayer towels.
Have you ever seen those green prayer rags that he has? Okay, it's good. You haven't watched him. Okay. Well, we need those. People need to be healed.
[22:41] But that's his thing is he's got these green rags, and he says there's green. I mean, at least he comes out and says it because green's the color of money. And so he says if you'll call the number and make a donation that you'll receive one of those rags in the mail.

And I did call, not to get it, but, you know, because I was curious. And they do ask you. They ask you for a donation about five times before they'll give you, they'll ask for your address to send the towel.
And I don't remember that I actually went all the way there, but if that was the case, I never got my rag. So I can't help you. But I have to ask Mike. We'll get it.
We'll have to borrow some of Mike's. But I guess any old green towel will work, but he said he has to pray for it. So when you see stuff like that, now that one's pretty obvious.
You see that guy and you think, this guy is a complete sham. Others are more subtle and more crafty, and they deceive many more. And if you're reading the word and if you're walking with the Lord, you can still identify them very clearly by their false teaching.
[23:50] So Peter's reaction to Simon's offer is very, very harsh. He says, may your silver perish with you because you thought that you could obtain the gift of God with money.

You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. So Peter, being discerning right, he knows where Simon's heart is.
He knows that Simon's not truly a believer. He knows that this guy is a false convert, a false believer, and he calls him out on it. And he basically tells him, you know, to heck with you and your

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money because you have no part or portion in what is happening here.
And so he's very harsh and he's very stern with him and justifiably so. And again, Peter reveals the truth that Simon, though he believed, right, if we go back up here, it says that he was baptized, that he believed.
But again, since we know the Bible, we see that also even demons believe, right? But they're not saved. And so we see that even though Simon claimed to believe, he certainly was not saved.
[25:01] He did not have saving faith in Jesus as his Lord and as his Savior. As such, again, he never truly was saved because his heart, as Peter reveals to him, was never really right before God.

And why was that? Because he had never repented of his sins. And because he'd never repented, he never truly had been born again. Simon's view of the Spirit as a commodity to be bought and added to his repertoire revealed that he, again, was not a true believer.
And so here we come to the fourth incorrect understanding, and that's that false converts have an incorrect view or an incorrect understanding of sin. Verses 22 through 24.
And so Peter, again, still addressing Simon, calls him to repent. He says, Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that if possible the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.
For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. And Simon answered, Pray for me to the Lord that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.
[26:20] So again, here we see the incorrect view of not only his goodness to begin with, also he had an incorrect view of salvation, also he had an incorrect view of the Holy Spirit, and finally we see that false converts have an incorrect view of sin.

Peter follows his condemnation of Simon with a call for him to repent. He challenges Simon to have a correct view of sin, one that sees it for what it is, and then in seeing it for what it is turns from it and agrees with what God says about sin and turns the other way.
If Simon would repent the evil intentions of his heart, then Peter says God would forgive him. So the gall of bitterness there, that's a strange term that we don't use often today.
What is that talking about? Well, gall refers to a bitter ingredient or bile. So it's a nasty taste.
Let's just say that. It's a gross, nasty, bitter taste that you can't wait to get out of your mouth. And so he takes that term gall and he couples it with bitterness, and there it conveys an extremely bitter, harsh, and distasteful condition.
[27:42] And it vividly pictures the reality of one in the bondage of iniquity, which means if you're in the bondage of iniquity that you're a slave to sin.

And so that's what Peter is saying here. Everyone is a slave in the spiritual sense, the Bible says. Everyone is a slave in the spiritual sense.
You are either, we are either slaves to sin, which is our natural state as we've talked about, Ephesians 2, or we are slaves to Christ. It's one or the other.
There is no third way. You're a slave to sin or you're a slave to Christ. The writers of the New Testament willingly declared their status as slaves of Christ.
If you remember, Paul opens his letter to the Romans by referring to himself as a slave of Jesus Christ and his letter to Titus by calling himself a slave of God.
[28:38] James opens his epistle the same way, saying, James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 8, 34, Jesus tells the unbelieving Pharisees, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

He uses the analogy of a slave and his master to make the point that a slave obeys his master because he belongs to him, right? You, as a slave, will be obedient to your master.
And if your master is sin, then you are a slave to it. Slaves have no will of their own. They are literally in bondage to their masters. So when sin is your master, that means that you are unable to resist it.
But, by the power of Christ to overcome the power of sin, Romans 6-18 says, you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.
So once we come to Christ in repentance and receive forgiveness for our sins, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit who comes to live within us, comes to dwell within us, and it is by His power that we are then able to resist sinning and as a result of that become slaves to righteousness.

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[29:58] Simon, however, was not persuaded. Although he was shaken and he was afraid by what Peter had to say to him in his harsh rebuke, he still refused to ask the Lord for forgiveness.

Notice that? He doesn't drop to his knees in conviction that, right, I was wrong, I had this all misunderstood, and I realize that I'm a sinner.
And I realize that I never truly believed in the first place. No, he doesn't do that. He doesn't repent. Instead, he asks Peter that, you know, would you pray for me that nothing of what you have said may come upon me?
And so here we see again that his only concern was to escape the consequences of sin. That's really what he was concerned about is just escaping sin's consequences.
True repentance, however, consists of more than grief over our sin. 2 Corinthians 7, 9-10, let me read that to you. As it is, I rejoice not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting.
[31:03] for you felt as godly grief so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

And so we see that Simon's grief is in that worldly category. True repentance cannot occur apart from such a genuine sorrow over one's sin.
Simon was not genuinely sorrowful over his sin against the holy God, but sorrowful over the fact that such a holy God exists. I'll say that again. Simon was not genuinely sorrowful over his sin committed against the holy God as much as he was sorrowful over the fact that such a holy God existed.
And so, that is the motivation behind a false convert. And so hopefully that helps us, right, as Christians in the church whenever one such assignment is revealed within our own congregation to understand more of their motivation for why that is.
We understand that it can happen. And so what do we do if it does happen? Well, we do what Peter did. We speak the truth. We do so in a loving way, right, but yet are stern with our rebuke.
[32:24] and then we pray for the person hoping that they will hopefully repent of their sins and be saved and know Christ as Lord and Savior.

And so that's the example of a false convert. And the next time that we meet, we'll be talking about overviewing an example of the conversion of a true believer with the Ethiopian unit.

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