



## NEW FRONTIERS

“So Close But  
Yet So Far”

Acts 8:9-24

June 19, 2016

### A Counterfeit Conversion – Simon

*John 2:23-25; James 2:19-20; Matt 13: 3-9, 18-23; 13:24-30,36-43; 7:21; Titus 1:16; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15*

- ✓ He was a Conjurer                    *Exodus 7:8-13, 20-22*
- ✓ He was Full of Charisma & Charm
- ✓ He was Calculated & Clever
- ✓ He was Comfortable
- ✓ He was Curious
- ✓ He was Carnal
- ✓ He Craved a Cheap Gospel

*The Gifts of God Are Always Free*

- ✓ He Compromised
- ✓ He Chose to Conform Rather Than Be Transformed
- ✓ He Covered Rather Than Confess His Sin
- ✓ He Contaminated the Gospel

### An Authentic Conversion – Ethiopian Eunuch

*1 Corinthians 2:1-3; Ephesians 2:8-10; Mark 8:34-38;  
Romans 12:1-2*

- ✓ I Am Chosen and Called
- ✓ I Consider the Cost of the Cross
- ✓ I Am Convicted Over My Sin
- ✓ I Confess Jesus As Savior & Choose to Follow Him as Lord
- ✓ I Cede Control to the Holy Spirit
- ✓ I Am Converted & Changed
- ✓ I Am Committed & Continue in the Faith
- ✓ I Am Commissioned to Go
- ✓ I Am Certain of My Salvation

**You Can't Have Conversion Without Authentic Change =  
Transformation**

## **NEW FRONTIERS**

“So Close, But Yet So Far: Is It Counterfeit or Is It Conversion?”

*Acts 8:8-24*

June 19, 2106 A.M. Service

### **Quick Background Review of Acts 8:4-8**

### **Genuine Life Change Comes Down to the Condition of the Heart**

#### **A Counterfeit Conversion – Simon**

*John 2:23-25; James 2:19-20; Matt 13: 3-9, 18-23; 13:24-30,36-43; 7:21; Titus 1:16; 2 Corinthians 11:14-15*

- ✓ He was a Conjuror *Exodus 7:8-13, 20-22*
- ✓ He was Full of Charisma & Charm
- ✓ He was Calculated & Clever
- ✓ He was Comfortable
- ✓ He was Curious
- ✓ He was Carnal
- ✓ He Craved a Cheap Gospel (gospel could be purchased or power of the Holy Spirit) The Gifts of God Are Always Free
- ✓ He Compromised - not surrendered
- ✓ He Chose to Conform Rather Than Be Transformed
- ✓ He Covered Rather Than Confess His Sin
- ✓ He Contaminated the Gospel

#### **A True Conversion – Ethiopian Eunuch**

*1 Corinthians 2:1-3; Ephesians 2:8-10; Mark 8:34-38; Romans 12:1-2*

- ✓ I am Chosen and Called
- ✓ I Consider the Cost of the Cross
- ✓ I Am Convicted Over My Sin
- ✓ I Confess Jesus As Savior & Choose to Follow Him as Lord
- ✓ I Cede Control to the Holy Spirit
- ✓ I Am Converted & Changed (Peter & John – Luke 9:52-55)
- ✓ I Am Committed & Continue in the Faith
- ✓ I Am Commissioned to Go

✓ I Am Certain of My Salvation

## You Can't Have Conversion Without Genuine Change = Transformation

### A Clever Deceiver - Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9-25)

It is a basic principle in Scripture that wherever God sows His true believers, Satan will eventually sow his counterfeits ([Matt 13:24-30,36-43](#)). This was true of the ministry of John the Baptist ([Matt 3:7ff](#)) and Jesus ([Matt 23:15,33; John 8:44](#)), and it would be true of Paul's ministry also ([Acts 13:6ff; 2 Cor 11:1-4,13-15](#)). The enemy comes as a lion to devour, and when that approach fails, he comes as a serpent to deceive. Satan's tool in this case was a sorcerer named Simon.

The word translated "bewitched" in [Acts 8:9](#) and [11](#) simply means "astounded, confounded." It is translated "wondered" in [Acts 8:13](#). The people were amazed at the things that Simon did and, therefore, they believed the things that he said. They considered him "the great power of God." Simon's sorcery was energized by Satan ([2 Thess 2:1-12](#)) and was used to magnify himself, while Philip's miracles were empowered by God and were used to glorify Christ. Simon started to lose his following as the Samaritans listened to Philip's messages, believed on Jesus Christ were born again, and were baptized.

What does it mean that "Simon himself believed"? ([Acts 8:13](#)) We can answer that question best by asking another one: What was the basis of his "faith"? His faith was not in the Word of God, but in the miracles he saw Philip perform; and there is no indication that Simon repented of his sins. He certainly did not believe with all his heart ([Acts 8:37](#)). His faith was like that of the people of Jerusalem who witnessed our Lord's miracles ([John 2:23-25](#)), or even like that of the demons ([James 2:19](#)). Simon continued with Philip, not to hear the Word and learn more about Jesus Christ, but to witness the miracles and perhaps learn how they were done.

It is important to note that the Samaritans did not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when they believed. It was necessary for two of the Apostles, Peter and John, to come from Jerusalem, put their hands on the converts, and impart to them the gift of the Spirit. Why?

Because God wanted to unite the Samaritan believers with the original Jewish church in Jerusalem. He did not want two churches that would perpetuate the division and conflict that had existed for centuries. Jesus had given Peter the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" ([Matt 16:13-20](#)), which meant that Peter had the privilege of "opening the door of faith" to others. He opened the door to the Jews at Pentecost, and now he opened the door to the Samaritans. Later, he would open the door of faith to the Gentiles ([Acts 10](#)).

Remember too that the first ten chapters of Acts record a period of transition, from the Jew to the Samaritan to the Gentile. God's pattern for today is given in [Acts 10](#): the sinner hears the Gospel, believes, receives the gift of the Spirit, and then is baptized. It is dangerous to base any doctrine or practice only on what is recorded in [Acts 1-10](#), for you might be building on that which was temporary and transitional. Those who claim we must be baptized to receive the gift of the Spirit ([Acts 2:38](#)) have a hard time explaining what happened to the Samaritans; and those who claim we must have "the laying on of hands" to receive the Spirit have a difficult time with [Acts 10](#). Once you accept [Acts 1-10](#) as a transitional period in God's plan, with [Acts 10](#) being the climax, the problems are solved.

The wickedness of Simon's heart was fully revealed by the ministry of the two apostles. Simon not only wanted to perform miracles, but he also wanted the power to convey the gift of the Holy Spirit to others - and he was quite willing to pay for this power! It is this passage that gives us the word *simony*, which means "the buying and selling of church offices or privileges it.

As you study the Book of Acts, you will often find the Gospel in conflict with money and "big business." Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives because they lied about their gift ([Acts 5:1-11](#)). Paul put a fortune-teller out of business in Philippi and ended up in jail ([Acts 16:16-24](#)). He also gave the silversmiths trouble in Ephesus and helped cause a riot (Acts .19:23-41). The early church had its priorities straight: it was more important to preach the Word than to win the support of the wealthy and influential people of the world.

Peter's words to Simon give every indication that the sorcerer was not a converted man. "Thy money perish with thee!" is pretty strong language to use with a believer. He had neither "Part or lot in this matter" ("this word") and his heart was not right before God. While it is

not out of place for believers to repent (see [Rev 2-3](#)), the command to repent is usually given to unbelievers. The word *thought* in [Acts 8:22](#) means "Plot or scheme" and is used in a bad sense. The fact that Simon was "in the gall of bitterness" ([Deut 29:18](#); [Heb 12:15](#)) and "the bond of iniquity" would indicate that he had never truly been born again.

Simon's response to these severe words of warning was not at all encouraging. He was more concerned about avoiding judgment than getting right with God! There is no evidence that he repented and sought forgiveness. A sinner who wants the prayers of others but who will not pray himself is not going to enter God's kingdom.

This episode only shows how close a person can come to salvation and still not be converted. Simon heard the Gospel, saw the miracles, gave a profession of faith in Christ, and was baptized; and yet he was never born again. He was one of Satan's clever counterfeits; and, had Peter not exposed the wickedness of his heart, Simon would have been accepted as a member of the Samaritan congregation!

Even though the persecution was still going on, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel in "many villages of the Samaritans" as they went their way. They lost no opportunity to share the Good News with others now that the doors were open in Samaria.