

Motivation for Ministry (Acts 8:9-25)^a

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Context

1. Stephen witnesses before the religious council and is martyred
2. Persecution intensifies in Jerusalem
3. Believers scattered
4. Philip goes down to Samaria, preaches the gospel, performs miracles

Passage

1. ***"[9] But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, [10] to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." [11] And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. [12] But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. [13] Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. [14] Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, [15] who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. [16] For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. [17] Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. [18] And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, [19] saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." [20] But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! [21] You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. [22] Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. [23] For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." [24] Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me." [25] So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans."***¹

Focus on two aspects from this passage

1. **FIRST: the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans**
2. **SECOND: Simon's Motivation for Ministry**

FIRST: the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans

1. Context - initial giving of the Spirit to Samaria

A. Acts records the fulfillment of several predictions made by Jesus

I. Prediction #1 - the 4th chapter of John

- a. The Samaritan woman at the well (John 4)
- b. John 4:20-21 - The Samaritan woman said, *“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”* Jesus said to her, *“Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.”*
- c. Not on “this mountain” — the Samaritan Temple on Mt. Gerizim.
- d. Nor in Jerusalem - the Jewish Temple
- e. Jesus predicts a different temple/worship arrangement, not tied to a physical building: the temple of the believer, permanently indwelt with the Holy Spirit

II. Prediction #2 - the 7th chapter of John's Gospel

- a. John 7:38-39 - Jesus said, *“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”* But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
- b. Elsewhere in scripture, living water flows from the presence of God within the temple (Eze. 47:1-9; Zec. 14:8; cf. Gen. 2:10; Rev. 22:1)
- c. A first hint: the Holy Spirit will take up residence within believers, forming a temple

III. Prediction #3 - the 1st chapter of the book of Acts

- a. **Acts 1:8** - *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).*

2. Dependent upon the arrival of Peter, with keys to the kingdom

- A. Under Steven's ministry, Samaritans are coming to faith and undergoing water baptism. But the giving of the Spirit to the Samaritans is dependent upon the arrival of Peter and John.
- B. **Matthew 16:18-19** - *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Mat. 16:18-19).*
- C. Peter is present when each of the three people groups (Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles) first receive the Spirit (Acts 2:14; 8:14; 10:44 cf. Acts 15:14)
- D. Paul is converted in Acts 9 and is commissioned as an Apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; Rom. 11:13; 15:16; 2Ti. 1:11).
- I. Yet, in Acts 10, it is Peter who brings the gospel (and Spirit baptism) to the Gentiles at the House of Cornelius (Acts 10).

3. Salvation order: relation of belief, water baptism, and Spirit baptism

- A. **Belief/faith always precedes water baptism**
- B. **Sometimes in Acts: water baptism precedes Spirit baptism**
- I. 1) belief; 2) water baptism; 3) Spirit baptism
- a. Disciples of Jesus (Acts 2)
- b. Samaritans (Acts 8)
- c. Disciples of John (Acts 19)
- C. **Elsewhere in Acts: Spirit baptism precedes water baptism**
- I. 1/2) simultaneous belief/Spirit baptism; 3) water baptism

a. Gentiles in Acts 10

D. What does this variation tell us?

E. Acts is a transitional book: not a book to scrutinize in isolation to develop doctrinal practices which apply for the entire Church age

- I. Spirit baptism, which begin in Acts 2, had never occurred before - establishing the “body of Christ” which is the Church
- II. Tongues associated with Spirit baptism only recorded in the occasions of the initial reception of the gospel by specific people groups Jesus mentioned: Jews, Samaritans (half Jews), Gentiles, and disciples of John at Ephesus
- III. Acts spans a period of 25 years², but only 3 times is there any record of tongues being spoken (four if we include the implied tongues here)
 - a. Pentecost, Acts 2 (AD 33)
 - b. Acts 8? (AD 36), 3 years after Pentecost
 - c. Acts 10 (AD 39), 6 years after Pentecost
 - d. Acts 19 (AD 52-53), 19-20 years after Pentecost
 - e. Why no mention of tongues following the preaching of the gospel in any of the other missionary journey events spanning some 25 years?
 - i. Cities such as: Antioch in Pisidia, Antioch, Athens, Berea, Corinth, Cyprus, Derbe, Ephesus, Iconium, Lystra, Miletus, Nicaea, Patara, Pergamum, Philippi, Smyrna, Tarsus, Thessalonica, Troas
 - f. The foundation of the Church having been laid thousands of years ago, Spirit baptism is now simultaneous with belief and unaccompanied by tongues
 - i. This also appears to have been the case for the thousands who came to faith following Peter's preaching on the Day of Pentecost

4. Purpose of tongues in relation to the giving of the Spirit

A. Tongues almost certainly spoken (what did Simon see in verse 18—how did he know the Holy Spirit was given?).

B. Purpose

Chapter	Region	Who	Tongues	Sign
Acts 2	Jerusalem	Jews	human languages	Sign to waiting disciples: the <i>Promise of the Father</i> had arrived. Sign to visiting and local Jews: judgment of Israel, God turning to foreigners. Endorsement of Peter and those who were Spirit-baptized.
Acts 8	Samaria	Samaritans	?	Sign to Samaritans: dependence upon laying on of Jewish hands: <i>salvation is of the Jews</i> (John 4:22).
Acts 10	Caesarea (beginning of the <i>ends of the Earth</i> , Acts 1:8)	Gentiles (Italians in Caesarea)	human language	Sign to Jews: Gentiles given salvation (Acts 11:15-18).
Acts 19	Ephesus (more <i>ends of the Earth</i> , Acts 1:8)	Disciples of John the Baptist	human language	Sign to John's disciples: authority of Paul, Spirit baptism by Christ now supersedes water baptism by John.

SECOND: Simon's Motivation for Ministry

1. Simon's occult ministry

- A. Practiced *sorcery*: μαγεύων [*mageuōn*], from which we get the term *magician*
- B. Not parlor tricks - true occult power
- C. Pharaoh's magicians
 - I. Turned wooden rods into serpents (Ex. 7:11)
 - II. Turned water into blood (Ex. 7:22)
 - III. Brought up frogs on the land of Egypt (Ex. 8:7)

2. Motivation of Simon's ministry

- A. Claimed that he was someone great — *to whom they all gave heed*
- B. *This man is the great power of God*
- C. The *heeded him* because he astonished them

D. Focus is on self: attention, influence, power

3. Simon's 'Conversion'

- A. Text states, *Simon himself also believed . . . and . . . was baptized (Acts 8:13)*
- B. *Also, he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs*
 - I. Perhaps Simon had been taken out of the occult world (this is debated)
 - II. But the occult world had not been taken out of Simon
 - III. Attention drawn to the miracles and signs, and especially the ability to bestow the Holy Spirit through laying on of hands (Acts 8:18)
 - IV. A pattern within Christianity: people initially come to faith, but their thinking has not yet been renewed by God's Word
- C. Occult power is inferior to the power of God
 - I. Aaron's rod (in serpent form) swallowed up the rods of the magicians (Ex. 7:12)
 - II. Unable to bring forth lice, Magicians proclaim, *This is the finger of God!* (Ex. 8:18-19)
 - III. Magicians inflicted with boils, unable to serve (Ex. 9:11)
- D. Motivated by desire for power
 - I. Acts 8:18-19 - *And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."*
 - II. Two issues in this verse: (1) attempting to obtain spiritual authority through bribery; (2) ministry motivated by power rather than service.

4. Simony - derived from the account in this passage

A. Encyclopedia Britannica³

- I. **Definition:** *Buying or selling of something spiritual or closely connected with the spiritual. . . . The name is taken from Simon Magus (Acts 8:18), who endeavoured to buy from the Apostles the power of conferring the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*
 - II. *Simony, in the form of buying holy orders, or church offices, was virtually unknown in the first three centuries of the Christian church, but it became familiar when the church had positions of wealth and influence to bestow. . . . From an occasional scandal, simony became widespread in Europe in the 9th and 10th centuries. Pope Gregory VII (1073–85) rigorously attacked the problem, and the practice again became occasional rather than normal. After the 16th century, it gradually disappeared in its most flagrant forms with the disendowment and secularization of church property.*
- B. Often involves exchange of money**
- I. **Paying for a position in the church hierarchy, historically in the Roman Catholic church**
 - II. **Demanding payment for spiritual work:** “selling of religious articles that have been blessed such as chaplets, crucifixes, holy pictures, relics, religious candles, religious medals, rosaries, scapulars, statues, water fonts, [etc.]”⁴
 - III. **Selling forgiveness for sins:** “the buying of indulgences, obtaining an absolution from the Sacrament of Confession”⁵
- C. Broader application: attempting to obtain that which is spiritual, using non-spiritual (or unbiblical) means — not necessarily money**
- I. **Contributions - influential and successful business leader obtains elder board position**
 - II. **Family connections - son or daughter of pastor (nepotism), family member of influential board member or donor**
 - III. **Charisma - using charm, eloquence, or personality to obtain position**
 - IV. **Academic standing - attendance at an influential school, scholarly achievements, advanced academic training**
 - a. **Men who have trained at various schools, making them qualified the “job” (as they see it), but who have not been born-again!**

D. Results: the proverbial fox is in the hen-house!

- I. Seeking position for power, influence, notoriety, attention
- II. Climbing the ladder in the Christian world, each position as a means toward a selfish end
- III. Vested interest in keeping the flock focused on the shepherd, promoting continued dependence rather than leading the flock toward freedom and strength
 - a. Like Simon, “This man is the great power of God” (Acts 8:10)
 - b. The minister is the “anointed one” — the “dispenser” of insight, power, discernment, an essential channel to God
 - c. An age-old problem, even among the shepherds of Israel
 - i. Isaiah 56:10-11 - *His watchmen are blind, They are all ignorant; They are all dumb dogs, They cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs Which never have enough. And they are shepherds Who cannot understand; They all look to their own way, Every one for his own gain, From his own territory.*
 - ii. Ezekiel 34:2-5 - *Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered." ' '*

5. Antidote to Simony: Faithfulness

- A. Faithfulness is a key attribute of God, Psalm 37:3 - *Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.*
 - I. Safety (ability to trust)
 - II. Peace (dwelling in the land)
 - III. Well fed (feeding on His faithfulness)

IV. Stability, a safe place to grow in the Lord

B. Difficult to find

- I. Proverbs **20:6** - *Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man?*

C. A primary qualification for shepherds,

- I. 2 Timothy **2:2** - *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

D. A primary qualification for service to God

- I. Matthew **25:21** - *His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*
- II. Promotion in God's economy is based on faithful service, rather than worldly power, influence, notoriety
- III. Faithful - reliable, principled, trustworthy
- IV. Servant - other-centered rather than self-centered

E. Cognizant of a stewardship (see Paul), as a caretaker, like the Apostle Paul

- I. 1 Corinthians **4:1-2** - *Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.*
- II. Even if unpleasant, stays in the saddle
 - a. 1 Corinthians **9:16-17** - *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.*

F. Many of today's cultural ills are due, in part, to a pandemic lack of faithfulness

- I. Individuals - lack of commitment, lack of principles, self-centered

II. Marriage - lack of commitment, self-centered**III. Pastors and congregations****IV. Business (bosses, employees)****V. Government****6. Attributes of a faithful ministry**

A. Loyal - the ministry has an allegiance to Christ and to the sheep

B. Trustworthy - no hidden motives, what-you-see is what-you-get (WYSIWYG)

C. In it for the long haul

D. Steadfast

I. Service is not circumstantial — not conditioned upon changing influences

II. A measure of immunity to external forces (money, prestige, power, opportunities which lead away from service)

III. Staying power: if gets temporarily knocked down, gets back up

E. See themselves within a larger context: a stream of purpose, historical context

I. “For such a time as this” (Est. 4:14), however minor or mundane their part may appear to be

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Endnotes:

1. [NKJV, Acts 8:9-25](#)
 2. AD 33-58
 3. Ref-0825, Simony
 4. [CatholicDoors.com](http://www.catholicdoors.com/faq/qu237.htm), <http://www.catholicdoors.com/faq/qu237.htm>, accessed 20150205.
 5. [CatholicDoors.com](http://www.catholicdoors.com/faq/qu237.htm), <http://www.catholicdoors.com/faq/qu237.htm>
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Sources:

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Ref-0825 Theodore Pappas, ed., *Encyclopedia Britannica 2002 Deluxe Edition CDROM* (np: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1994-2002).

Links Mentioned Above

- a** - See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/25_Acts_8_9-25/index.htm.
- b** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- c** - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.