

(Based on Acts 8:9-23)

Shalom! What is your reason for following Jesus or attending church? Is your heart truly upright before God?

Motivation Matters to God

In the New Testament, we read about a man named Simon the Sorcerer, who practiced witchcraft and deceived many people in Samaria. He claimed to be someone great, and the people believed him, saying, *“This man is the power of God that is called Great”* (Acts 8:10). He amazed them with his sorcery for a long time.

However, when he heard the Gospel preached by Philip, he believed and was baptized. But here’s the problem: his inward motive wasn’t repentance or salvation—he wanted more power. He believed in Jesus not for the forgiveness of sins, but so he could perform greater miracles. He saw Christianity as a means to enhance his influence and sorcery.

Outward Acts Don’t Equal True Faith

Dear reader, confessing Jesus or getting baptized does not automatically mean you are accepted by the Lord. There must be an inward transformation—a genuine change of heart.

Simon had simply exchanged his “witchcraft cloak” for a “religious robe,” continuing his pursuit of power under a new disguise.

Let’s read what the Bible says:

Acts 8:9-23 (ESV)

9 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.

10 They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.”

11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.

12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles

performed, he was amazed.

14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit,

16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!"

21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

Many people today are like Simon:

- Some are traditional healers or spiritualists who join churches and even get baptized—but not because they want Christ. They want more spiritual influence or to mask their true identity.
- Some are politicians who join churches to gain public favor, not because they want to surrender their lives to Christ.
- Others attend church because:
 - They're looking for a spouse.
 - They think it'll help them get jobs or wealth.
 - They want to show off their new clothes.

- They're lonely and seek crowds or entertainment.
- They want prophecies or deliverance—but have no intention of repenting from sin.

A Litmus Test: Is Your Heart Right?

Just like Simon, these people may do religious activities—praying, giving, attending church, even getting baptized—but God sees the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7 says:

“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

You may deceive people, but you cannot deceive God. Jesus warned us

that false Christs and false prophets would arise (Matthew 24:24), and they aren't just those in the pulpit. Anyone who fakes faith or uses Christianity for personal gain is among those false prophets.

What About You?

- Are you living in fornication or cohabiting outside marriage?
- Are you still using profanity or lying?
- Are you involved in corruption, gossip, or fraud?
- Are you still holding onto secret sins?

If yes, then why do you call yourself a Christian?

2 Timothy 2:19 says:

“Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”

Giving Money Doesn't Justify Sin

Giving large offerings while you continue in sin doesn't impress God. You're no different from Simon who tried to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money.

Peter rebuked him sternly:

“May your silver perish with you... for your heart is not right before God” (Acts 8:20-21).

There's Still Hope - Repentance

If you've done these things ignorantly, there is still hope. Jesus loves you and is calling you to repentance. Repentance isn't only for unbelievers—it's for everyone, including pastors, prophets, and

teachers.

2 Chronicles 7:14 says:

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

What Should You Do?

1. Repent from all known sin.
2. Turn away completely from those sins.
3. Seek baptism in water (immersion) in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

As written in Acts 2:38:

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

And John 3:23 shows that baptism requires plenty of water.

Once you do this with a sincere heart, God will forgive you, and you will become a true disciple of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will guide you in the rest of your journey.

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Final Word:

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.”

—2 *Corinthians 13:5*

Is your heart upright before God?

Now is the time to make it right.

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