



Sermon Series Notes

“Believing in Vain” (Acts 8:4-25)

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The transformation in the apostles to go into Samaria & preach the gospel in MANY Samaritan villages. This is HUGE!

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, this is very important. Go over brief summary, Acts 2, 8, 10, 19, etc. But the main focus of the text is not the transformation of the apostles to go into otherwise forbidden territory to preach the gospel, or the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The main focus of the text is the supposed transformation of this man Simon the sorcerer into a follower of Jesus Christ. He believed and was baptized, but when he offers Peter and John money thinking he could buy the power of the Holy Spirit, the real truth about his supposed conversion becomes painfully clear. His attempt to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit tells us right away that something is terribly wrong in Simon’s heart. He was used to having power, the power of hell that is. And through sorcery he had gained a pretty good reputation. Simon was called “the Great Power of God.” Hell has power to offer, and this has always fascinated me. For example, Pharaoh’s wise men matched the miracles Moses and Aaron performed. By their magic arts they (see the txt). But when it came to producing life from death (gnats from dust, this they could not do. But they did perform miracles by their magic arts. Then there’s II Thess.2:9-10, and Rev.13:11-14a. When Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves, I believe that storm was sent by hell. Remember when God gave Satan permission to get at Job? His sheep and servants were killed by fire falling from heaven, and his children died when a mighty wind caused the house they were in to collapse.

And when Simon offers Peter and John money to buy this power of the Holy Spirit, Peter’s words in response make absolutely clear that Simon’s supposed conversion was not at all what it originally appeared. My new NIV translates Peter’s words this way: “May your money perish with you.” The same word perish is used in Matthew 7:13, John 17:12, Rom.9:22, Phil.1:28, Heb.10:39, and many other NT passages. What Peter was actually saying to Simon is “May your money go to hell with you.” This tells us that, even though Simon believed in Jesus and was baptized, he was not saved.

Simon believed in Jesus, but he believed in vain.

I Cor.15:2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

My first year after becoming a Christian I was a freshman at Liberty Baptist College, now Liberty University. My dorm was a Ramada Inn that was about to go bankrupt, but Liberty acquired a lease with the hotel for dorm space. We had dorms in various places all around Lynchburg, Va. All upstairs rooms at the Ramada became dorms, while downstairs rooms were for hotel guests. One day I came across a young boy getting something out of the drink machine at the bottom of the stairs from my room. Since I was very evangelistic from the time I became a Christian, I saw this as an opportunity to share the gospel. I asked him if he was saved, and he looked at me with that deer in the headlights look and then said, “From what?” I said “from

hell.” He knew nothing about hell. I had heard the gospel since I was very young, had been taught about hell, and knew the biblical phrase “saved,” I guess I assumed everybody knew what I knew. Boy was I wrong!

Are you saved? Not do you believe in Jesus Christ? Not have you been baptized? Are you saved?

John 3:16-17

Luke 7:50 Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

See Luke 13:22-28

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Saved is used in many other passages, such as Acts 16:30-31; Rom. 5:10; 10:13; I Cor. 1:18; II Cor. 2:15; Eph. 2:8; I Tim. 2:4.

What are we saved from? First, a place called hell. See Matt. 5:29-30; 10:28; 23:15, 33.

In Mark 9:43 Jesus said that the fire in hell never goes out. And in Luke 16 he told a story about a rich man who went to hell, and he was tormented in the flames.

But hell is not the eternal destiny of those who are not saved. See Rev. 20:11-15.

Some teach that you can be saved and then lose your salvation. Is that what happened to Simon? A couple from our church last weekend asked me about Rev. 3:5 where it seems to suggest that God may at times blot someone’s name out of the book of life. There are verses in the Bible on both sides of the issue. As a result, two belief systems have been formed within the church, Calvinism and Arminianism.

The emphasis of the Scripture is not on whether one can lose their salvation. The emphasis is clearly on are you really saved?

II Cor. 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test.

Did you know there is one whole NT book of the Bible dedicated to answering that eternal question. Go with me to I John. Now we are not going to read the entire book, but we will look at some key verses in this book that will help us to know whether or not we really are saved.

I John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Probably everyone in this church service believes in Jesus Christ. But do you have eternal life? Are you saved?

A LOVE & LONGING FOR HEAVEN (I John 2:15-17)

See Heb. 11:8-10, 13-16; Phil. 3:20-21

PERSEVERANCE (I John 2:18-19)

Jesus told a parable about those who persevere and those who don’t It’s called the parable of the seed and the sower (Luke 8:4-15). The seed is the Word of God. Some seed is sown on the path, and the devil is able to immediately steal the word from their hearts. This is because the path is hard from being walked on constantly. The path is hard, and represents a hard heart. The only hope for this type of soil is for it to be plowed, to become “broken.”

Some seed is sown on a rocky place. This is not an area with rocks on the surface, but rather a thin layer of soil covering a solid ledge of limestone a few inches below the surface. The heat from the sun makes this type of soil a hotbed that produces rapid germination, then a furnace that soon scorches and withers the tender plant. These people start off with a bang. They may testify, lead people to the Lord, inspire others as a result of their own contagious zeal. But they last only “a while.” Why? Because they have no root. There is no depth. Plenty of emotion, but no real depth. So in the time of testing, they fall away.

Then there is seed sown among thorns, and the thorns end up choking the plants. The thorns represent life's worries, riches & pleasures. Over time the priorities of the kingdom of God & eternal issues are choked by focusing one's attention on all the cares of this life.

Finally there is seed sown on good soil. The key to the fruitfulness of this seed is a changed heart, as well as perseverance. As a result of a changed heart & perseverance, this seed produces a crop.

Dawn Hild, Mark Pierpont, guy who worked with Dave Vollmer who's wife went astray, those in our fellowship who have bought into the Hebrew roots movement, Malcolm Wild's son and daughter-in-law who no longer believe in hell, etc.

Hebrews 10:36,39 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised...we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

PURITY OF DOCTRINE REGARDING THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST (I John 2:20-23).

Antichrists are not just those who are against the Jesus of the Bible, but those who put something in the place of the Jesus of the Bible. What better to put in the place of the real Jesus, but a false Jesus?

Matthew 24: 24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible.

II Cor.11: 4...if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

See Gal.1:8-9

The Jesus that John believed in: See John 1:1, 14

John 5:17 Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." 18 For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

John 10: 32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" 33 "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

Booklet "Jesus is God"

PURITY OF LIFE (I John 3:2-3)

I Cor.6: 9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Gal.5: 19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Mormons have some of the most appealing family commercials I've ever seen. And they have high standards of morality in many areas of life. The JW's are the same way. So we might commend them on their commitment to "purity" regarding their faith, but we clearly believe in a different Jesus than they do. The Pharisees had the outside of the cup really clean; The apostle Paul was faultless in regard to legalistic righteousness.

First of all, purity of life must be linked with purity of doctrine (the right Jesus). Secondly, purity of life for the one truly saved is not motivated to become righteous, but rather in response to already being made righteous.

“Holiness is not something we are called upon to do in order that we may become something; it is something we are to do because of what we already are...that we are to discipline ourselves in order that we may become Christian is a denial of the doctrine of justification by faith...I am not to live a good and holy life in order that I may become a Christian; I am to live the holy life because I am a Christian. I am not to live this holy life in order that I may enter heaven; it is because I know I am going to enter heaven that I must live this holy life.” (Lloyd Jones, p.41)

Purity of life is also motivated by the hope of one day seeing Jesus. It's why the prophets endured such harsh treatment, why Joseph refused the repeated attempts by Potiphar's wife to seduce him, why the apostles persevered through extreme persecution; They all had a future hope. That hope became mine almost 38 years ago! It is a certain hope, a hope that is an anchor for my soul.

II Cor.5:8-10

Purity of life begins with purity of heart

Matt.5: 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

THE INABILITY TO CONTINUE IN IN SIN (3:4-10)

- Conviction
 - Luke 22: 60 Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. 61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." 62 And he went outside and wept bitterly.
 - Psalm 51:2-4 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and **my sin is always before me**. Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...

- Correction
 - Psalm 32:3-5 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night **your hand was heavy upon me**; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord" – and you forgave the **guilt** of my sin.

CONCLUSION

Eccl.3:11, God has set eternity in the heart of man.