

The Gospel Versus Magic

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I. Introduction.

A. Text: Acts 8:1-24.

B. God uses the opposition to advance His cause.

II. It was by means of persecution that the gospel was spread.

A. God may have to bring persecution upon the church so that there will not be dependence upon a central ministry.

B. The first mark of resurrection power is that persecution leads to proclamation of the truth.

III. Philip's ministry was that of laymen, but one of power demonstrating what Christianity is like.

A. Marks that accompany a genuine ministry of the Spirit.

1. A ring of truth because the gospel is the way things really are.

2. The accompaniment of power that frees.

3. The accompaniment of great joy.

IV. The Spirit contrasts true faith with false faith in the scenario of Simon the Magician.

A. Religious falseness.

1. There is an exaltation of personalities. There is an injection of a mediator other than Christ.

2. There is a widespread delusion.

3. There is a counterfeit power.

4. They join the opposition if they cannot beat them.

B. The mark of genuine Christianity is the impartation of the Spirit.

1. The believers in Samaria had not received the Spirit.

2. They had power--the operation of the Spirit--but they did not have the Spirit "fallen upon them."

a. They were still separate unregenerate Christians.

b. They were not baptized into one body.

c. The Spirit is sovereign and sometimes does something in a different order, but He always accomplishes the full program.

C. The exposure of the false religion of Simon.

1. He actually thought God's power could be bought with money.
2. Peter said to Simon, "to hell with you and your money" and told him that his heart was not right.
3. Simon did not repent, however.

Application questions:

1. How can persecution be a positive thing according to this passage?

2. How can one discern religious falseness when it crosses his or her path?

3. Why is the Spirit so essential to the ministry of the Christian? Explain.
