

# Acts- Church Afire! “Genuine Faith Vs. Counterfeit Faith, Acts 8:1-25”

Sermon Summary & 5-Day Devotional Mar 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2026 By Rev. Paul Hudson

## Sermon Summary

In Acts 8:1-25, the story of the early church unfolds against the backdrop of persecution, led by Saul. Despite being scattered from Jerusalem, the believers did not falter; instead, they spread the Word wherever they went. Philip, a remarkable deacon, exemplifies this bold proclamation as he shares the gospel in Samaria. This passage serves as a reminder that genuine faith grows stronger through trials, deepening our reliance on God, and inspiring us to evangelize even in the face of adversity. When faced with challenges, true faith turns opposition into an opportunity to further God’s mission.

Philip’s ministry in Samaria not only shows resilience but also breaks through racial and cultural barriers. The Jews traditionally despised Samaritans, yet Philip's unprejudiced preaching led many to embrace the good news. This inclusion created a joyful and burgeoning community of diverse believers. Thus, genuine faith actively seeks to dismantle walls of division, uniting people under Christ’s love. Modern Christians are called to reflect this same love, fostering a faith community enriched by differences and unified in worship.

The account of Simon the Sorcerer serves as a poignant contrast between genuine and counterfeit faith. Although he professed belief and was baptized, Simon’s interest lay solely in the supernatural aspects rather than a transformative relationship with Christ. His desire to purchase spiritual power underscores the hollow nature of counterfeit faith, which seeks personal gain over genuine conversion. This cautionary tale urges believers to root their faith in a sincere connection with Jesus, not in signs and wonders. We learn the importance of aligning our faith with the truth and integrity of Christ's teachings.

## Key Takeaways

### 1. Genuine Faith Grows Under Persecution

The scattering of believers after Stephen's martyrdom led to widespread preaching of the Word. Genuine faith thrives and finds opportunities even in persecution. When faced with trials, true faith in Christ seeks to deepen its roots rather than crumble. It emboldens believers to share the gospel despite opposition. As Christians today, understanding the resilience and growth that genuine faith can achieve under pressure challenges us to stand firm and proclaim God's truth in every situation.

### 2. Faith Embraces Diversity

Philip’s ministry in Samaria illustrates how genuine faith breaks down racial and cultural barriers, bringing unity and joy. His boldness in preaching to Samaritans emphasizes that faith in Christ transcends all divisions. This is a call for Christians to check their biases and embrace unity in diversity. Our faith communities should reflect God's kingdom, where every tribe and tongue are welcome and rejoice together in salvation.

### 3. Focus on Relationship, Not Signs

Simon's story in Acts 8 is a cautionary tale about focusing on miraculous signs rather than a genuine relationship with Jesus. Supernatural wonders should point us to deeper faith, not become the foundation of our belief. Genuine faith seeks repentance, transformation, and a closer walk with Christ. The danger of counterfeit faith is its focus on ideals and manifestations that distract from true worship and relationship with God.

## 5-Day Devotional

### 4. Connected to the Universal Church

Peter and John's laying on of hands for receiving the Holy Spirit emphasizes the communal nature of genuine faith. The early church was meant to be interconnected, with the Holy Spirit uniting believers across regions. Genuine faith finds strength and affirmation in connection to the wider body of Christ, reinforcing unity and collective growth. In contrast, counterfeit faith isolates itself, breaking away from the true teachings and fellowship of all believers.

### 5. Examine Your Faith

As we search our hearts, examining the foundation and expression of our faith becomes vital. Genuine faith is characterized by resilience, unity, transformation, and connection. It perseveres in adversity, seeks inclusive community, is led by the Holy Spirit, and remains grounded in relationship with Christ. Christians are encouraged to engage in self-reflection to ensure their faith aligns with these biblical truths, rooting out any counterfeit beliefs that may have taken hold.

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## 5-Day Devotional

### Day 1 — Faith Strengthens Through Trials

Supporting Scripture: Acts 8:1-4

Acts 8:1-4 shows us the resilience of believers even when faced with persecution. As they were scattered, they didn't go into hiding; instead, they boldly preached the Word wherever they went. This reflects the power of genuine faith to not only withstand trials but to thrive and grow because of them. It's a reminder that challenges can serve to deepen our roots in Christ instead of uprooting us. As we encounter trials in our own lives, we can choose to lean on God's strength and share His love, knowing that our faith can grow and bring others to Him even in adversity.

*Reflection Question: How does your faith respond to challenges and trials?*

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### Day 2 — Embrace Diversity in Faith

Supporting Scripture: Acts 8:5-8

In Acts 8:5-8, Philip breaks societal norms by ministering to the Samaritans, who were traditionally despised by Jews. His actions led to joy and healing within the community. This passage challenges us to reflect on our own views and whether biases prevent us from sharing the gospel across cultural or social divides. Genuine faith celebrates diversity and unites believers in the truth of Christ. As we embrace the fullness of God's family, our churches become a vibrant mosaic of backgrounds and stories, each bringing unique perspectives of God's grace.

*Reflection Question: Are there biases that hinder your sharing of the gospel?*

## 5-Day Devotional

### Day 3 — Seek Genuine Transformation

Supporting Scripture: Acts 8:9-24

Simon's story in Acts 8:9-24 underscores the danger of a faith based on self-interest rather than sincere transformation. While he was drawn to the miraculous signs accompanying Philip's ministry, his desire to purchase spiritual power revealed a counterfeit faith. This challenges us to examine our motives and ensure our faith seeks genuine relationship with Christ, not just the supernatural. True faith is characterized by repentance and seeks to glorify God through a transformed life, not personal gain.

*Reflection Question: Do you seek signs or a deeper relationship with Christ?*

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### Day 4 — Community and the Holy Spirit

Supporting Scripture: Acts 8:14-17

When the apostles Peter and John arrived in Samaria (Acts 8:14-17), they confirmed the connection of the new believers to the wider church by praying for them to receive the Holy Spirit. This passage highlights the importance of staying connected to the larger body of Christ. Genuine faith thrives in community, drawing strength and encouragement from fellow believers. The Holy Spirit unites us as one body, crossing geographical and cultural boundaries. Our connection to the church through the filling of the Holy Spirit strengthens our individual and collective witness as Christ's followers.

*Reflection Question: How are you connecting with the larger body of Christ?*

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### Day 5 — Security in the Universal Church

Supporting Scripture: Acts 8:25

Acts 8:25 shows Peter and John continuing to preach the gospel in many Samaritan villages after their visit. Their journey underscores the continuity and unity of the church across different regions. Staying connected with the broader church provides accountability, orthodoxy, and encouragement. It guards against unbiblical beliefs and practices. Genuine faith is nurtured in this connectedness, serving as a testament to the truth and love of Christ that transcends personal and national boundaries. We are called to participate actively in the global mission of the church, contributing to a faithful and vibrant community.

*Reflection Question: Is your faith rooted in the broader church community?*