

## Sunday Morning Message

July 21, 2024

### *The Gospel Goes to Samaria*

Text – Acts 8:4 - 25

Congregational Reading – Acts 8:4 - 13

### Introduction

The last time that we studied the Book of Acts together, our focus was on the ministry of Philip. We followed Philip as he took the gospel from Jerusalem, where he was a deacon, to Samaria, and then down toward Gaza, where he preached Christ unto the Ethiopian Eunuch. Finally, we saw that Philip was “caught away” by the Spirit of God, and was found preaching the gospel at Azotus, and then Caesarea.



Today's study will particularly involve the ministry of Philip in the City of Samaria, which we passed over in the last lesson. The main characters in this study will be the Apostles Peter and John and an interesting character named Simon, who at one time was a sorcerer.

Remember, the context of this passage is the overflow of the gospel to the regions surrounding Jerusalem. The disciples were commanded to take the gospel everywhere, but for a time, they seemed content to remain in Jerusalem. Through the vehicle of persecution, the disciples at

Jerusalem were forced away from their comfort zone and had to flee away from those who were seeking their destruction. This took them to places like Samaria, where they took their faith with them.

*"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." - (Acts 8:4)*

Just a reminder, the primary source of the persecution was a Pharisee named Saul who from the city of Tarsus. We saw Saul's name mentioned twice in chapter eight and once in chapter seven where he was the ringleader in the martyrdom of Stephen. This man, Saul, who at this time has a passionate hatred for Christianity will be gloriously saved by the Lord on the Road to Damascus in Syria. We will read all about that when we get into chapter nine.

### **I. The Gospel Reaches the Samaritans (vs. 5 – 8)**

*"5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." (Acts 8:5 - 6)*

We know that for people to be saved, there must be the inner working of the Holy Spirit. We often read in the Scriptures where the Spirit of God directed an individual to go to a certain place or to talk to a particular person. We saw that with Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian Eunuch in the last message. Here, however, we only see that it was persecution that was moving people, and that Philip went to Samaria. Notice that he preaches the gospel, and the people get saved. Of course, God also did the miraculous through Philip. There were people healed, etc., which validated the message that Philip was preaching.

However, the preliminary point I wish to make is that where the gospel is preached, there will be people saved. Sometimes, there will be many people, sometimes just a few. But the preached Word of God will always produce converts. That is why we need more preachers, and we also need the preachers that we must preach more often.

Jesus said that we need to pray for more labourers:

*"36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; 38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:36-38)*

Notice that this was a citywide revival.

Notice that the people heard and saw – People need to be able to hear and see the gospel at work in your life as well.

## A. The Gospel Brought Changes (v. 7)

*"For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed." - (Acts 8:7)*

Satan had held these people in bondage for a long time, and they were finally being released from their prison. The people in our community have been blinded by their sin, and bound by the devil, and their only hope is a heaven-sent revival of the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

Illustrate – Joe Reyes, Bob Fenton, George Diehl – preaching the gospel to all in the community.

## B. The Change Brought Cheer To the City

*"And there was great joy in that city." - (Acts 8:8)*

Salvation produces joy. Knowing that your sins have been completely forgiven and knowing that you are in a right relationship with God will produce joy. Knowing that your final destination is Heaven will give you peace and make you happy.

Christians ought to be joyful people. *"The fruit of the Spirit is joy"*

*"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." - (Psalm 16:11)*

## II. Simon the Sorcerer Responds to Philip's Preaching (vs. 9 – 13)

*"9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: 10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries."*

(Acts 8:9 - 11)

### A. He Was Reported to Have Miraculous Power

Sometimes these people use magic and trickery to fool people, but it is also important for us to know that there is a demonic power behind witchcraft, sorcery, and fortune telling. Some of their works are real. We also must remember that though their power may be real, it is very limited as compared to the power of God.

### B. He Recognized a Greater Power in Philip

*"12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles*

*and signs which were done."* (Acts 8:12 - 13)

The Scripture says that Simon "believed." We have no reason to doubt his conversion up to this point. This is the same word (Greek - pisteuo) that is used in John 3:16; but it is also the same word that is used in James 2:19:

*"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." -*  
(James 2:19)

The question is "what did Simon believe?" He believed what Philip preached concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus.

Nevertheless, we will learn things regarding Simon, after his conversion, that have caused some to doubt that his salvation was genuine.

### **III. Peter and John Receive the News of the Revival (vs. 14 – 17)**

#### **A. The Church at Jerusalem Sends Them to Samaria**

*"14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts 8:14-17)*

#### **B. They Prayed for the Samaritans to Receive the Holy Ghost.**

Note – today all believers receive the Holy Ghost at the time of their conversion. There were many unique things about this transitional time, one of which was that the Holy Spirit did not enter all believers immediately at the time of their conversion. See also Acts 19:1 – 6

Verses that support the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all believers

*"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," - (Ephesians 1:13)*

*"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." - (Ephesians 4:30)*

*"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" - (1 Corinthians 6:19)*

*"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." - (John 14:17)*

However, just because the Spirit of God is within you, it does not necessarily mean that you are filled with the Spirit of God. The Bible commands all believers to be *“filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18). The fullness of the Spirit will only happen when a Christian is obedient to the will of God and the Word of God. It is the Holy Spirit’s job to guide you into all truth (John 16:13), and to lead you through the Christian life in a path that leads to and results in righteousness, or right living. If you are resisting the Spirit (Acts 7:51), quenching the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), or grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), you are not filled with the Spirit. If you are filled with the Spirit, however, God will be able to use you in miraculous ways to glorify Him and reach the people in your world with the gospel.

#### **IV. Simon Reverts Back to His Old Ways (vs. 18 – 19)**

*“18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.”* (Acts 8:18 - 19)

Simon envies the power that these men from Jerusalem possess, and he decides to use whatever carnal means necessary to get it. Remember, he used to be the one that the people respected, that the people looked to as a powerful spiritual authority.

This is where we wonder whether Simon’s conversion was genuine. We cannot see inside of people’s hearts, but we can see the fruit that comes out of their lives. Simon demonstrates here that there is a lot of bad fruit still coming out of his life.

#### **V. Peter Rebukes the Sorcerer for His Covetousness (vs. 20 – 24)**

*“20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”* (Acts 8:20 - 23)

Peter delivers a scathing rebuke to this man. Notice, though, that Peter tells him to pray. That would be a strange thing for him to say to a lost man.

Notice – “gall of bitterness” – gall is a bitter substance – like bile; “bond of iniquity.” I think that Peter was saying that Simon was filled with bitterness and was still in the bondage of his sins.

When Peter said that Simon’s heart was not right and that he had neither part nor lot in this matter, he may have been stating that Simon as a new believer was not spiritually mature enough to handle the spiritual gifts that God was using through Peter and John.

*"24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." (Acts 8:24)*

So was Simon a true believer, or no?

He does ask Peter to pray for him.

This is a question that comes up at times when we consider the types of lives that many Christians live. Is their faith real, or did they just go through the motions or follow the crowd in making some type of profession of faith. Again, we should not judge because we cannot see a person's heart. And we certainly know that genuine believers are capable at times of doing some pretty bad things. Just investigate your own life and you will recall some thoughts and actions that were not very Christ-honoring, and certainly were not in obedience to His word. However, a person who consistently lives outside of the will of God and has no remorse about it should cause us to wonder about the genuineness of his conversion.

#### **VI. Peter and John Return to Jerusalem (v. 25)**

*"25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." (Acts 8:25)*

On the way back to Jerusalem, Peter and John stop off to preach the gospel at some of the other villages in Samaria.

Note – This is the first recorded report of conversions in people who were not Jews.

It is glorious to read about people being saved. It is even more glorious to be used by the Lord to lead someone to Christ, and to witness their conversion experience firsthand.

#### **Concluding Thoughts**

1. Learn to share your faith with others.
2. Carry gospel tracts and hand them out to everybody that you encounter.
3. Pray for the people you know who need to be saved.
4. Pray that God will open doors of opportunity for you to talk to someone.
5. Don't be too frustrated if your new converts are not ready for the mission field right away.
6. Be patient with them and continue working with them.
7. Understand that not all your converts will be genuine believers.
8. Keep working with them anyway, until they are, or until they cut ties with you.