

Acts of the Apostles

Week 9: Acts 8:2-23

Persecution (8:2-3)

"Saul continued to cause harm to the church."

- Stephen – martyr – "God was not bound to the sacred land or the temple"
- Godly men buried Stephen and mourned. **Who were these men?**
- Saul persecuted the church. **Where was the church meeting?** "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women." (Acts 22:4) Also, he told the Galatians "For you heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it." (Galatians 1:13)
- He was convinced Jesus was under God's curse. (Deut.21:22-23 & Galatians 3:13 –Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.")
- The word destroy **{/ravaging/made havoc}** – sadistic cruelty, a wild boar ravaging a vineyard. Luke was setting up the drastic contrast that would happen in the next chapter. **If you faced persecution, would you stay grounded in your faith in Christ? Would you continue to preach? Where does our persecution come from today?**
- If we are obedient to Christ, we will face some form of persecution. **Story of Polycarp, the 12th martyr of Smyrna.** People go to great steps to avoid the pain by just simply not taking personal responsibility.

Proclamation (8:4-11)

"They preached the word wherever they went."

- Scatter – diasporio/diaspora/dispersion associating Stephen with an important OT concept.
- The people went as missionaries more than refugees. They had been preaching where they were before they had to leave. This evangelistic lifestyle now spreads.
- **What caused it to spread? Were the apostles enacting the mission Jesus gave to them in Acts 1:8?**
- **The beginning of the traveling section (8:4-11:19). 37 miles for Philip. How do we share Christ traveling today?**
- **Why were the apostles not scattered?**
- Philip went down to a city in Samaria. **What was the impact of this statement?**

- Miracles were performed while Philip proclaimed just as they had been when the apostles proclaimed in Jerusalem. Healing miracles would cause you to pay attention.
- Simon amazed all the people and boasted that he was someone great. (v. 9-11)

Conversion (8:12-17)

- The people believed and were baptized. The message Philip proclaimed was more powerful than “the great’s message”. Even Simon believed. If you can’t beat them join them. (vs. 12-13)
- Think of Moses confronting Pharaoh’s magicians or Elijah confronting the false prophets on Mount Carmel. They could duplicate some divine signs but they had limits.
- He attached himself to Philip. (v. 13)
- When the apostles in Jerusalem heard...they sent Peter and John to the people there. (v.14) What was the significance of Peter and John going?
- Two of the three most prominent leaders in the Jerusalem church.
- When they arrived, they prayed... (v. 15). They prayed because they accept that the faith of the Samaritans as authentic. They did not have to rebaptize them.
- The Spirit had not yet come upon any of them... (v. 16)
 - o Why the delay of the Spirit in Samaria? Why the two-step process conversion/baptism? Luke does not use this with Lydia or the jailer in Philippi.
- All other Christian writers explicitly address the subject of the Spirit given at conversion. Paul, Peter, John, the writer of Hebrews and Luke does as well.
- ^{Luke 2:38} Peter replied, “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
- Luke is speaking of receiving the spirit in terms of prophetic empowerment – the power to speak Christ’s message across cultural barriers.

Confrontation (8:18-25)

- Simon wanted the power the apostles had in the laying on of hands. He thought he could buy it. Simony – the act of selling church offices or sacred things.
- What are some examples of simony today?
- There is tangible evidence of the act of laying on of hands and receiving the spirit. What tangible evidence do we give that we are full of the Holy Spirit?
- “may your money perish with you” (v.20). Perish is referring to OT to the destruction that God brings on human beings as a result of their rebellion against Him.
- Simon wanted the ability to manipulate God himself which is impossible and a sin!
- “Your heart is not right in God’s sight” (v.21). Simon’s defective relationship with God.
- Repentance of Simon is a real possibility, yet his intentions are still wicked.
- Pray for me...was Simon repentant?
- What does this section teach us about how to be a missionary?