

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Advances, Pt 3

Acts 8:4-8

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SermonAudio Blurb: Philip goes out with the fleeing church and finds himself in Samaria. It is there that he begins to preach the gospel and in doing so we see the power of the gospel in bringing life, joy and deliverance to a people who lived in great darkness. But what we really see is how the gospel is for the world, every tongue, tribe and people.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read 8:4-8.
- B. Today we conclude this small series on the way God advanced the gospel of Jesus Christ outward from the birthplace of the Church—Jerusalem.
 1. The book of Acts will now focus outward into the rest of the world as the spread of the Christian faith moves through the preaching of the good news about Jesus Christ.
 2. In vs 4 we saw that as persecution arose and the Church was under vicious attack there were many Christians who fled. The apostles remained behind but many others did not.
 3. However, as the Church fled the persecution before it they took the gospel with them.
 4. There is a lesson in this that I believe is worth pausing for a moment to consider. There are three things, in my experience, that most Christians struggle to be faithful in.
 - a. Prayer, Bible intake and Evangelism.
 - b. And all three of these are God’s means to grow both the person and the Church; which is why we find it so hard to be faithful in them.
 - c. One of the great lies of the Word of Faith, Pentecostal, New Apostolic Reformation, and Latter Rain type movements is how they teach a false understanding of how the Holy Spirit works among His people and how Satan attacks God’s people. So they are busy fighting Satan in all the wrong places using all the wrong tactics premised on a wrong grasp of the work of the Holy Spirit.

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5. Vs 4 illustrates for us something very important that is often missed: the bible teaches that the role of the pastor-teachers in the local church is to equip the people of the church to do the work of ministry.
 - a. Ephesians 4:11-13 makes this point explicit whereas our passage in Acts makes the point implicit. Note the logical flow of the text in Ephesians.
 - b. The ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ is given to the whole of the Church, not merely a select few. Gospel work is never to be seen as a professional task or responsibility.
- C. Today we will see how Luke focuses upon one specific person out of the large number of those fleeing the persecution.
 1. His name is Philip and we know him because he was one of the Seven in chapter 6 who were picked to oversee the care of the widows.
 2. He was like Stephen, another of the Seven, and it seems that he took the place of Stephen as a key evangelistic preacher.
- D. Today I want to give three observations about how the gospel is spread.

II. The Gospel Advances.

- A. First, the gospel is not confined to a specific people, but to the whole world.
 1. Samaria was enemy territory for a Jew. Now who exactly are these Samaritans?
 - a. King Solomon's son Rehoboam splits the kingdom and Jereboam rose to power in the Northern Kingdom—the 10 tribes of Israel. Rehoboam managed to keep two tribes, Judah and Benjamin.
 - b. Later, King Omri named the new capital of the Northern Kingdom as Samaria (1 Kings 16:24), eventually all of that area was known as Samaria.
 - c. In A. D. 722 Assyria captured Israel (northern kingdom). They deported all the powerful, and wealthy Israelites and replaced them with foreigners.
 - d. These intermarried and helped introduce even more ancient, false religions—not that Samaria was exactly pure on their own right.
 - e. After the exile the Jews returned to the remains of the Southern Kingdom and viewed the Samaritans with a sense of hatred and distrust.

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- (1) half breeds
- (2) Political rebels.
- (3) They saw that their religion was defiled.
- f. About 400 BC the Samaritans built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, which was later destroyed in 2nd century.
- g. One of the unique aspects of the Samaritan worship was that they only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament as true.
2. Now Philip is going out to these same people, still hated and still under the dominion of Satan to bring to them the good news of Jesus Christ.
3. So the first observation is simply that the gospel is not confined to a specific people, but to the whole world.
- B. Second, the gospel destroys the power of Satan within the world.
 1. It is easy to forget that there is a very real spiritual dimension that we live in. Paul said it best in Ephesians 6:12, *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*
 2. 2 Kings 6
 - a. 8-14, the city of Dothan is surrounded by the army of Aram.
 - b. 15-20 the perceive reality and the real reality.

Francis Schaeffer gave a wonderful illustration of this idea. Essentially the universe is just a room and nothing else. Two men in the room, one a materialist and one a Christian. Years of examining everything in the room was done by the materialist. In the end he presents the Christian with man books he has written on the subject. The Christian then points out that it is incomplete.

Here is what Schaeffer writes, " Finally the Christian turns to the materialist and says, “Well, this is a tremendous work. You have really told me a great deal about my universe that I wouldn’t otherwise have known. However, my friend, this is all very fine, but it’s drastically incomplete.”

And you can imagine this man, who has spent his lifetime pouring out his heart to do his measuring and his weighing, suddenly taken aback. He turns and says to the Christian, “Well, now, I’m shocked that you tell me it’s not all here. What have I missed?” And then the Christian responds something like this: “I have a book here, the Bible, and it tells me things that you do not know. It tells me the origin of the universe. Your scientific investigation by its very nature cannot

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do that. And it also says nothing about where you and I as men came from. You have examined us because we, like the paint on the wall, are phenomena in the universe. You've studied something of our psychology and even given me several volumes on it, but you have not told me how we came to be here. In short, you don't know the origin of either the universe or us."

"Furthermore," the Christian continues, "I know from this book that there is more to the universe than you have described. There is an unseen portion as well as a seen portion. And there is a cause-and-effect relationship between them. They are not mutually exclusive, but are parts of one reality. It's as if you had taken an orange, sliced it in half, and only concerned yourself with one of the halves. To understand reality in our universe properly, you have to consider both halves – both the seen and the unseen."

In this sense "supernatural" is not a good word to describe the unseen portion. We must understand that the unseen portion of the universe is just as natural and as real as is the seen portion. Furthermore, the seen and the unseen are not totally separated. When we do certain things, it makes a difference in the unseen world and things in the unseen world make a difference in the seen world." (*Death in the City*, 141-2)

3. Add to this let me give a brief word about territorial demons: Daniel 10:12-13.
4. As the gospel took hold there was encountered strong, demonic resistance. And these demons were being cast out by Philip resulting in great joy in the city.
5. Now the question is raised in my mind as to why is this story here? Why is Luke choosing this story from all the possible stories of the countless men and women who were also fleeing and bringing the gospel to the people?
 - a. An answer is found in Jesus. In Matthew 12:28 He says, "*But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.*"
 - b. And keeping that in mind, what do we see Philip proclaiming? The gospel. And what is the gospel? That Jesus is the promised Savior and King. His death brings all who believe true and full forgiveness of all sin. His resurrection bring them true, eternal life. And what Philip did was all in the name/authority NOT of Philip, but of Jesus.
6. And we see this continue even to this day as missionaries enter into the lands of people groups who have been blocked from ever hearing the gospel. And over and over again if you listen and are aware, people believe and find the darkness of the lies and power of Satan banished.

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- C. The gospel is not to be confused with miracles or signs.
1. The gospel is the proclamation of Christ. Philip's message was that Jesus was the Messiah—notice that it says that he preached “Christ” and not “Jesus.” That is what was important for them to know, that the promised Messiah had come.
 2. But alongside his preaching he performed what the bible calls “signs.” What is this?
 3. What you see here is the natural benefits of evangelization. As the gospel is proclaimed and believed, the powers of darkness are pushed away.
 4. Here is my point, throughout history so many have become sidetracked from the central task of bringing the gospel to unbelievers because of the desire for the miraculous.
 5. There is a passage in Matthew 7 where Jesus makes a telling statement and warning, *“Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'”* (Matthew 7:21-23)
 - a. The fact one does miracles even in the name of Jesus means nothing in itself.
 - b. Jesus says that what matters is that you are doing the revealed will of the Father in heaven. You are in the habit of obeying the Scriptural commands.
 - c. For those who claim to be preachers of the gospel but who really emphasize signs and wonders, we should not give any special attention to them. To cast out demons or to perform miracles ultimately means nothing.
 - d. Let me give you two simple methods in who to listen to and what to look for:
 - (1) Look for those who rest only upon the sufficiency of the revealed Word of God rather than so-called revelations and words from the Lord. Their ministry, and yours, should be fully founded on the bible.

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- (2) Lastly, look for those who look on for the power of God through the preaching of the gospel. Miracles, signs and wonders should never be your focus. Do not believe that there is a greater power in them. Only one thing is given to us that is expressly stated to be the power of God unto salvation—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Through these three sermons on the advance of the gospel we have seen much.
 1. The gospel brings hatred because it brings people to Jesus and He demands they let go of all other things and follow Him alone by faith.
 2. The gospel is the only thing that matters. Even if you flee because of Jesus Christ you are to flee with the gospel on your lips. How much more should you speak it now, in times of peace?
 3. The gospel is not confined to a specific people, but to the whole world.
 4. The gospel destroys the power of Satan.
 5. And finally the gospel is never to be confused with miracles or signs and wonders.
- B. Next time we will begin to see how this plays out in the life of two men, one named Simon and another a man from Ethiopia. Two men but two very different responses to the gospel.

Benediction

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing the good news of Jesus Christ, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen