

## Putting Feet to Your Faith

### Acts 8:1-25

- We left off with Stephen going from serving widows to sharing a sermon with the highest court in Jerusalem, and it cost him his life. As instead of the religious leaders hearing and repenting of their pride and jealousy they respond in hatred and rage, resulting in cold blooded murder as they take Stephen out of the proceedings and into the streets where they have a rock party at his expense, killing him as a warning to all those who would dare defy their commands.

### V1-25

- **V1-3** at the end of the chapter were introduced to a central figure of the NT Saul who of course would later become Paul the Apostle, but before his conversion he was a persecutor of the church, one who was so zealous in his wrong thinking that he hunted, tortured, and imprisoned, any who would profess a faith in Jesus Christ. Just so we knew his role in the execution of Stephen scripture uses the word “**consenting**” in the Greek means he not only approved of the murder but was pleased with it, so he wasn’t some reluctant participant but a willing witness.
- This act against Stephen produced a greater boldness for those who hated the faith as they grew in their fervor against the church haunting all who followed the apostle’s teachings which caused the church to scatter out of Jerusalem and into the regions of Judea-Samaria. What the enemy meant for evil actually produced obedience as Jesus told the disciples in > **Acts 1:8** that they’d spread the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the utter most parts of the world, but up to this point they had only shared with the people in Jerusalem until the persecution.
- Also something to take note of, that in spite of the sorrow that everyone felt over the murder of Stephen, his death was not an end but a beginning. The gospel will spread with such force that no amount of persecution will be able to silence it, and it started with the death of Stephen. This shows that no matter what were involved in for Christ it should never stop or die if we are not present. So if you’re facing rejection or mockery at work, in school, or with family, count it as a privilege that you are able to represent the Lord despite whatever opposition we face.
- V4-8 despite the torturing and the killing of Christians the gospel is increasing and not decreasing, for the disciples are preaching, teaching, and casting out unclean spirits and anything that stands in their way of demonstrating the truth. We see another of the seven (**Philip**) picking up the mantle of Stephen and taking the lead in spreading the gospel in Samaria. This is interesting because ordinarily the Jews hated the Samaritans because they were of mixed heritage and didn’t always follow Jewish culture since they weren’t accepted in Jewish circles.
- Yet just like the widows the Lord chooses the right people for the right job in sending Philip who understood since he was a Hellenist Jew how to overlook an offense and respond in forgiveness allowing him to be used by God to bridge the gap between the Jews and the Samaritans.

- This opened the door for salvation, restoration, healing, and freedom from oppression, as the demonic which were having its way in people's lives are now on the run, for people are experiencing true joy for the very first time and it's exhilarating. **V9-13** anytime when ministry is successful people of all types will be drawn to it, but eventually whatever their motives are it will be revealed in time, for when the pure is present make no mistake about it the phony is lurking near, trying to find a way to infiltrate and ruin what God is doing.
- A man named "**Simon**" a sorcerer who used his magic to oppress the people in order to make them obey him, amazingly stops his sorcery because he sees a greater power before him. **V13** points out an important fact as Simon instead of following Christ is following Philip, throughout the chapter the key to the miracles, healings, conversions, wasn't Philip and his faith but the power of Jesus Who was working through Philip, Simon missed this and it will show later on.
- Don't ever forget this that initially you may start out being attracted to the gospel through an individual, circumstance, or ministry, but in time that must fade away and Christ must become the central focus or your faith will be built upon a person, relationship, or ministry, and if that fails then so will your faith, but if its built on Christ Who never fails your faith will remain in tack. **V14-17** word spread to Jerusalem and the Apostles who send people to help Philip disciple the new believers, notice Philip begins to fade to the backdrop why? Because he is an evangelist and his job is to spread the gospel, while others have come to disciple those who have responded.
- It's so important for us to know our role in the body of Christ, find out what your gifts are and then take the time to perfect them and stay in your lane so God can continue to use you and it mightily. **V16** is not speaking of salvation but an empowering of the Holy Spirit (fallen upon them) for the people to be used in the gifts and talents that the Lord has given to them, just as He did with the Apostles. **V18-19** now Simon's true motives reveal themselves, as he reverts back to his old nature, for magicians would observe a good trick and then offer to buy it from another magician, showing that is how he sees the power of God just something to be used.
- **V20-23** Peter sees that Simon is still in bondage to his old self, he is a deceiver, he delights in tricking people, he desires to be great at any cost, and now he believes he can purchase the power of God with money. Peter tells him that he has no part or portion in this work of God, this includes both salvation and sanctification, proving that he was never born again even though he was baptized. For there are many people who will admire a pastor or church member, profess that the gospel is true, join a church or ministry, and yet not truly surrender to the gospel.
- **V24-25** the ultimate show of Simon's heart is after Peter tells him to repent of his actions and profess and confess his sins that the Lord may forgive him his response is (no) but you pray that none of these things are true. The true test of whether someone's faith is pure or phony is when confronted by truth will they confess and repent or will they brush it off and move on to the next best thing in their lives, Simon proves "**that to be almost saved is to still be totally lost**".