



"Ministry to the Outcasts"

Acts 8:1-25

Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

Introduction: As rising persecution in the church comes to a climax, the gospel is not suppressed, it spreads.

I. Saul Persecutes. Disciples Scatter. Apostles Stay (vv. 1-3)

Acts 8:1 – "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

Thus far in the book of Acts we've seen "warning" (4:21), "flogging" (5:40), and "martyrdom" (7:58-60). Yet, this is the first time we see the noun (*dióghmos*) "persecution" used.

Matthew 10:22-23 – "and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

Acts 8:2-3 – "Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."

Saul's zeal for the Law was displayed as he showed great violence in an attempt to destroy the church.

II. Philip's Ministry in Samaria (vv. 4-8)

Acts 8:4-5 – "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them."

God has always brought His will to pass through the real decisions of real people (Genesis 50:20).

Acts 1:8 – "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

During this time Samaritans were viewed as outside of God's covenant people (See Luke 17:18; Matthew 10:5; John 4:7-10, 8:48)

Acts 8:6-8 – "The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. So there was much rejoicing in that city."

Philip was preaching about the kingdom of God in a town that was under Satanic oppression and possession.

III. Simon Claims to be Somone Great (vv. 9-13)

Acts 8:9-11 – "Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God." And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts."

Simon had the people right where he wanted them because they believed the things he said and did.

Acts 8:12-13 – “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.”

What does it mean that “Simon himself believed”? (James 2:19; 2 Timothy 2:19)

IV. Peter and John’s Ministry in Samaria (vv. 14-24)

Acts 8:14-17 – “Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.”

This is the only place where those who’ve believed in Jesus receive the Spirit as a later event to conversion.

John’s attitude here is much different than it was in Luke 9:52-54.

Not For Sale

Acts 8:18-19 – “Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’”

simony – the buying or selling of things considered religious or sacred.

Acts 8:20-23 – “But Peter said to him, ‘May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.’”

Acts 8:24 – “But Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.’”

V. Peter and John’s Ministry to Samaritans (v. 25)

Acts 8:25 – “So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.”

The work in Samaria convinces Peter and John to continue to share the gospel with Samaritan villages even after they return to Jerusalem.

Conclusion: As we see the gospel move from the insiders to the outcast, we’re reminded that the gospel is for every person with ears to hear and hearts that respond.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. When is the last time you were around a campfire?
2. Read Genesis 50:20. Can you think of a moment when you felt like something was happening “to” you that you later discovered was happening “for” you?
3. Who are the outcasts of our society today and how can we do better at taking the message of hope to them?
4. What ways might we protect ourselves from being blinded by money and power like Simon?