



A C T S

# Laying a Foundation for Global Mission

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*Acts 6:8 – 9:31*

Stephen · Philip · Saul of Tarsus

*"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."*

## Three Pillars of the Global Mission

01

### Stephen

*Acts 6:8 – 8:2*

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First martyr · seed of universal gospel

02

### Philip

*Acts 8:4 – 40*

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First evangelist · Samaritans & Ethiopian Eunuch

03

### Saul

*Acts 9:1 – 31*

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Persecutor converted · apostle to the Gentiles

*"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up..." — Acts 9:31*

## Importance in Luke's Narrative

### Sharpens the Tension

Stephen intensifies the conflict with the Jewish religious establishment.

### Longest Sermon in Acts

His defense before the Sanhedrin is the most extended speech in the entire book.

### Catalyst for Scattering

His martyrdom triggers great persecution, scattering the Jerusalem church throughout Judea and Samaria (except the apostles).

### Mission Transition

Stephen's story creates the pivotal shift from a Jewish-focused mission to the global mission of the church.

## Why Was Stephen Used So Powerfully?

1

### Spirit-Filled Life

*Acts 6:8; 7:55*

Stephen was full of grace and power — doing wonders, gazing into heaven at the moment of death. He modeled what spiritual maturity and the Spirit's fullness look like.

2

### Wisdom & Insight

*Acts 6:9-12*

His opponents could not withstand his wisdom (v.10). His theological insight exceeded even that of the apostles in some respects, threatening the entire religious establishment.

3

### Christlike Character

*Acts 6:13-15*

His face shone like an angel's. His readiness was not to win the debate but to die for Christ in confidence and peace — the highest goal of spiritual maturity.

*"So full of the Spirit, so full of wisdom, faith, grace, and power is Stephen that the glory of God shines from his face." — William J. Larkin Jr.*

What does a person "full of the Spirit" look like? By God's grace, can I be such a person? Stephen engages in an effective witness by deed and word . . . The defendant [Stephen] stands before the court in session, tier upon tier of dignified jurists of Israel's highest court. Stephen transfixes those who would be his judge. It's as though they cannot take their eyes off him. And no wonder: his face was like the face of an angel! Though this certainly reflects divine approval of his witness and parallels the effects of Moses' standing in God's presence, Jesus' transfiguration is a better immediate model for what is happening here (Luke 9:29). So full of the Spirit, so full of wisdom, faith, grace, and power is Stephen that the glory of God shines from his face. To a greater or lesser extent, that's the way it is with all those who are full of the Spirit of God (2 Cor. 3:18).

- William J Larkin, Jr.

## A Panorama of Old Testament History

Passage	Figure	Key Theme
Acts 7:2-8	Abraham	God appears outside the land — not confined to one place
Acts 7:9-19	Joseph	Israel's pattern: reject God's chosen deliverer
Acts 7:20-43	Moses	Rejected twice — parallels rejection of Jesus
Acts 7:44-51	David	God does not dwell in temples made by human hands

Stephen did not instruct the Sanhedrin on unknown history — he re-framed what they knew.

His central argument: God never confined Himself to one place, and Israel had a habit of rejecting those God sent.

*"Stephen seems to have perceived...that the old order of things was passing away and a new order was coming. His speech is a transition speech that paves the way for presenting the gospel to the Gentiles, which begins in the very next chapter of Acts."*

— James Montgomery Boice

## Stephen's Use of Amos — Damascus to Babylon

### Stephen's Adaptation of Amos 5:27

Amos wrote "beyond Damascus" — Stephen changed it to "beyond Babylon." He was not misquoting; he was deliberately re-applying the text to his audience. Boice explains: "Stephen alters it because he is not talking to the people of the northern kingdom but to the leaders of Israel in the south. It is their history that he has in mind."

*"He takes the sharp knife of the Word and rips up the sins of the people, laying open the inward parts of their hearts, and the secrets of their soul...He could not have delivered that searching address with greater fearlessness had he been assured that they would thank him for the operation; the fact that his death was certain had no other effect upon him than to make him yet more zealous."*

— Charles Spurgeon

## "Stiffnecked and Uncircumcised in Heart and Ears"

Stephen wove together Exodus 32:9 ("stiffnecked") and Jeremiah 9:26 ("uncircumcised in heart") — behind both lies Deuteronomy 10:16: "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer."

### Almost 20 Times in the Old Testament

God called Israel "stiff-necked." These religious leaders — among the most educated and devout in the nation — were acting exactly as their forefathers had. The accusation was not a metaphor; it was a documented pattern.

### The Circumcision Irony

Israel prided itself on circumcision as the sign that set them apart from Gentiles. Stephen turned it back on them: "In your rejection of the Lord, you are just like the Gentiles." It was the sharpest possible rebuke for a Jewish audience.

### The Unbroken Pattern of Rejection

Acts 7 had traced the entire OT — Joseph rejected by his brothers, Moses rejected twice, prophets rejected, now Jesus rejected. The leaders before Stephen were not exceptions; they were the continuation of a tragic tradition.

## The Council's Reaction — Gnashing of Teeth

### Old Wineskins Cannot Hold New Wine

*Matthew 9:17 / Acts 7:54*

Through Stephen, the Holy Spirit demonstrated that the old traditions of Judaism — especially the overemphasis on the temple — could not contain the new wine of the gospel. The council's fury was the reaction of old wineskins straining against new wine.

### Prominent Men Aligning with Hell

*cf. Matthew 8:12*

Seven times Jesus described hell as a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth." These men were prominent, successful, and appeared deeply religious — yet in their rejection of God they were associating themselves with hell, not heaven.

GAEBELEIN ON ACTS 7:54

*"All they could do in their frenzy was to gnash with their teeth. It was not a sudden outburst — the tense shows that it was prolonged."*

They began grinding before Stephen even finished speaking. Their response was not reasoned objection — it was uncontrolled, sustained rage.

## The Stoning of Stephen

### The Charge of Blasphemy — F.F. Bruce

*"For Stephen to suggest that the crucified Jesus stood in a position of authority at the right hand of God must have ranked as blasphemy in the thinking of those who knew that a crucified man died under the divine curse."*

— F.F. Bruce

### Stephen's Christlike Death

He gazed into heaven, saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand. He prayed for his killers — mirroring Christ on the cross — and died in peace and confidence.

#### THE MISHNAH ON STONING

*2nd-century Jewish writing*

The condemned was brought to the place of stoning and told, at ten cubits out, to confess ("all who confess have a share in the age to come"). At four cubits they were stripped. The drop was twice the height of a man. A witness pushed him from behind — face down — then turned him over. If the fall did not kill him, the second witness dropped a stone on his heart. If that was not sufficient, all the congregation stoned him.

*Cited in Bruce*

## Saul Introduced & The Impact of Stephen's Death

*"Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul." — Acts 7:58*

### The Introduction of Saul (7:58)

"Young man" literally means a man in his prime — Saul was almost certainly already a Sanhedrin member. In Acts 26:10 Paul says "I cast my vote against them," implying he held a vote on the council. He did not stumble onto this scene; he was there in an official capacity, consenting to Stephen's death.

### Impact of Stephen's Death (8:1-4)

#### Great Persecution

A severe persecution broke out against the Jerusalem church (8:1)

#### All Scattered

All except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (8:2)

#### Saul Ravaged the Church

Entering house by house, dragging off men and women, putting them in prison (8:3)

#### Scattered Ones Preached

Those driven out went about preaching the word wherever they went (8:4)

P H I L I P

# The First Evangelist

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*Acts 8:4 – 40*

Philip reached beyond Jewish boundaries — to Samaritans and to an Ethiopian Eunuch — the gospel crossing every social and ethnic barrier.

BOOK OUTLINE

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## The Ministry of Peter • Acts 1:1 – 12:19

- |    |                                  |                          |
|----|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | Peter's First Sermon             | <i>Acts 1:1 – 2:47</i>   |
| 2. | Peter's Post-Pentecost Ministry  | <i>Acts 3:1 – 4:37</i>   |
| 3. | Persecution of Peter & Apostles  | <i>Acts 5:1 – 42</i>     |
| 4. | Persecution of the Church        | <i>Acts 6:1 – 7:60</i>   |
| 5. | <b>Persecution of the Church</b> | <i>Acts 8:1 – 9:43</i>   |
| 6. | Peter Preaches to the Gentiles   | <i>Acts 10:1 – 12:25</i> |

## The Gospel Crosses a Barrier

### Scattered Become Proclaimers (8:4)

Those forced from Jerusalem by persecution immediately went about preaching — persecution could not silence the word.

### Philip Empowered (8:5-8; cf. 6:6)

Philip, empowered through the laying on of apostolic hands, proclaimed Christ in Samaria. Crowds listened, unclean spirits were cast out, the paralyzed were healed. Great rejoicing followed.

### Simon the Sorcerer (8:9-13)

Simon had long held the city's attention with magic, claiming greatness. But when Philip proclaimed Christ, even Simon believed and was baptized — and was constantly amazed by the signs he witnessed.

### Magic vs. Gospel Power

The contrast Luke draws is clear: sorcery captivates through illusion and self-exaltation; the gospel brings genuine healing and freedom.

## Magic & Occult Practices in Scripture

#	Practice	Also Known As	Reference
1	Enchantments	Magical Arts	Deut. 18:10-12
2	Witchcraft	Soothsaying	2 Chr. 33:6
3	Sorcery	Witchcraft	Jer. 27:9
4	Divination	Fortune Telling	1 Kings 17:17
5	Wizardry	Male Witch	Ex. 22:18
6	Necromancy	Séances / Communication w/ Dead	1 Chr. 10:13-14
7	Charming	Casting Spells	Isa. 19:3
8	Stargazing	Astrology	Isa. 47:12-15
9	Imagery	Use of occult symbols for decoration/branding	

## The Holy Spirit & the Samaritan Believers

### Apostles Sent (8:14)

When Jerusalem heard Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John. The first thing they did on arrival: pray for the new believers.

### The Spirit Had Not Yet Fallen (8:15-16)

The Samaritans had believed and been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus — yet the Holy Spirit had not come upon them. Luke deliberately separates conversion from the reception of the Spirit.

### Commissioned for Mission (8:17)

Peter and John laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Luke's language (receive, *lambanō*; fall on, *epiptō*) is identical to Pentecost — indicating the same prophetic enabling for mission.

### Key Theological Point

Luke shows the Spirit's coming was not simply about incorporation into the body of Christ — it was commissioning for effective service in the church's mission (cf. Acts 6:6; 13:3).

## Seven Ways Luke Describes Receiving the Holy Spirit

1	<i>baptizō</i>	To be 'baptized' with the Holy Spirit	1:5; 11:16
2	<i>erchomai</i>	The Holy Spirit 'comes upon'	1:8; 19:6
3	<i>epiptō</i>	The Holy Spirit 'falls on'	8:16; 10:44; 11:15
4	<i>pimplēmi</i>	To be 'filled with' the Holy Spirit	2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52
5	<i>ekcheō</i>	To 'pour out' the Holy Spirit	2:17, 18, 33; 10:45
6	<i>didōmi</i>	To 'give' the Holy Spirit	5:32; 8:18; 11:17; 15:8
7	<i>lambanō</i>	To 'receive' the Holy Spirit	2:38; 8:15, 17, 19; 10:47; 19:2

## Indwelling & Empowering

### INDWELLING

The Spirit dwells within every believer at conversion.

*Acts 2:38*

Happens at salvation.  
All believers share this.

### EMPOWERING

The Spirit commissions and equips believers for witness and mission.

*Acts 1:8; 8:17*

Luke's distinctive emphasis.  
For prophetic witness & mission.

*Luke deliberately separates conversion from reception of the Spirit's empowering gift — the Samaritan narrative is not an exception but a window into Luke's pneumatology.*

## The Spirit of God, Not Magical Power

### Simon's Request (8:18-19)

When Simon saw the Spirit given through the laying on of apostolic hands, he offered money to obtain that authority. He viewed spiritual power through the lens of his magical worldview.

### Peter's Rebuke (8:20-22)

"May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!" Peter declared his heart was not right before God and called him to repentance.

### Gall of Bitterness / Bondage of Iniquity (8:23)

Peter's phrase = prisoner of your inward sin. The term 'gift' (dōrea) in 8:20 always refers to the gift of the Spirit in Acts — confirming the Samaritans received the same gift as at Pentecost.

### Simon's Response (8:24)

"Pray to the Lord for me..." — Luke presents this as a genuine believer (8:13) struggling to understand his new life, not a confirmed apostate.

## Speaking in Tongues

The ability to speak in a human language not previously known or studied by the speaker.

In the Samaritan narrative, Luke's language indicates the Samaritans began to prophesy and speak with tongues as on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:4; 10:45-46; 19:6). When Simon 'saw' the Spirit being given, Luke implies audible, visible evidence — consistent with glossolalia as a sign of prophetic empowering.

### Pentecost

*Acts 2:4*

Jerusalem — birth of the church

### Samaria

*Acts 8:17*

Mission crosses Jewish/  
Samaritan boundary

### Cornelius

*Acts 10:46*

Gentiles receive the Spirit

### Disciples

*Acts 19:6*

Disciples of John re-commissioned

## The Gospel at the Edge of the World

### Obedience to the Spirit (8:26-29)

Philip followed the Spirit's leading to a desert road — and encountered an Ethiopian official, a eunuch, treasurer to Queen Candace. Obedience often looks irrational; it wasn't.

### Isaiah 53 Opens the Door (8:30-35)

The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53 and could not understand it. Philip began from that scripture and preached Jesus to him — a model of Scripture-centered evangelism.

### Immediate Baptism (8:36-38)

"What prevents me from being baptized?" Philip's answer: "If you believe with all your heart, you may." Confession then Baptism then new life. Both went down into the water.

### 1 Peter 2:9 Connection

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness." The eunuch embodies this calling.

S A U L O F T A R S U S

# A Chosen Man

*Acts 9:1 – 31*

The most fearsome persecutor of the church becomes its most far-reaching apostle. The same zeal, redirected by a divine encounter.

SAUL'S PERSECUTION · ACTS 9:1-2

## Breathing Threats and Murder

*"Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest...so that if he found any belonging to the Way...he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." — Acts 9:1-2*

### **A.T. Robertson on 'breathing threats':**

The Greek participle pictures Saul not merely breathing out threats, but breathing them in — inhaling the very smell of persecution like a warhorse sniffing battle. He exhaled what he inhaled. The taste of blood at Stephen's death was pleasing to him, and now he reveled in the slaughter of the saints.

Agreed with Stephen's killing

Sought to destroy the church

Led a violent campaign house by house

## Breathing Out Threats and Murder

Present active participle of old and common verb. Not "breathing out," but "breathing in" (inhaling) as in Aeschylus and Plato or "breathing on" (from Homer on). The partitive genitive of *apeilees* (NT:547) and *fonou* (NT:5408) means that threatening and slaughter had come to be the very breath that Saul breathed, like a warhorse who sniffed the smell of battle. He breathed on the remaining disciples the murder that he had already breathed in from the death of the others. He exhaled what he inhaled. Jacob had said that "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf." (Gen 49:27). This greatest son of Benjamin was fulfilling this prophecy (Furneaux). The taste of blood in the death of Stephen was pleasing to young Saul (Acts 8:1) and now he revelled in the slaughter of the saints both men and women.

*A. T. Robertson*

ACTS 9:3-5

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*"As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'"*

## A Chosen Man: The Conversion of Saul



**This conversion is recounted THREE times in Acts:**

*Acts 9:1-30 (The account) · Acts 22:1-21 (Defense before the crowd) · Acts 26:1-23 (Before King Agrippa)*



*"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."*

**Gentiles**

Primary calling

**Kings**

Rulers & authorities

**Sons of Israel**

His own people

**Acts 9:26-28**

26 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to ~~join the disciples;~~ but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.

"join"  
"identify"  
"placing membership"

27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Would not accept  
Just any one

Gathered information  
from the person &  
others

28 So he was with them at Jerusalem,

Accepted & Active

## What Does It Look Like to Be Really Saved?

1

### A Personal Encounter with Jesus

9:3-5

Saul met Jesus on the road. Salvation is never merely intellectual — it requires a personal confrontation with Christ.

2

### Real Change

9:20-22 / 2 Cor. 5:17

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation." Saul immediately proclaimed the Jesus he had persecuted. Zeal redirected, not diminished.

3

### Real Forgiveness

9:17-18

Scales fell, sight returned, he was baptized. Baptism marked the washing away of sin — even the murder of Stephen and others.

4

### Real Obedience

9:19

He was baptized. He joined the disciples. He submitted to the community. Obedience follows genuine conversion.

5

### Real Service

9:20-22

At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. Growing in strength, confounding opponents, proving Jesus is the Christ.

## Barnabas: A Bridge to Acceptance

### Seeks to Join

*"join / identify / place membership"*

Saul came to Jerusalem and tried to associate with the disciples. They would not receive just anyone — discernment was required.

### Investigated

*Gathered information from person & others*

Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, declaring how Saul had seen the Lord and preached boldly at Damascus.

### Accepted & Active

*"Placed membership"*

He was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

*"So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied."*

Acts 9:31

## God Advances His Mission Through Unexpected Means

### **Stephen**

*The seed of martyrdom*

Death does not stop the gospel, it scatters it. What looks like defeat is a divine strategy for expansion.

### **Philip**

*The power of obedience*

Following the Spirit into unlikely places (Samaria, a desert road) breaks down the walls that we would never choose to cross ourselves.

### **Saul**

*The grace of conversion*

No one is beyond the reach of Christ. The church's greatest enemy became her greatest missionary. Grace redeems and redirects.

### **The Holy Spirit**

*The source of all mission*

Every advance was Spirit-empowered. The prophetic enabling of the Spirit is not a luxury. It is the engine of the church's witness.