

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

Study Number Six – Acts 8:1-40

You know sometimes in our lives things seem so chaotic and so confusing, we cannot understand or comprehend the purpose of God in the traumatic—in the tragic—in the trials that we face.

Reading the sad story of Charles Haddon Spurgeon’s life and death, was only made more sorrowful by reading a letter from his wife after Spurgeon had gone for a period of time:

(C. H. Spurgeon by Arnold Dallimore)

I have travelled far now on life’s journey, and having climbed one of the few remaining hills between earth and heaven, I stand while on this vantage ground and look back across the country through which the Lord had led me...

I can see two pilgrims treading the highway of life together, hand in hand—heart linked to heart. True, they have had rivers to ford, mountains to cross, fierce enemies to fight and many dangers to go through. But their Guide was watchful, their Deliverer unflinching, and of them it might truly be said, “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel

of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of old.”

Mostly they went on their way singing; and for one of them at least, there was no greater joy than to tell others of the grace and glory of the blessed King to whose land he was hasting. And while he thus spoke, the power of the Lord was seen and the angels rejoiced over repenting sinners.

But at last they came to a place on the road where two ways met. And here, amidst the terrors of a storm such as they had never before encountered, they parted company—the one being caught up to the invisible glory, and the other, battered and bruised by the awful tempest, henceforth toiling along the road—alone!

But the “goodness and mercy” which for so many years had followed the two travellers, did not leave the solitary one. Rather did the tenderness of the Lord “lead on softly,” and choose green pastures for the tired feet, and still waters for the solace and refreshment of His trembling child. He gave, moreover, into her hands a solemn charge—to help fellow pilgrims along the road, therewith filling her life with blessed interest, and healing her own deep sorrow by giving her power to relieve and comfort others.

(source unknown)

When stress hits in life, we’re a great deal like a wet watermelon seed between the thumb and forefinger. As soon as the stress comes, we squirt out quickly and want to escape the pressure instead of learning what God is going to use through that circumstance to create in us that which He

desires.

The early church was filled with stress. There are lots of hurt in our study. There's a lot of pain. There's a lot of the unexpected that takes place in this chapter.

1. In chapter 1 we saw Preparations for Pentecost.
2. In chapter 2 the event itself took place.
3. In chapter 3 the healing of the lame man.
4. In chapter 4 the first persecution.
5. In chapter 5 the sin of Ananias and Sapphira.
6. In chapter 6 we saw the first internal dissension as the Meals on Wheels missed a few stops and created some tragic complications in the early church.
7. In Acts chapter 7 we saw the tragic martyrdom of Stephen.

Stephen's message is the longest that's recorded in the Scripture. It's a powerful message—scriptural survey—from Abraham to Jesus Christ.

That message has just been preached and Stephen has gone to meet his maker, being stoned to death just outside the city of Jerusalem.

Acts 1-7 focuses on the city of Jerusalem.

In Acts 8 we shift gears and we go now to all Judea and Samaria.

When we get to Acts 13 we go to the uttermost part of the earth. It's the inspired outline from Acts 1:8 so we're at a turning point as we come to chapter 8.

But just remember, as the scene of this study opens, they have had a tragedy. They've had an unexplainable circumstance—the death of a tremendous individual. A man who just impressed us greatly with his knowledge of the Scriptures is now gone and so the church hurts.

v. 1 Then on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

“Then on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Now this is no small Mickey Mouse movement. This is the religious establishment against the early Christians. As soon as Stephen dies and the blood of Stephen flows, the persecution becomes great and a lot of other people begin to pay the price.

It's kind of like once one thing happens, the intensity of it increases greatly—especially when there's a riot or something tragic like this takes place.

And we look at this and we say WHY? It was permitted by God for a purpose that “they were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.”

If we understand the divine outline, then the tragedy is not that much of a tragedy. There is a purpose behind this to move the Gospel out.

Don Anderson shared this personal story:

One night I was musing with the Lord about some things that had happened in our lives in just the last few weeks and I said, “Lord, there's a purpose and sometimes we can't see it for a while. We just have to trust you, right?” And He said, “Right.”

“Well I've got to confess to you Lord that when Jan's husband was killed the other day after 10 months of marriage I wondered. And Lord I've got to confess that when my best friend's 15 year old son took his life, I wondered. And Lord when Henry's wife Hazel died of cancer—You remember the one who said on his fiftieth wedding anniversary ‘She's all I'll ever get. She's all I'll ever need and she's all I ever want'—I wondered.”

And the Lord said, “Precious child. Just leave all that in my hands. We’ll talk about it when you get home.”
(personal source)

Sometimes we just have to do that. The face of injustice, the face of hurt, the face of pain—“We see through a glass darkly but then face to face. Now we know in part that we’re going to know even as we’re known.” (ref. 1 Corinthians 13:12)

It’s not for God to give the reasons why. We can glimpse a little bit of it because as a result of this persecution in verse 1 the people who are involved are beginning to be “scattered.” No longer is the concentration just in Jerusalem.

“The persecution was a storm permitted to scatter the seed of the Word of God,” one writer tried to describe it.

v. 2 And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.

“And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.”

It was a sad time and they paid many tributes to Stephen for the messages that he had preached and the work that he had done.

This passage is often used in graveside messages:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

And now dear brothers, I want you to know what happens to a Christian when he dies, so that when it happens you will not be full of sorrow as those who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and then came back to life again, we can also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him all the Christians who have died. I can tell you this directly from the Lord, that we who are still living when the Lord returns, will not rise to meet Him ahead of those who are in their graves. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a mighty shout, and with the soul-stirring cry of the archangel, and the great trumpet call of God; and the believers who are dead will be the first to rise, to meet the Lord. Then we who are still alive and remain on the earth shall be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and remain with Him forever. So comfort and encourage each other with this news.

When we come to verse 3 we have the word “But.” It’s a CONTRAST. There’s hurt among the young believers over the death of Stephen:

v. 3 But Saul kept on ravaging the church, entering house after house, dragging off both men and women, handing them over to prison.

“But Saul kept on ravaging the church, entering house after house, dragging off both men and women, handing them over to prison.”

Saul we met in our last study for the first time. We're going to see him again in our next passage. In our last message they laid the garments at his feet while they stoned Stephen. Saul was the man who instigated the execution frankly. He certainly organized the troops to take Stephen outside and to commit this crime.

When a man is guilty he'll do some of the dumbest things. He'll ravage, he'll hurt, he'll do a lot of things just to escape a confrontation with himself.

Saul of Tarsus would have been a tremendous man in the NFL because of the intensity of his ability to get after something and then do it. We would admire him if he walked in and told us how he'd spent his day just because he would never rise after anybody else and he wouldn't go to bed until everybody else was asleep. He would get the most out of every day.

And as an intense individual he was way ahead of his peers in the religious realm and he was also, when it came to a project, the one who was most intensely involved. And here in verse 1 we learn that the persecution scatters the church, but in verse 3 we realize that the church is literally being ravaged—torn to pieces.

v. 4 Therefore, those who were scattered went about proclaiming the good news of the word.

“Therefore, those who were scattered”—they all felt sorry for

themselves. Is that what the text says?

They “went about proclaiming the good news of the word.”

These “who were scattered” took it as an opportunity! Not as a disappointment but His appointment. They’re going to scatter the good news of the Word of God wherever they go.

Do we do that? The average American has 12 addresses during his lifetime. Do we take that transfer, that change, that move as a new opportunity to have a new mission field? Or do we say, “Oh no! I’m leaving all my friends and all of this!”

God is sovereign. He knows where to put us. He knows where to let our lights shine for Him. We can’t stop Him!

Remember Acts 5 when Gamaliel stood before the Sanhedrin? He said, “Leave these guys alone. If this is from God you’re not going to stop them. If it’s from men it’ll die by itself. You can’t stop them.”

Courage is a man who just keeps coming on.

We can scatter them but we can’t stop them.

They’re “proclaiming the good news of the word [of God].”

Psalm 107:2

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of his enemy.

How many people are going to be in heaven because we witnessed to them? How many people have we shared Jesus Christ with? God brought us into the family for the purpose of sharing our faith with others.

There's an interesting article in the *St. Petersburg Times* about Leon Jaworski. The article says Leon Jaworski brings his faith into the open. The article read:

At 76, Leon Jaworski, the special Watergate prosecutor, has taken on a new commitment, talking more openly about his religious faith." In 1981, the son of a Polish immigrant, evangelical preacher, published his fourth book *Crossroads*, an account focusing on the role of religion in his life. According to the newspaper, Mr. Jaworski has also participated in an evangelistic campaign and has openly witnessed to his colleagues. He was quoted as saying, "I had a heavy burden on my heart because I did something I felt I should have done a long time ago." The report adds that he had attended church for many years without taking public religious stands. Jaworski's testimony should encourage us to speak out for our faith. As believers, we should ask ourselves these questions: Have I ever told another person of my faith in Jesus? Does anyone know that I am a Christian?

If we've been silent about our faith, I am confident we'll find real blessing in going public.

(source unknown)

Now the focus in the passage begins to turn to a man. Stephen the first deacon or the first server was in chapter 7. Now when we come to chapter 8, Philip is going to take the center stage. In our next study Saul of Tarsus is going to take the center stage. And in study 8, Cornelius is going to be our key character. Let's get to know Philip.

v. 5 And Philip, having gone down to the city of Samaria, began proclaiming Christ to them.

“And Philip, having gone down to the city of Samaria, began proclaiming Christ to them.”

Now that's confusing isn't it? In our language we say we go down south, we go up north. We don't go down north or up south. That's confusing.

But the Greeks did and so Philip went “down to...Samaria,” that is about 25-30 miles north from where he is. So if we want to say he went up north to Samaria, that's where he is.

Now realize what he's getting ready to do. He's going to a place where Jews just call off limits. If they want to go to Jerusalem to Galilee, they cross over the Jordan River. They went up neutral territory. When they went to see their friends in Galilee they cross over the Jordan to visit friends then come back over neutral territory. They didn't pollute themselves with Samaritan territory.

And here's Philip going into no-man's land. He's picking the hard place. And this is a tremendous, traumatic step for him. They didn't like those guys. They were half-breeds. They were foreigners that were married to Jews. They had their own rival worship at Mount Gerizim and they didn't have any time for the Jews.

Remember when Jesus sent a couple of guys to go into one of the Samaritan villages to make reservations and they went in and found that the Samaritan Sheraton was the place to stay? And when they found out that they were Jews, they didn't allow them to stay there. And the disciples said to them after that, "Let's call fire out of heaven and wipe out the place." (ref Luke 9:54)

That's the feeling of the Jews toward the Samaritans. So this is a horrendous step to see Philip heading north to take the message. And he gets a good response. Look at verse 6.

v. 6 And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to the things spoken by Philip, hearing them and seeing the signs which he was performing.

"And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to the things spoken by Philip, hearing them and seeing the signs which he was performing."

v. 7 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.

“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.”

v. 8 And there was much rejoicing in that city.

“And there was much rejoicing in that city.”

That’s exactly what Jesus found when He went there. In John chapter 4 He says, “I must needs go through Samaria.”

In other words, they have to go straight north to Galilee through Samaria because there’s a woman there who has a great need. And He deals with this woman who’s been married five times and the man she’s living with now is not her husband. He reveals to her the Christ. Then she goes into the town, gets all the town folks to come out. And when Jesus speaks there’s even more response to it.

We read in John chapter 4:

John 4:38-42

...And many more believed because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, “It’s no longer because of what you said that we believed, for we’ve heard ourselves and we know that this One indeed is the Savior of the world.”

So he's getting the same response that Jesus got when he was there. Now enter the next character in the cast. Oh this guy's going to make our flesh creep here for a minute.

v. 9 Now there was a certain man whose name was Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;

“Now there was a certain man whose name was Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;”

Now Simon is the Houdini of the day. He is the predecessor of Mohammed Ali. He is Simon the Great! He is a magician who is “astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great.”

v. 10 to whom they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention, saying, “This man is what is called the great power of God.”

“to whom they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention, saying, “This man is what is called the great power of God.”“

v. 11 And they were giving attention to him because for a considerable length of time he had astonished them with his magic arts.

“And they were giving attention to him because for a considerable length of time he had astonished them with his magic arts.”

He’s no fly-by-night. He doesn’t come in with his magic show and train and puts on his deal and goes to the next town after he makes his haul. He lives here! He’s been around a long time. He has been pulling rabbits out of hats and sawing women in half and making things disappear. He’s been doing that for a long time! He’s a permanent fixture in town.

“And they were giving attention to him” because he was there. They knew him.

v. 12 Now when they believed Philip, as he was proclaiming the good news concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized both men and women.

“Now when they believed Philip, as he was proclaiming the good news concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized both men and women.”

Notice SINGLE CONDITION—they were believing God. They came to faith, they expressed that faith by being baptized because they’re just like the Jews in Jerusalem back in Acts 2. They have to come out of Judaism and come into Christ. And they are baptized to declare they’re leaving one to go into the other.

Now up here they have their rival religion. Remember when the woman at the well is talking to Christ and she says to Him:

John 4:19ff

“Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and your fathers say Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship...

And then Jesus reveals Himself to her as the Messiah.

Gerazim in Samaria is the place to worship!

Careful with verse 13.

v. 13 And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he was continuing on with Philip; observing signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

“And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he was continuing on with Philip; observing signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.”

Is it possible to believe and to be baptized and not be saved? Is it? YES.

This is not real. This is a man making intellectual assent to a

set of facts. There is no heart-faith here. He's impressed with appearances! He just wants this. He's going through the motions without any meaning.

He's a baptized man but he's not a real believer.

What's happening is his magic juices are starting to flow and he's asking all kinds of questions and observing what's going on but he is not a Christian. The fact that he believes does not mean that he has come to a saving faith.

For instance we can believe that a chair will hold us. We can say yes it will because we see others sitting in chairs. That chair will hold us. But until by an act of our will, we commit ourselves to that, do we experience the saving faith of the chair and we experience the function of it.

This is the problem in America today. People are always saying, "I believe in God!" But there's absolutely no evidence of a vital, living relationship with Jesus Christ in their life.

Matthew 7:22-23

Many will say unto Me that day, "Lord, Lord, haven't we done many wonderful works?" And I'll say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity."

"You never came to relationship with Me! You watched everybody else believe, you went along with it, but you never personally appropriated Jesus Christ for your sin and came to

saving faith.”

This is the third time in the book of Acts, in these brief chapters, that we’ve seen the devil’s seed start to sprout.

In Matthew 13 it says there is the wheat and tares. And the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest.

1. First we saw the **HYPOCRISY** of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.
2. We saw the **DISSENTION** in Acts 6 which the evil one loves to provide between the saints.
3. And now we see **RELIGIOUS FALSENESS** here in Acts 8.

v. 14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,

“Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,”

Now we need to understand. If Peter and John, the official delegation from Jerusalem, didn’t go to Samaria there would have been two churches immediately. The Spirit of God could not come upon the Samaritans until an official delegation from Jerusalem got there so we have one church. We’d still have had two because they would have gotten the Spirit

independent of the church in Jerusalem.

So this all must be tied together. It's necessary for the Spirit to delay until Peter and John get there and the Gospel goes to them.

Peter was given the keys of the Kingdom, remember? There are three of them:

1. one to open the Gospel in Jerusalem,
2. the other to open it in Samaria, and
3. the other to open it in the house of Cornelius in Acts 10.

And here he's going now to open the Gospel in Samaria—verse 15.

v. 15 who came down and prayed for them, in order that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

“who came down and prayed for them, in order that they might receive the Holy Spirit.”

Now the charismatics will wreak havoc on this particular passage saying, “See there, had to be the laying on of hands and the coming of the Holy Spirit came after they made their profession of faith.”

Which one is authoritative?

1. Acts 2 when the Spirit of God comes, they're baptized in the Holy Spirit—they speak in other languages.
2. In Acts 8 they come to belief, they're baptized and later the Spirit of God comes when the apostles lay on their hands and there's no speaking in tongues here.
3. When we get to Acts chapter 10 the apostles are there with the Gentiles but they speak in tongues. And the whole sequence is different. The Spirit of God fell when he was speaking in Acts 10—instantaneous—so then they were baptized.
4. Acts 19 is different.

Don't try to formulate theology in concrete in the book of Acts. And the big rift in the church, the body of Christ, today is because we're trying to form theology on isolated passages. And we have to look at the whole thing and realize its transition.

If we've come to know Jesus Christ by faith, we have the whole package. Jesus Christ came in and He's totally adequate and the Spirit is there to guide us into all truth.

v. 16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; but they had been baptized only into the name of the Lord Jesus.

“For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; but they had been baptized only into the name of the Lord Jesus.”

v. 17 Then they were laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

“Then they were laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.”

Now it's important that there is an **ABSENCE OF TONGUES**. Why? There are no Jews here.

The tongues were a sign of judgment to the nation Israel and it's not necessary here for that phenomenon to occur so it doesn't.

Now enter Simon. He's watched this happen.

v. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was being given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

“Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was being given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,”

What's he saying? He's saying, “Man! I've got a bird nest on the ground! If I add this kind of action to my magic show I'm going to clear up the roof! You know, it's going to be incredible! I've got to buy this stuff!”

And he wants to buy into some of this action. He's been impressed by appearances through the whole thing!

v. 19 saying, **“Give to me also this authority, in order that everyone on whom I lay my hands may be receiving the Holy Spirit.”**

“saying, ‘Give to me also this authority, in order that everyone on whom I lay my hands may be receiving the Holy Spirit.’”

And the only reason he can say that is because Peter flat hasn't laid his hands on him yet and he hasn't received the Holy Spirit either. And so he's asking for it.

But pretense can never pass for power!

v. 20 But Peter said to him: **“May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!”**

“But Peter said to him:”

This is strong stuff. Here it comes:

“May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!”

Oh that's strong stuff! There are a lot of people that need to hear that. They're building stone and concrete and stained-

glass windows hoping they're buying their way to getting their ticket to heaven. They have it all fouled up. It's wonderful to do those things after becoming a Christian and we do it out of a heart filled with love to serve the Lord. But we're never going to buy "the gift of God."

Romans 6:23 says:

Romans 6:23

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We have to receive the gift. It's all there for us to take.

Ephesians 2:8, 9

For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.

"Simon you can't buy this stuff! It's not on the market! It's not for sale!"

v. 21 You are not having a part in this matter concerning which I am speaking, for your heart is not right before God.

"You are not having a part in this matter concerning which I am speaking,"— he's referring to the Spirit of God—"for your

heart is not right before God.”

Wow! Now that took a lot of real guts to say that. Is this guy some kind of a head honcho in the city? He’s been there. He’s one of the founding fathers. He’s been there a long time. Does he carry clout and does he carry influence with a lot of people? Yes!

What’s the temptation? Buy Simon, bring him along so he can reach more people! Huh?

“Better to show yourself approved unto God a workman that he is not to be ashamed.” (ref. 2 Timothy 2:15)

Don’t bow down and cater to men, failing to declare the whole counsel of God. When we start worrying about what people think of us and about what they’re going to feel about what we feel, what we believe and in what we say, we’re in trouble. God wants us to be faithful.

Stephen just looks right at him. Peter looks right at him: “your heart is not right before God.”

“You have to do something Simon about this whole thing!”

v. 22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and beseech the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

“Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and beseech the

Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.”

Wow!

Psalm 139:23, 24

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my thoughts;...

“Beseech” and “repent”!

v. 23 For I am seeing that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

“For I am seeing that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”“

That’s a hard verse, isn’t it?

“I am seeing that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

What’s that mean? He looks into Simon’s heart and He sees “the gall of bitterness.” He sees “the bond of iniquity.” What are those two things?

That’s exactly where the man who does not know Christ comes from.

Talk to most people who are not Christians and they'll say:

They're bitter toward God because of something that happened in their life. They're "in the gall of bitterness."

"My God, if You're a great God of love, why did my kid get run over?" or

"God, if You're a great God of love, why did my wife die of cancer?" or

"God, if You're a great God of love, why did I lose that great big contract?"

Simon must have had a few failures in the magic business. And he's probably just a tad bit bitter from what Peter's saying.

Life will do one of two things. It'll either make us BITTER or BETTER.

And if we're relating to it as God's plan with His purpose, we're going to get BETTER from it rather than BITTER.

Hebrews 12 talks about that:

Hebrews 12:12-17

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that

the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue after peace with all men, and after the sanctification without which no man will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

What is the “bond of iniquity”?

Just talk to some guy who’s not a Christian and he’ll talk all about the bondage of sin. The shackles of sin chain the man! His drinking, drugs or an illicit affair, or whatever it is.

Thinking about Samson and his problems with Delilah. Talk about the chains that bind. How tragic sin can bind the sinner and he’s never set free unless the Spirit does a marvelous work in his life.

He breaks the power of canceled sin!

He sets the prisoner free!

“the bond of iniquity”

“the gall of bitterness”

Simon is a shackled man.

v. 24 Then Simon answering said, “Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that none of the things of which you have spoken may come upon me.”

“Then Simon answering said,”—get this— “Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that none of the things of which you have spoken may come upon me.”“

“Simon if you’d have just said, ‘I want to pray! Teach me what to pray! I’ll repent! I’ll get it right!’”

All he wants is surface appearance. “You guys pray for me so this bad stuff doesn’t happen to me.”

Invariably we fog the issue when we get to the personal. We get down to where we really live.

Simon doesn’t want to pray himself and he doesn’t want to repent, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

We shouldn’t plan on seeing Simon anywhere in glory unless he came to that personal relationship. It would be a major miracle if he did. So much so that it probably would have been recorded in the sequence of the book of Acts.

v. 25 Then after they had borne their testimony and had spoken the word of the Lord, they were

starting back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

“Then after they had borne their testimony and had spoken the word of the Lord, they were starting back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.”

The Gospel’s been introduced so now it moves out to the “villages of the Samaritans” because the delegation has been there. The Spirit of God has been dispensed, now we begin to evangelize the Samaritan villages.

Want to know how to witness for Jesus? Here’s the great case study on how to witness.

First, we’re going to see the **FACTS** and then we’re going to see the **FAITH** and then we’re going to see the **FEELINGS**. That’s God’s order of evangelism.

v. 26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, “Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This road is in a desert.)

“But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, ‘Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.’”

Air traffic control comes on Philip’s little system and says to him, with a dispatch order, “Everybody else is heading to Jerusalem but I want you to go down ‘south to the road that

descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.”

“(This road is a desert.)”

“I thought you said Lord, go into the desert. Is that right?”

“Yes. Go to Gaza.”

Sixty-five miles south of Jerusalem—That’s down there in one of those Philistine cities where old Samson and his judgeship went over there one night and took the gate away—picked it up and carried it away. Going down in the hot spot!

That’s like the Lord saying, “Arise and go to Death Valley.”

“But Lord, why way out here? There’s nobody out here!”

“Just go.”

Are we sensitive to the Spirit’s leadership in our life? Do we consider when we start every day that we’re checking in for orders? That the people who are going to come across our path are not a mistake but a sacred assignment? And that the Spirit of God wants them to hear something from us and as a result we’re sensitive to it?

v. 27 And he arose and went; and behold, a man, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a royal official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all

her treasure; who had come to Jerusalem for the purpose of worshipping.

“And he arose and went; and behold,”—three great verbs right in verse 27. That’s instant obedience.

“a man, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a royal official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure who had come to Jerusalem for the purpose of worshipping.”

Here he gets an opportunity and the Lord is providing an opportunity for a searching heart in sending Philip down here.

John Ogilvie in his book *Drumbeat of Love* says this:

(Drumbeat of Love by Lloyd John Ogilvie)

I want to share with you what I believe is the secret of an exciting life. People who have discovered it are some of the most attractive, win some people I know. They sparkle and shine with an identifiable radiance. Their lives are distinguished by an eagerness and earnestness. They have zest and zeal. I believe I have discovered this secret and it’s the source of the unquenchable enthusiasm I feel about living. The mysterious origin of this vitality is traceable to two words: guidance and obedience. This triumphant tandem is the belief that the Holy Spirit actually can guide our thoughts, and that obedience can appropriate His power to do what is guided. The overwhelming wonder stems from the amazing fact that the Holy Spirit can put into our minds ideas, insights, possibilities

and directions which we would never have conceived or dared contemplate without Him. He knows not only the past and present but the future, not only what we need but what we will need, not only our concerns but those of others. And He has chosen us as channels to do His work in the world.
(source unknown)

Philip is sensitive and he would have missed this great opportunity if he hadn't been sensitive. So here he goes, he meets this Ethiopian. He's a great man, a religious man.

v. 28 And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

“And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.”

Talk about a set-up. This is really something. Great opportunity here—and he is reading where? “the prophet Isaiah”—the best place to be reading.

v. 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go up and join this chariot.”

“And the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go up and join this chariot.’”

Now he would not have gotten the second instructions if he hadn't been obedient to the first instructions. He had to go to Gaza first, then the second instructions were to go up and sit in the chariot.

“You’ve got to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only.”
(ref. James 1:22)

Once we’re obedient then the Lord gives new instructions. But until we’re obedient to what He said, we’re not going to get any new stuff.

v. 30 And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

“And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’”

v. 31 And he said, “How am I able to unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

“And he said, ‘How am I able to unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.’”

This is incredible!

“Just come on up here.” Philip is very sensitive to the man.
“What are you reading? Do you understand what you’re reading?”

“Well how can I unless somebody comes up?”

We're not like that.

Ruth Harms Calkin said it so well in one of her little poems:

(Tell Me Again, Lord, I Forget by Ruth Harms Calkin)

I spoke to her at the bus stop
But she turned the other way.
My immediate reaction:
A rush of resentment—
She's ignoring me
She doesn't really like me
I've always suspected it
Now I know.

Suddenly she looked toward me
Startled, but sincere:
“Forgive me—I didn't see you.”
(Until then I hadn't noticed
The agony lining her face.)
A hesitant pause
A catch in her voice—
“I just came from the doctor's office
Our little boy has leukemia
It's all a terrible nightmare.”

Lord, Lord
What loathsome selfishness.
A mother stricken with grief

Her heart soaked with pain
An hour of black catastrophe
And I thought only of me.
Cleanse me, Lord
Sensitize me
Until my first concern is for others
And my last concern is for me.
(source unknown)

Gordon and Gail MacDonald wrote a book called *If Those Who Reach Could Touch*. They talk about the sensitivity of Jesus. Even while He's hanging on the Cross, He's sensitive three times:

(If Those Who Reach Could Touch by Gordon and Gail MacDonald)

1. He's sensitive to the guys who are killing Him: "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing..."
2. He's sensitive to the guy hanging next to Him: "Today you'll be with Me in the paradise..."
3. He's sensitive to His mother who's grieving in front of Him, giving her to John: "Woman behold your son; son behold your mother."
(source unknown)

And they go on to say this:

(If Those Who Reach Could Touch by Gordon and Gail MacDonald)

Sensitivity means an eye that sees fatigue, unhappiness, expectancy, loneliness, or hurt. Sensitivity means a touch that discerns tension or weakness, energy or relaxation.
(source unknown)

E. Stanley Jones writes:

(If those Who Reach Could Touch by Gordon and Gail MacDonald)

You can judge how far you have risen in the scale of life by asking one question: How wisely and how deeply do I care? ... To be Christianized is to be sensitized: Christians are people who care. No one, anywhere, can come into authentic contact with Jesus Christ in personal surrender and obedience without beginning to care. It was the first reaction I felt when I arose from my knees in the hour of conversion. I felt as though I wanted to put my arms around the world and share this with everybody [I came in contact with].
(source unknown)

Here he's sensitive and he gets a great opportunity—verse 32.

v. 32 Now the passage of scripture which he was reading was this: “He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth.

“Now the passage of scripture which he was reading was this: ‘He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before his shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth.’”

v. 33 In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who shall describe his origin? For His life is taken from the earth.”

“In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who shall describe his origin? For His life is taken from the earth.”

v. 34 And the eunuch answering Philip said: “I am begging of you, concerning whom is the prophet saying this? Concerning himself or concerning someone else?”

“And the eunuch answering Philip said: ‘I am begging you, concerning whom is the prophet saying this? Concerning himself or concerning someone else?’”

What has he just finished reading? That’s Isaiah 53:7 and 8. Just prior to that we read in:

Isaiah 53:4-6

Surely he hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him, stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; and the chastisement of our peace was upon him,

and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we've turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He just finished reading that before he started reading this. Is he talking about himself or was he talking about someone else?

That's like going in to make a pitch to make a sale and the guy wants to close the deal before we get to the close! He wants to buy it but we say, "Hold it! I want to finish my pitch first! Let me get the whole story out, then you can get on!" He's already made up his mind.

He asks all the right questions!

v. 35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture he preached Jesus to him.

"And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture he preached Jesus to him."

v. 36 And as they were proceeding along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What is hindering me from being baptized?"

"And as they were proceeding along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What is hindering me from being baptized?'"

Now notice verse 37 is a little strange. It says:

v. 37 (omitted in earlier manuscripts)

“(omitted in earlier manuscripts)”

Now why is that there? In the King James we will hear Philip answer:

“If you will believe with all of your heart, you can.”

Now isn't that wonderful? The only problem is, that is not in the earliest manuscript.

When studying the Greek text, we get as close to the originals as we can get. And if something is added in a later manuscript that is absent in one of the earlier manuscripts, it's pretty certain that it's an addition.

So that thirty-seventh verse is in later manuscripts but it's absent in earlier ones. The closer we get to the original, the more we have the authentic or the real.

And so to be faithful to the text, we have to leave out verse 37 because of the principles of interpretation that are involved. And it makes good sense without it.

He says, “Look! Water! What is hindering me from being baptized?”

Philip's no dummy. He knows the guy's already bought the whole package.

v. 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him.

“So he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him.”

Philip and the eunuch probably came out of the water and the eunuch started singing:

“O happy day that fixed my choice on Thee,
my Savior and my God.
Well may this glowing heart rejoice
and tell its raptures all abroad.
‘Tis done, the great transaction’s done
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”
(source unknown)

v. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing.

“And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the

Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing.”

Notice Philip doesn't hang around to see to it that he gets the rest of the package by getting baptized in the Holy Spirit? He got the whole package before he went into the water and he left! The other guy “went on his way rejoicing.”

He's done! The work's been done! The message has been proclaimed! Jesus has been made personal to this man.

The Spirit of God caught Philip away. That's exactly the same word that's used in 1 Thessalonians 4 that we read earlier.

“The Spirit of the Lord is going to descend from heaven with a shout. The dead in Christ are going to raise first, and we which are alive and remain are going to be caught up—snatched away!” (ref. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

That's just one rapture there in Philip. There's a big one coming.

v. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea.

“But Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea.”

Now Caesarea's still about 30-35 miles north of Jerusalem so he's on the sea coast where we leave him at the end of our episode.

There are a number of lessons that we got out of this study.

Lesson #1: The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

They just keep spreading the Gospel.

Lesson #2: The persecution is permitted by God for a purpose.

Lesson #3: Nothing can stop these early followers of Christ from preaching the Word.

Lesson #4: The message spreads north to Samaria.

Lesson #5: Simon is a man of:

PROFESSION without POSSESSION,

ASSOCIATION without ACCEPTANCE,

RELIGION without a RELATIONSHIP.

Lesson #6: You cannot buy the gift of God with money.

Lesson #7: FACTS, FAITH and FEELINGS are the divine order of things.

God said it—that’s the FACT.

I believed it—that’s the FAITH.

That settled it—FEELINGS come and feelings go.

Lesson #8: Philip is a great illustration of how we are to witness to those who need to know Christ.

Listen to Dwight L. Moody’s last sermon and his last appeal for people to receive Christ:

(The Life of Dwight L. Moody by W. R. Moody)

Suppose we should write out tonight this excuse? How would it sound?

“To the King of Heaven: While sitting in Convention Hall, Kansas City, Mo., November 16, 1899, I received a very pressing invitation from one of your servants to be present at the marriage supper of Your only-begotten Son. I pray Thee have me excused.”

“Would you sign that, young man? Would you, mother? Would you come up to the reporters’ table, take a pen, and put your name down to such an excuse? You would say, ‘Let my right hand forget its cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, before I sign that.’ I doubt if there is one here who would sign it. Will you then pay no attention to God’s invitation? I beg of you, do not make light of it. It is a loving God inviting you to a feast, and God is not to be mocked. Go play with forked lightning, go trifle with pestilence and

disease, but trifle not with God.

“Just let me write out another answer: “To the King of Heaven: While sitting in Convention Hall, Kansas City, Mo., November 16, 1899, I received a pressing invitation from one of Your messengers to be present at the marriage supper of Your only-begotten Son. I hasten to reply. By the grace of God I will [indeed] be present.”

(source unknown)

Ruth Harms Calkin has a little poem called “Limping Home”:

(Tell Me Again, Lord, I Forget by Ruth Harms Calkin)

Lord—

With a crooked stick for a cane

I’m limping home.

Mocked and maligned

Stooped and stupid

Soiled and shabby

I limp toward You.

You could say, “I told you so.”

You could say, “It’s a little too late.”

You could say, “Wait while I think it over.”

You could sweep me under the rug—

We both know I deserve far less.

But when I see the Cross

And the Man who died there

Suddenly I know I limp

Toward unfathomable love

And there is forgiveness

Rushing toward me.
I don't ask for a banquet, Lord
Nor do I need a gold ring.
I'm so hungry
So thirsty
For You.
(source unknown)

Father, we thank You for Your Word. Thank You for Acts chapter 8. Thank You for showing us so much in these characters. Please Father, if there's someone that's been going through the motions without meaning, that You would draw them to Calvary for a fresh touch from Your hand. And grant to them a sensitivity to Your Spirit that is speaking to their hearts right now about doing something about this immediately. And Father we pray that as believers we learn what it is to be sensitive to Your Spirit in relationship with people, that we might have the glorious opportunity of seeing many come to know Jesus Christ because we're faithful in letting our light shine before men. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

A Practical Study of ACTS:

Take It To Them!

“Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

STUDY NUMBER SIX – ACTS 8:1-40

NOTES

v. 1 Then on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

v. 2 And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.

v. 3 But Saul kept on ravaging the church, entering house after house, dragging off both men and women, handing them over to prison.

v. 4 Therefore, those who were scattered went about proclaiming the good news of the word.

v. 5 And Philip, having gone down to the city of Samaria, began proclaiming Christ to them.

v. 6 And the multitudes with one accord were giving attention to the things spoken by Philip, hearing them and seeing the signs which he was performing.

v. 7 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.

v. 8 And there was much rejoicing in that city.

v. 9 Now there was a certain man whose name was Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;

v. 10 to whom they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention, saying, “This man is what is called the great power of God.”

v. 11 And they were giving attention to him because for a considerable length of time he had astonished them with his magic arts.

NOTES

v. 12 Now when they believed Philip, as he was proclaiming the good news concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized both men and women.

v. 13 And even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he was continuing on with Philip; observing signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

v. 14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,

v. 15 who came down and prayed for them, in order that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

v. 16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; but they had been baptized only into the name of the Lord Jesus.

v. 17 Then they were laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

v. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was being given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

v. 19 saying, "Give to me also this authority, in order that everyone on whom I lay my hands may be receiving the Holy Spirit."

v. 20 But Peter said to him: "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

v. 21 You are not having a part in this matter concerning which I am speaking, for your heart is not right before God.

v. 22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and beseech the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

v. 23 For I am seeing that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

v. 24 Then Simon answering said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that none of the things of which you have spoken may come upon me."

v. 25 Then after they had borne their testimony and had spoken the word of the Lord, they were starting back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

v. 26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Arise and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This road is in a desert.)

v. 27 And he arose and went; and behold, a man, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a royal official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; who had come to Jerusalem for the purpose of worshipping.

NOTES

v. 28 And he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

v. 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

v. 30 And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

v. 31 And he said, "How am I able to unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

v. 32 Now the passage of scripture which he was reading was this: "He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He does not open His mouth.

v. 33 In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who shall describe his origin? For His life is taken from the earth."

v. 34 And the eunuch answering Philip said: "I am begging of you, concerning whom is the prophet saying this? Concerning himself or concerning someone else?"

v. 35 And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture he preached Jesus to him.

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v. 37 (omitted in earlier manuscripts)

v. 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him.

v. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing.

v. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Acts 8:1-40 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What happened to the church after Stephen's death, according to verse 1?

3. What did those people do who were scattered by the persecution, according to verse 4?

4. What does Simon do wrong, according to verses 18-20?

5. What did the angel of the Lord say to Philip in verse 26?

6. To whom did Philip witness in the desert, according to verse 27?

7. Describe Philip's technique in sharing his faith with this man.

8. According to Philip, who is Isaiah the prophet speaking about in Isaiah 53:34,35?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

LESSON #2: The persecution is permitted by God for a purpose.

LESSON #3: Nothing can stop these early followers of Christ from preaching the Word.

LESSON #4: The message spreads north to Samaria.

LESSON #5: Simon is a man of: profession without possession, association without acceptance, and religion without relationship

LESSON #6: You cannot buy the gift of God with money.

LESSON #7: Facts, faith, and feelings are the divine order of things.

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