

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 27

I. Exposition of Chapter Eight (continued).

A. Verse 3 – “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.”

1. “...he made havoc...” – The meaning of the word “havoc” is, “to dishonor”, “defile”, “devastate” and “ruin”. “Like the laying waste of a vineyard by a wild boar”¹ Dr. Robert Utley defines it as; “the tearing of a body by an animal.”² The violence and damage Saul did to the church cannot be underestimated.

“Saul is the leading figure in this great persecution. He ravaged and laid waste the church. What a miracle of grace to hear him later refer to his conduct, ‘I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons, both men and women’” (22:4)³

B. Verse 4 – “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” -

“The persecution was severe, but it worked for the advance of the gospel. The many Christians who were compelled to leave Jerusalem carried the gospel with them wherever they went. Thus was fulfilled the second part of their Lord’s commission: ‘You shall be my witnesses ... in all Judea and Samaria’” (Acts 1:8).⁴

1. “...preaching the word...” – The word for “preaching” has only appeared one other time so far in this book (5:42). The meaning is important. It literally means; “to communicate good news concerning something”⁵ Preaching “good news” is preaching Christ (cf. verse 5) and preaching “...the things concerning the kingdom of God.” (cf. verse 12).

“Now those who were scattered abroad went about [*through the land from place to place*] preaching the glad tidings, the Word [*the doctrine concerning the attainment through Christ of salvation in the kingdom of God*].”
Acts 8:4 – Amplified Bible

2. The Christians scattered to many parts of the known world of that day and proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ. Dr. Stanley Horton writes:

“Those who were scattered did not settle down. Instead, hundreds of them kept traveling from place to place, spreading the good news, the gospel. Acts 11:19 says some traveled as far as Cyprus, Phoenicia, and Antioch. We can be sure they traveled equally far in other directions as well. Luke gives us hints of this from time to time, letting us know there were Christians in Galilee, Tyre, and Sidon and even in Rome before Paul arrived there.”⁶

C. Verses 5-6 – “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.”

1. Philip was one of the seven mentioned in 6:5 and later became known as “...Philip the evangelist” (21:8) who had four daughters who prophesied (21:9).
2. They “heeded” (to pay close attention to something, with the possible implication of agreement)⁷ the things Philip spoke because they were “...hearing and seeing...” the miracles. This is another example of the Lord “...confirming the word with signs following.” (Mark 16:20). Horton asserts, “Luke gives us an example of what must have happened wherever the believers went.”⁸
3. Who were the Samaritans? The Jews generally had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9) because they regarded them as racial and religious half-breeds. Their ancestors were the Israelites who had intermarried with the Gentiles, after the Assyrians sent them to live there following Assyria’s conquest of Israel in 722 B.C.

“At first, they had worshiped the Lord plus other gods (2 Kings 17:24-41). Later they built a temple on Mount Gerizim. But about 128 B.C. the Jews under King John Hyrcanus went up and destroyed that temple and forced

¹A.T. Robertson, The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. III, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 101.

²Robert James Utley, *Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*, vol. Volume 3B, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2003), 111.

³Arno C. Gaebelien, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Exposition* (New York: “Our Hope” Publication Office, 1912), 142.

⁴F. F. Bruce, *Acts: Bible Study Commentary* (Nashville, TN; Bath, England: Kingsley Books, 2017), Ac 8:1b-8.

⁵Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 411.

⁶Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 160.

⁷Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 353.

⁸Horton, 161.

the Samaritans to give up their idolatry. In the New Testament times the Samaritans followed the law of Moses much as the Jews did, but said sacrifices must be made on Mount Gerizim instead of at the Jerusalem temple (John 4:20).”⁹

D. Verses 7-8 – “For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.” – Luke now is more specific as to the kinds of miracles the Samaritans witnessed. Philip, by the power of God, cast out “unclean” spirits from those who were demon possessed. This is a continuation of the ministry of Jesus who was known for doing the same (cf. Mark 1:23-26; 5:2-13; 7:25-30; Matthew 10:1; John 14:12; Mark 16:15-20 [17]).

“Luke then tells us what kind of miracles enthralled the people: power over the demonic powers and over various illnesses (8:7-8). The “shrieks” are not of pain but of frustrated defeat, as the evil powers turned out to have no power in the face of the overwhelming might of the Spirit in Philip. Demons are “impure” or “unclean” because they are filled with evil and taint everything they encounter. The “paralyzed or lame” are healed by both Jesus (Luke 5:17-26) and the apostles (Acts 3:1-10; 9:33-35). The natural result was “great joy in that city,” not only because people had been healed and delivered, but also because they had found salvation in Christ.”¹⁰

E. Verses 9-13 – Simon the Sorcerer’s Confession of Faith.

1. In verses 9-11, we are introduced to Simon who had practiced “sorcery” and had greatly influenced and astonished the people of Samaria. The Greek word for “sorcery” means, “to practice magic, presumably by invoking supernatural powers”¹¹ It states in verse 11 that he had “astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.” We can conclude, however, that the Gospel and the power of God astounded the people even more!
2. Sorcery is always condemned in Scripture and is equated to demonic power. The Bible warns believers against practicing divination. **Leviticus 19:26** warns, “Do not practice divination or sorcery.” **Deuteronomy 18:10-11** forbids any Israelite from engaging in divination. **II Kings 17:17** indicates that divination is one of the things that provokes the Lord to anger. In the New Testament, sorcery is called a “work of flesh” which diametrically opposed to the “fruit of the Spirit” (**Galatians 5:16-24**). No Christian should engage in any form of divination or sorcery.
3. Verses 12-13 – When the people including Simon, believed the things Philip preached “...concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus...”, they were baptized in water – as was Simon as well.

“Some have questioned whether Simon truly believed. But the Bible says he did and does not qualify the statement in any way. Moreover, Philip, a man led by the Spirit, surely would not have baptized him if he had not given evidence of being a true believer.”¹²

F. Verses 14-24 – The Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Simon’s Sin.

1. Verses 14-17 – The new Samaritan believers were saved and water baptized, yet Philip, and the apostles, knew they needed another experience.
2. When the Jerusalem apostles (presumably the twelve), heard that the Samaritans had “...received the word of God” (verse 14), they sent Peter and John to Samaria to pray for them “...that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them...” (verses 15-16).
3. Verses 17-18 – The apostles laid their hands on the believers and they received the Holy Spirit upon them. This so impressed Simon that he offered them money to be able to do the same.

“When the Spirit came upon the Samaritans, there were obvious outward signs and expressions apparent even to Simon, the sorcerer...It is reasonable to conclude that the outward demonstrations were like those that occurred after the Spirit’s first coming on Jesus’ followers on the day of Pentecost, mainly the speaking in other tongues.”¹³

4. Verse 19 – Simon’s foolish request.
5. Verses 20-23 – Peter rebukes Simon.
 - a. Verse 20 – “...you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!” – Take note that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is called a “gift” (cf. 2:38; 10:45).
 - b. Verse 21 – “...for your heart is not right in the sight of God.” – This is simply stating that his motives were not right.
 - c. Verses 22-23 – Peter’s command to repent.

⁹Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2001), 161.

¹⁰Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 158.

¹¹Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 544.

¹²Horton, 163.

¹³*Fire Bible: Student Edition*, Donald C. Stamps, Gen. Ed. (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers Int’l, 2007), 1531.