

To Samaria and Beyond!

Acts 8:4-25

September 13th, 2020

The church was on the move. Persecution scatters them but persecution always allows the gospel to spread. You might think if they are being tortured for their faith, killed for what they believe in, that they might begin to be quiet, to hide. What does it say? Those who were scattered went about preaching the Word! They kept being faithful witnesses for Jesus Christ. They continued to testify, to tell the truth, about Jesus Christ.

1. Christians doing God's work leads to joy in the city.

The good work that Philip was doing in the city was preaching the gospel, the good news that Jesus Christ has come to save sinners and reconcile them to God by believing in him. First Philip preaches the gospel message. The preaching of the gospel is the key to conversion. Afterwards he performs signs and wonders and the Holy Spirit is given, those things validate the conversions.

The most important work is the proclaiming of the gospel message to and in our city. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. If you will by faith trust in Jesus Christ, you can be made right with God and spared from an eternity separated from him. Working for God doesn't just mean telling people about Jesus Christ. It means seeking to live like Jesus lived. Our God is a God of restoration and reconciliation.

What things do we see in our city that needs to be restored? Who are the people we know who need to be made right with God? We should seek to work as God's ambassadors to help bring hope and healing to the hurting here in Alice. We don't run from challenges. We don't hide from unbelievers.

We reach out, we engage the community, we answer the skeptics, and the causes we seek to be a part of, the people we reach out to, we do all of it while faithfully proclaiming the saving work of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, as the way, the

truth, and the life. Proclaiming the gospel message will lead to gospel action. And you can't have gospel action without the gospel message.

2. We must be able to easily identify false teachers because they easily deceive.

Many will claim to be working for God but in reality they are working for themselves. You have to be able to discern. People thought Simon was working for God. He said he was great. In our text he is called "The Great Power". This is a Samaritan designation for the supreme deity. Nearly all Samaritans considered Simon to be the highest god.

Someone working for God won't be exalting himself or herself. The genuine Christian points to God not himself or herself. Philip and Simon are both doing signs. What's the difference? Philip proclaimed Christ, Simon proclaimed himself.

When God's people know God's Word, they will be able to tell who is and who is not a genuine teacher of God's Word. False teachers easily trick people, even today, because they do not know God's Word.

John 10:27

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."

If God's people will commit themselves to the regular reading and study of the Bible, we can put a lot of false prophets and fake pastors out of business. Their churches are full because we believe them. They make millions because we buy their books. They meet in churches that used to be homes for professional sports teams because we keep sending them our money.

3. The gospel has the power to overcome evil and change hearts and lives.

Acts 8:12-13

“But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Simon himself believed and was baptized.

The gospel is powerful but that power is only unleashed when it is preached. People in Samaria went from being amazed by a sorcerer, who practiced black magic for personal gain, to being amazed by the power of God. And if that is not enough the sorcerer himself was also overwhelmed by the power of the gospel! They crossed from darkness to light. From death to life. But they had to hear the gospel for that to happen.

For someone to hear the gospel we must share it with them. For us to share the gospel with others we must first be compelled to share it with them. For us to be compelled to share the gospel with others it first has to make a difference in our life. If Jesus doesn't mean much to us, we will never share him with anybody else. Our response to Jesus will determine our outreach to others. If we love Jesus, we will share him with others. If we don't, we won't.

Illustration- Jesus doesn't need any secret admirers. Jesus doesn't want to be your guilty pleasure.

In Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus says, *“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.”*

4. The Holy Spirit is a gift from God and cannot be bought.

Simon essentially bids to purchase the license that will give him the territorial rights to distribute the Holy Spirit in Samaria. Perhaps he was still stuck in his old ways and now he was thinking he could exploit God's power to make money.

2nd Kings 5- Naaman, Elisha, and Gehazi

The Holy Spirit is not for sell and cannot be directed by humans. Instead, the role of the Holy Spirit is to direct the lives and activities of humans. We are not to try and control the Spirit, but rather, we are to let the Spirit control us.

Illustration- Moana

They had forgotten the way. Their ancestors were voyagers. They stopped voyaging and the island begins to suffer, to crumble. The people needed help. They needed to remember the way of their ancestors. The way forward was the way back.

As Christians, I wonder if the same could be said of us today. We look around we see things falling apart. We see things crumbling. I'm not talking about in America. I'm talking about in our churches. I'm talking about Christians.

We've lost the way. We've gotten lazy. We've forgotten the way of our ancestors, the way of our brothers and sisters in Christ who went before us. We have forgotten the way of Jesus Christ. For us to move forward we may just need to look back.