

Acts 8 Saul Persecutes the Church

Now Saul approved of putting Stephen 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 for the apostles. 2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and mourned loudly for him. 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and he would drag away men and women and put them in prison.

Philip in Samaria

4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went through places preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming the Christ to them. 6 The crowds were paying attention with one mind to what was being said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. 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 or limped on crutches were healed.

8 So there was much rejoicing in that city. 9 Now a man named Simon had previously been practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; 10 and all the people, from small to great, were paying attention to him, saying, "This man is the Power of God that is called Great." 11 And they were paying attention to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic arts.

12 But when they believed Philip as he was preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were being baptized. 13 Now 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 repeatedly amazed. 14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they would receive the Holy Spirit. 16 (For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could acquire the gift of God with money!

21 You have no part or share in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Therefore, repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart will be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of unrighteousness." 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."

An Ethiopian Receives Christ

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. 26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Get ready and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) 27 So he got ready and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading Isaiah the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." 30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED LIKE A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND LIKE A LAMB THAT IS SILENT BEFORE ITS SHEARER, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. 33 IN HUMILIATION HIS JUSTICE WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL DESCRIBE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS TAKEN AWAY FROM THE EARTH."

34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. 36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch *said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 38 And he ordered that the chariot stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea.

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

What questions were provoked within you?

Did anything confuse you?

Did anything move you emotionally?

Did God instruct you to do something?

Did you gain any insight into God's character?

1. There is always something that sparks a fire into flame.
2. What do you think about Paul's hearty agreement to the persecution of the church?
3. Persecution is an opportunity to refine Christians. Would you agree?
4. Why did the Apostles stay in Jerusalem even though everyone else was driven out?
5. Good men die and then what?
6. Saul has launched himself into the persecution of God's people with immense aggression.
7. The scattered Christians began to scatter the seed of the gospel!
8. It's Philip's turn to take centre stage as an evangelist and miracle worker.

9. What is an evangelist?
10. Phillip was into the expelling of unclean spirits, healing those who were sick and working signs and wonders.
11. To rejoice is to let yourself be glad by the good things happening. Can you recall their being such a time in your life?
12. A magic man named Simon worked in the practice of the dark arts. Why did people give him their attention?
13. Why did they call Simon 'the great power of God'?
14. Philip's message drew the people away from Simon towards following God. They came because they invested their faith in the truth message that Philip shared with them.
15. Even Simon, the magic man, believed Phillip and was even baptised. What is baptism for?
16. Now, it was the signs and wonders that had attracted Simon's attention, not the message of the gospel.
17. Simon even tries to buy, from the apostles, the power to work these signs and wonders, even though he already had power!
18. Simon recognised the Holy Spirit power worked through the authority of the words the apostles spoke.
19. The apostles got this authority from God's , revealed by Jesus Christ, this came from the conviction they had invested their faith in.
20. Peter is angry at the suggestion that Simon thought he could buy something so pure and holy and yet on TV today we see the gospel being pedalled for money. What do you think about this?
21. That kind of thinking was an insult to God and revealed Simon as not having the same Spirit as the apostles.
22. Peter invites Simon to repent and ask God for mercy, he uses the words 'if possible, the intentions of your heart'. What is Peter saying to Simon?
23. Is Peter suggesting that this sin is coming close to the unforgivable sin?
24. What was Peter seeing that made him say what he said?
25. Simon seeks intercession and asks for mercy from God that he would be saved.
26. Philip on his way home preaches to the Samaritans, but when Jesus was here he chose not to.
27. Philip is taken, transported to Straight Street to meet an Ethiopian Eunuch who was reading from the book of Isaiah and was confused.
28. Philip's question to the Eunuch invites him to ask Philip for help.
29. It is only when people invite you into their conversation that we have the right to speak to them straight.
30. Winning hearts before we win their minds.
31. 'Who is the prophet talking about?' says the Eunuch. Philip's response 'it's Jesus Christ, He is the fulfilment of the prophets'.
32. Philip preached Jesus to him, it means tell the story of Jesus.
33. The Eunuch asks 'here is water, what is stopping me from being baptised?'
34. The signature on the contract had not yet been signed.
35. I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the saviour of the world.
36. They both went into the water, having been baptised Philip is snatched away by the Holy Spirit and taken away to another place. What do you make of that?
37. In these kind of situations we have a choice, decide to believe what we don't understand, or allow what we don't understand to undermine what we believe!
38. The Eunuch went on his way rejoicing. Filled with joy at all that had happened to

him.

39. Philip was in another place talking to other people – what must Philip of thought?