

"The Persecution"

Part 2

Acts 8

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we started into chapter 8 where the persecution broke out after the death of Stephen. We were introduced to Saul who made havoc of the church. Saul was a terrorist and he literally dragged people from their homes and committed them to prison which was the first step to their execution.

Acts 26:9-11

⁹ *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*

¹⁰ *Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.*

¹¹ *And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.*

In the scattering of the church there was another of the first deacons whom God sent to Samaria. His name is Philip and starting tonight we are going to follow him to Samaria.

➤ **Philip in Samaria**

Notice Acts 8:4-5

Last week we considered how the Samaritans were despised by the Jews and Jews would have nothing to do with them.

John 4:7-9

⁷ *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.*

⁸ *(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

⁹ *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*

Then in Acts 8:5 we see that Philip went to Samaria and preached Jesus Christ unto them.

Application:

Here in Philip's life we see what happens to a man's heart when he is saved, and he is walking with the Lord. Passed offences are let go and he begins to see people through the eyes of Jesus. He begins to see his enemies as lost souls in need of a Saviour. He is willing to lay aside past differences and reach out to them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:15-17

¹⁵ So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

*¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: **for it is the power of God** unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation and in that we know that the Gospel has the power to change lives and bring people who were enemies together as fellow believers united for the cause of Jesus Christ.

Acts 1:13-14

*¹³ And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and **Matthew**, James the son of Alphaeus, and **Simon Zelotes**, and Judas the brother of James.*

¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Notice Acts 8:6-8

Here we see that Philip was given the power to perform miracles just as the apostles. These miracles which Philip did were for the purpose of validating the message of the Gospel which he preached. God used the miracles to prepare the way for the message and the Samaritans were overjoyed.

Here in Samaria is a picture of what happens when the glorious light of God breaks through the darkness. It is then that sadness, depression, discouragement, and immorality begin to vanish away, and true joy and peace come flooding in.

Application:

This is what our world is searching for today, but they are looking in the wrong places.

John 8:31-36

³¹ Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

³² And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

³³ They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

³⁴ Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

³⁵ And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

³⁶ If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

The unsaved world is enslaved to sin today and for them it is impossible to produce any righteousness or to worship God. God created man to worship Him and to live in righteousness so sin keeps man from living the life God has created him for and this then brings misery to the unsaved life. People need the light of the Gospel to break through the darkness and to set them free. This is what was happening in Samaria.

➤ **Simon the Wizard**

Notice Acts 8:9

This verse opens with the Word "BUT" which is a contrast to the joy found in the previous verse. This Word helps us to know that what we are about to read is something that is going to attempt to drain the joy from the people.

Before we get into this text let me help you to understand what we are about to see. Let us remember that in our study so far, we have seen multiple attempts by Satan to cause problems within the church.

Acts 5:1-3

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

² *And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

³ But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

This was an attempt to bring sin in the church in the form of deception.

Acts 6:1

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

This was an attempt to cause division within the church.

Now we come to chapter 8, and we see another attempt by Satan to cause problems. What is he going to do with Simon?

Matthew 13:24-28

²⁴ Another parable he put forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

²⁵ But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

²⁶ But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

²⁷ So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

²⁸ He said unto them, An enemy hath done this.

Simon will prove to be a tare among the wheat. There is much controversy over whether or not this man was actually saved but I believe the verses in this text make it very clear that he was NOT. Let us notice Peter's words to Simon.

Acts 8:21-22

²¹ Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

²² Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

Notice Acts 8:9-11

Satan had used this man to deceive the people of the city and they believed that he was a man of God because of the powers that he had. Simon had a connection with the demonic world and the power of the demons. This is how he did what he did. Simon promoted himself as a "great one" and the people believed that he was. It was to the point that the people of the city worshipped this man from the least to the greatest!

Notice Acts 8:12-13

When we first look at verse 13, we want to rejoice and say, "Praise God!" Simon was saved. But I believe we need to be very careful here. Let us search the Scriptures to see another group.

John 2:23-25

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

²⁴ But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

²⁵ And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

Here was a group of people that believed in Jesus when they saw His miracles, but we also read that Jesus would not commit Himself to them because He knew their hearts. These people did not believe unto salvation they were just simply impressed with His miracles. Let us notice another situation.

John 3:1-2

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

² The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Here is the account of Nicodemus and he too believed in the miracles of Jesus and that He was sent from God. But Jesus goes on to inform Nicodemus that he needed to be born again.

John 3:3

³ Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus was just like the group in John 2, they all believed but their faith was not unto salvation. They were only impressed with His miracles. They all needed to be born again.

This is the very same place that Simon is at. He is impressed with the miracles of Philip, but he does not believe unto salvation.

Application:

This is recorded here to give us a warning. There have been many people over the years who have said, "Yes I believe!" But we must be very careful when we evaluate these kinds of people. We must NEVER give someone the false impression they are saved when they might not be. Notice the parable of the sower.

Luke 8:11-15

¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

¹² Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

*¹³ They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, **which for a while believe**, and in time of temptation fall away.*

¹⁴ And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

¹⁵ But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

True saving faith will be manifest in a person's life.

James 2:14-18

¹⁴ What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

¹⁵ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

¹⁶ And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

¹⁷ Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

James knew that TRUE saving faith would be seen in the works of a person's life.

Conclusion:

Simon's profession of faith made a way for Satan to plant an unbeliever within the church. Let us understand that if Satan cannot defeat the Church, he will join it to get on the inside. This is a wolf in sheep's clothing.