

Living out your faith Pt 10
Acts 8:1-40

V1-8

- Last week we left off with Stephen, that great deacon and apologist, being martyred for the faith. It is also when we are introduced to Saul of Tarsus. He was an eyewitness to the defense Stephen gave to the Sanhedrin. He also heard the piercing sounds of his comrades screaming and yelling insults while beholding the Angelic countenance of a man who's having a vision of heaven while being stoned to death. And he heard him pray aloud for God to forgive his killers. Although Saul didn't throw a rock, he stood watch over the clothes of them who did participate in Stephen's murder (verse 7:58). Verse 1 again says Saul was consenting of Stephen's death and it triggered a wide spread assault against the church causing believers to be scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
- Jesus Who is the Prince of peace and preaches the gospel of grace, did not come to bring peace but a sword that separates; therefore those who reject the gospel will be at odds with them who accept the gospel (**Luke 12:51-53**). You see two sets of emotions here one is greatly saddened over Stephen's death told to us in Verse 2 while in Verse 3, the other is spurred on by his death to do even further harm to the church. Although Saul wasn't a thrower of stones he did use his own hands to drag men and women out of their homes and throw them in prison. Saul was a cruel persecutor of the faith as we see but we must remember that he really thought that persecuting the believers was one way of serving God. Later on this would haunt him where in **1 Timothy 1:12-13** – calling himself a blasphemer (he denounced Jesus Christ), a persecutor, and injurious (violent), **Acts 26:10-11** where we read he tortured believers and forced them to denounce their faith creating havoc-the verb describing a wild animal devouring its prey.
- Its been said that “persecution does to the church what wind does to seed: It scatters it causing it to produce a greater harvest”. The word scattered- diaspeiro, as to scatter seed. Where as the believers in Jerusalem were God's seed, and the persecution was used by God to plant them in new soil so they could bear more fruit. Verse 11:19 - Some went throughout Judea and Samaria and even to more distant fields.
- Verse 4 we're introduced to another link to Stephen, one of the seven deacons chosen in chapter 7 a man named Philip. He was a Greek speaking Jew and was able to relate to people outside of Jerusalem. God would use him mightily. Philip not only declared God's word but he also demonstrated God's power by performing miracles Verse 5- 6, bringing great joy Verse 8. Notice the order how miracles follow the believer not the believer following miracles as often is the case today.
 1. The central theme was Christ (Verse 5)
 2. Christ as the central theme leads to liberation from bondage of sin (Verse 7)
 3. The message of Christ brings joy (Verse 8)

V9-25

- Anytime a ministry is successful people of all types will be drawn to it, but eventually motives will be revealed. Simon stops his magic because he doesn't

amaze people anymore, as there's a greater power before him. Simon's belief it is pointed out in verse 13, that he's following Philip and not Christ. Many of us at some point were attracted to Christ through an individual, a circumstance, or a ministry, but a time comes when those things fade away and Christ is the central focus.

- Verse 14 - once word gets back to the Apostles about the goings on in Samaria they send Peter and John to help with the revival. An important point – notice that Philip fades into the backdrop. Why? Because he is an evangelist and he's done his job which is to spread the gospel. Now, its time for the Apostles to give confirmation to this new work and disciple those who have given their lives to Christ. Verse 15-17 – is not unto salvation but for empowering them for service, there are three relationships the believer has with the Holy Spirit
 1. He's with us (Para) alongside us
 2. He's in us (en- the Greek, in- the English)
 3. He comes upon us (epi)
- In verse 12 they were saved but verse 17 was when they were empowered by Him, this is clear as the sky until someone's theology or denomination gets a hold of it. Verse 18-19 – once Simon who is familiar with the supernatural having bewitched the people for years (verse 9) sees this and his true motives begin to surface. He reverts back to his old nature, as a magician after observing a good trick, will often offer money in exchange for its secret. Simon wants this power, but not to live for the Lord, instead he wants power so he can control people as he once did. His background was one of deception and he sees this as a way to become great in people's eyes again. People want to be great so they profess to have power, and the irony is that the power is available but we must humble ourselves and not exalt ourselves if we are to possess it. Verse 20-21- Peter rebukes him severely.
- Many have asked the question was Simon ever saved? Peter tells him he has no part or portion of this work of God and that includes salvation:
 1. Your money perishes with you. No believer will ever perish.
 2. You have no part or portion in this matter-in other words no fellowship.
 3. Your heart is not right with God. Your heart becomes right when saved.
 4. You are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity. This describes the unsaved.
- Because Simon was following Philip that didn't mean he was saved. When he was told to repent instead of repenting he asked Peter to pray for him because he didn't have a relationship with God to pray for himself. Simon was so close, but remember to be almost saved is to be totally lost, and many are in this category.

V26-40

- Back to Philip, he was willing to leave the crowds in order to deal with one lost soul. This is the attitude the Lord desires for us, that we'll drop everything if it means just one person coming to Christ. Philip is told to leave but he's not told why. After seeing the caravan he could have thought "Oh I'll take it from here"; however, in verse 29 he waits until the Spirit of God, which led him there, tells him to go. The Ethiopian represents many people today who are religious, they read the scriptures and claim to seek truth yet do not have a saving faith in Jesus

Christ. They're sincere, yet lost! They need a Philip, and upon hearing where the man was Philip joins him and preaches Christ to him nothing else. Verse 36 Notice, salvation first, baptism later, never invert these. Verse 40 – Philip continuing the work traveling and preaching the gospel.