

THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: SCATTERED IN THE WIND. (Acts 8)

A. The Suffering:

- *“And Saul approved of their killing him (Stephen). On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.” Acts 8:1*
- Compare with Jesus’ command: *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

B. The Spreading:

- *“...a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.” Acts 8:1*
- The word “scattered” comes from the same root Greek word as the word “seed”. The hidden picture is one of God spreading the seed of His Word on to the ground all over the place and not just in Jerusalem.
- The thousands of Christians who made up this new church had not even begun to fulfill this great commission, now found themselves fleeing for their lives to the surrounding regions of Judea and Samaria.
- *“But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.” Acts 8:4*
- Contrasts:
 - *“Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.” Acts 8:2*
 - *“But Saul was ravaging the church, entering house after house, he dragged off both men and women and committed them to prison.” Acts 8:3*

C. The Servant: Philip

D. The Sowing:

- The crowd: *“Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city.” Acts 8:5-8*
- The sorcerer: *“A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, amazing the people of Samaria and claiming to be someone great...They listened closely to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic.” Acts 8:9,11*
 - *“But now the people believed Philip’s message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.” Acts 8:12-13*
 - *“Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him. But Jesus didn’t trust them, because He knew all about people.” John 2:23-24*
 - The response: *“When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money and said. ‘Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’” Acts 8:18-19*
 - The rebuke: *“May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.” Acts 8:20-23*
 - The result: *“Then Simon answered, ‘Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me.’” Acts 8:24*

- The Ethiopian:
 - A God-fearing man returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem where he had gone to worship in the holy temple, a distance of about 2000 kms in his chariot. Yet he was still searching. He had not received answers to his most pressing questions. And he was left with a spiritual hunger.
 - *“As for Philip, an angel of the Lord said to him, ‘Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ So he started out, and he met the treasurer of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under the Kandake, the queen of Ethiopia. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.” Acts 8:26-28*
 - Divine appointments cannot happen without an obedient Christ follower – someone who will listen first and then obey without delay.
 - Philip’s obedience:
 - *“So he started out.....*
 - *“The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’” Acts 8:29*
 - *“Then Philip ran up to the chariot...” Acts 8:30*
 - *“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” 2 Chronicles 16:9*
 - *“Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ Philip asked.” Acts 8:3*
 - *“How can I,’ he said, ‘unless someone explains it to me?’ So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.” Acts 8:31*
 - *“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.” Acts 8:35*

D. The ‘Sprouting’:

- *“As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?’ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.” Acts 8:37*
- *“In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world.” 1 John 5:3-4*
- *“When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.” Acts 8:39*

E. The Significance:

- This is the heart of our God. Philip has been reaching out in a crusade like manner to the throngs and yet God calls him to leave so that he might reach one person! If you have ever entertained the thought that you don’t matter to God – this should dispel that notion forever. He cares about the one. He cares about you. You have a value to Him that cannot be estimated because He gave His Son for you.
- God always responds to the openness of anyone earnestly seeking Him.
- In the early days of the church, believers were incredibly passionate about those who didn’t know Jesus yet. Are you moving toward non-Christians with passion these days? Or has your flame dwindled and your heart grown colder and more afraid?
- When is the last time you engaged in a spiritual conversation with someone, and you knew that God had you right there at that moment in time by divine appointment to talk about what matters most in life?
- Where is the chariot that you are supposed to stay near? What is the equivalent of the chariot for you? Maybe it’s people who live right in your neighborhood. Maybe it’s people that you work with every day. People you go to school with.
- You and I cannot hope to have any impact if we don’t have contact with those who don’t know the Lord.
- Confess, repent, commit to reaching out to others with the Good News and go on your way rejoicing!