

Acts 8

The Church Reaches Out....

Can you find in the death of Stephen....and in the first 4 verses of Chapter 8...a reason to believe the scripture “ All things work together to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose”?

What are some of the reasons that Paul knew this scripture that he wrote is and always will be true?

Chapter 8 is an important chapter in the history of the church. The Church began by being a purely Jewish institution.

Acts 6 shows the first murmurings of the great debate about the acceptance of the Gentiles.

Stephen had had a mind far above national delimitations.

Persecution scattered the Church abroad and where they went they took their gospel.

Philip who, like Stephen, was one of the Seven and who is to be distinguished from the Philip who was one of the Twelve.

Philip preached to the Samaritans.

The Samaritans formed a natural bridge between Jew and Gentile for they were half Jew and half Gentile in their racial descent.

Incident with the Ethiopian eunuch in which the gospel takes a grip in going to a wider circle...gathering in even more of the world.

The church had no conception of a world mission; but when we read Chapter 8 (in light of what was soon to happen) we see the Church unconsciously being moved towards her destiny....reaching the world for Christ.

Are we continuing that trend...reaching to win the world for Christ?

Acts 8:1b-8

Jerusalem had ceased to be a safe place for followers of Jesus, so they found themselves fleeing into the countryside and towns around the city (Judea) or pushing further north to settle in Samaria (verse 16).

Why do you suppose the Apostles did not flee? Were they in hiding? How did they avoid being arrested?

Stephen is not forgotten... "Godly men gave him a decent burial...and there was mourning by those that buried him."

Paul (Saul) persecuted the Church even more (v.3)...systematic, hateful, enthusiastic persecution...to men and women of the Jesus "the Way" movement.

Philip...one of the deacons mentioned with Stephen...began his campaign of preaching in Samaria...healings took place, demons cast out. The Apostles had layed hands on them (the Deacons) and anointed them and the power of God went with them.

Instead of the gospel dying, the gospel was spreading. What does this tell us?

The Good News can cross cultural, religious and racial boundaries, bringing healing and forgiveness.... What do we mean forgiveness....forgiveness of what?

If we, as Christians, were thrown out of homes....and ran out of town....watching our homes burned...maybe our families or part of our families killed...would we retaliate? Would we want revenge? Would we respond as the hypocrites do...or as Peter? Or as Jesus, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"?

Will someone pray that our challenges in this life to be no more than what our minds and hearts can stand?

Acts 8:9-14

Philip continues his ministry and comes into contact with a local ‘sorcerer’. The apostles arrive to lend a hand and encourage Philip.

*New character on the scene....Simon, the sorcerer.
Rival for Philip...*

Both of them do astounding things which amaze the people....but there the similarity ends.

*Simon’s displays of wonder are called ‘magic’ (v. 11).
Philip’s are called ‘miracles’ (v. 13).*

*Simon talks about himself (v. 9b)
Philip talks about God (v. 12)*

*After Simon’s ‘magic’ people follow him (v. 11a).
After Philip’s ‘miracles’ people follow Jesus (v. 12b).*

Simon has to have what Philip has...He believes in what Philip has is genuine...Simon is baptized. Simon himself is astonished at what happens when Philip speaks the Word of God and lays hands on people.

The saved, baptized people in Samaria received the baptism of the Holy Ghost...when Peter and John placed their hands on them.

It was an act separate from salvation...separate from water baptism...and, since Simon wanted to have the same power they did...what made it so enticing to Simon that he would pay for the power?

Give me reasons that what Philip, Peter and John had to offer, no money could buy.....

Why is 'motive' so important in calculating the risk of being a Christian....Why is 'motive' important in you coming to Church, doing the Lord's work?

Acts 8:14-25

What are some things that cannot be bought and sold?

Salvation..Baptism of the Holy Spirit...Character...Love...Goodness...(The Fruit of the Spirit)

Things Which Cannot Be Bought and Sold

Simon was impressed with the visible effects of the laying on of hands and he tried to buy the ability to do what the apostles could do.

Simon had two (2) faults:

- 1. He was not interested in bringing the Holy Spirit to others so much as in the power and prestige it would bring to himself.*
- 2. Simon forgot that certain gifts are dependent on character; money cannot buy them.*

Acts 8:26-40

The Ethiopian Eunuch must have been one of two type of worshippers of God:

- 1. A Gentile who went to worship the true God in Jerusalem who accepted Judaism and was circumcised...called a proselyte.*
- 2. A Gentile who was interested in Judah's God, had not accepted the Jewish faith, had not been circumcised...but, attended the Jewish synagogue, read the Jewish scriptures... called a God-fearer.*

He was a searcher..looking for something that the world could not give him....and trying to find it in reading scripture... the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah.

When the Ethiopian became a believer he was baptized.

To enter the Jewish Faith....one had to be baptized and circumcised.

Early Christian baptism was, whenever possible, by immersion and in running water.

Baptism symbolized three (3) things then and symbolizes three (3) things today:

1. It symbolized cleansing

As a man's body was cleansed by the water, so his soul was bathed in the grace of Christ.

2. It marked a clean break

From the old world to the new.

3. It was a real union with Christ

As the waters closed over a man's head he seemed to die with Christ and as he emerged he rose with Christ.

Tradition has it that this eunuch went home and evangelized Ethiopia.
