

ACTS

Chapter 8

Note from Kathy

In Acts 1-7 we have seen the apostles enjoying great success as they minister to the people of Jerusalem.

Acts 1 - there were about 120 believers

Acts 2 - the Lord added to their number daily

Acts 4 - many heard their message and believed, and the number grew to about 5,000

Acts 5 - believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women

Acts 6 - the number of disciples was increasing

Anyone would look at this new church and say, "Great job boys, keep doing exactly what you are doing." But God had other plans. The heat of persecution would be the catalyst for even greater expansion of the church. Believers fled Jerusalem because the persecution was very great, and they carried the gospel with them.



Observation

1. Acts 8 continues to tell the story of Stephen's death and how even that sad event served God's purpose for spreading the gospel. Saul was not an innocent bystander.

Scripture tells us that he _____ killing Stephen. This began a time of even greater persecution against the church. How did this fulfill the command Jesus gave them in Acts 1:7-8?

2. Who do we read about in Acts 8:4-8?

Where did he go?

What did he continue doing?

What affect did his words have on the people there?

3. In Acts 8:9 we are introduced to a man named Simon who lived in that area. What was his line of work?

¶ **Acts 8:14-16**

“When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria.¹⁵ When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit,¹⁶ because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

¶ **Matthew 7:17-21**

“Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.²¹ Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

¶ **Acts 8:27-29**

“So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means queen of the Ethiopians). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship,²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it.’”

¶ **Acts 8:38-40**

“Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.”

- Acts 8:14-16 describe the events that took place when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that some of the people of Samaria had accepted the word. They sent two men to check this out. _____ and _____ prayed with these new converts and they too received the _____.
- Were the disciples confused by Simon the sorcerer’s profession followed by his offer? Read Matthew 7:17-21.
What did the apostles tell Simon to do?
- Even though Simon had heard the apostles’ preaching and teaching, had it made a real difference?
What was his heart still filled with?
Simon was still captive and in bondage to _____.
- Salvation is so simple that even a child can hear the gospel and accept it. According to Acts 8:22, what must Simon do to be saved?
- Peter and John made their way back to Jerusalem preaching and teaching all the way. Philip remained in Samaria faithfully sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. What happened next that would alter Philip’s plans?
- Who did Philip meet as he was on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza?
- Why had this man been in Jerusalem?
- What was this man doing when Philip came up to his chariot?
- Philip started a conversation with the man by asking a very simple question, “Do you understand what you are reading?” What was the man’s response?
What did he invite Philip to do?
- After Philip baptized the man, what amazing event happened that would stand as a testimony that Philip truly was a man of God?
- After this encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch, what did Philip go back to doing?

Application

1. The persecution of the Jesus followers was very real during the time of Acts 8. It was never God's intent for the church to stay secluded in Jerusalem. Jesus had instructed them to go and share this good news everywhere they went. Persecution served a purpose. It scattered the believers who in turn shared the good news. How do you view the difficulties, trials and persecution that comes your way?

Have you ever been faithfully serving God, and yet, you experienced a trial that caused you to dramatically change where or how you were serving? Do you recall your response? We need not share names, places and dates.

Romans 3:23-24

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Romans 6:23

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Ephesians 2:8-9

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

2. Look carefully at Acts 8:18-24. What did Simon the Sorcerer ask Peter and John to do? Is this even possible?

Can our money purchase anything from God?

What is the whole premise of a gift?

What is the most wonderful thing about God's gift of salvation? Read Romans 3:23-24 and 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8-9.

3. Fearing the consequences of our sin is not repentance. Define repentance? What are some identifying marks of true repentance?
4. Simon's heart was still filled with bitterness and sin. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters..." Is it possible to have a heart filled with bitterness and sin and truly be following Jesus? Have you ever met someone who was serving in the church, and yet, when you talked to them you could hear the bitterness in their conversation? How might a loving follower of Christ, carefully and prayerfully, respond if an opportunity is presented?
5. Understanding how bitterness starts and what it does to a person is important. Bitterness starts with a hurt or offense. This seed burrows its way down into the soil of our heart, and if left there will grow roots. Life is filled with intentional and unintentional hurts from others. What we do with them is of grave importance. It is the most loving of persons who, out of a true heart of compassion, tries to help a friend experience forgiveness. Have you ever had a loving friend who was willing to risk speaking to you about bitterness? Have you been that friend that tried to help someone see their need to forgive? How did it go?

Psalms 139:23

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.”

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Hebrews 12:14

“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

Philippians 4:4-8

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

- 6. We deceive ourselves if we believe no one sees our bitterness. It often oozes out in critical or angry words. Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” This does not mean that everyone is always going to like us, or that we are going to get along with everyone we meet. It doesn’t mean we let others walk all over us and hurt us over and over without saying a word. It means we learn to handle hurts like Jesus. What do you believe this verse is telling believers to do?
- 7. What practical steps can believers take when hurt or offended according to the below verses?

Verse	Practical application of this verse in your own words.
Psalms 139:23	
1 John 1:9	
Hebrews 12:14	
Philippians 4:4-8	

- 8. Philip experienced many amazing things as he followed the Lord. Probably one of the most amazing was meeting the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39. Philip had a successful ministry, seeing miracles happen and many people giving their heart to Jesus. And yet, when the angel told him to stop what he was doing and take a walk he did not hesitate. Did you notice that God did not give him details, only go for a walk? It made me stop and think, am I so in tune with the Spirit of God that He could say, “Kathy, go for a walk,” and I would get up and go? When my children were small I would remind them, and myself, if obedience is not immediate, it’s not really obedience. We must be in tune to the Father’s voice and ready to hear from Him. Do you believe this story might have ended differently if Philip had not gone immediately? How important is our immediate obedience to our heavenly Father?
- 9. The eunuch had traveled all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship God. Sadly, he did not even understand what he read in the scriptures, but he wanted to. God used Philip to help a man he had never met before. So often people are afraid to offer help to others because they do not know how it will be received. Philip simply told the man what he knew. Are you helping someone get to know God? What are some ways you are helping others understand God’s word?