

Day 36, Acts 8

by David Servant

David Servant's sermon emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in evangelism and the necessity of baptism for true believers.

Scripture: John 8:31, Acts 1:8, Acts 8:4, Acts 8:7, Acts 8:12, Acts 8:15-16, Acts 8:38-39

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Effective Ministry"

Description

David Servant preaches on how God's redemptive purposes can be seen in what may initially appear as misfortunes, using the Jerusalem persecution as an example. He highlights the importance of being supernaturally equipped by the Holy Spirit for effective ministry, as seen in Philip's cross-cultural missionary work in Samaria. The sermon emphasizes the need for believers to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a second experience for empowerment in their Christian walk, drawing from the example of the Samaritan believers. Additionally, the story of the Ethiopian eunuch illustrates God's guidance to receptive hearts and the importance of obedience in baptism as a demonstration of true faith.

Transcript

Some suggest that God permitted the Jerusalem persecution so that the gospel might be spread outside of Jerusalem. Jesus did command His disciples to take the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8), and it was to Judea and Samaria that the Jerusalem believers were scattered (8:1). Wherever they went, they shared the gospel (8:4). How many saints have experienced God's redemptive purposes in what first appears to be their misfortune? I certainly have. When "all hell breaks loose," heaven has a plan.

Philip is the only person named in the New Testament as an evangelist. He was also a cross-cultural missionary, as he ministered to people of a different ethnicity. (Remember that Jews and Samaritans generally hated each other.)

Notice that Philip's ministry was anointed with gifts of healing and other miracles, as paralyzed and lame people were healed and the demonized were delivered. If Philip had not been so supernaturally equipped, his message may well have gone unheard, because Simon the magician had already captured the Samaritans' attention with his magic arts. Isn't it tragic that so much of the modern church is powerless, sometimes even denying God's supernatural power, while cults and false religions promote themselves by means of minor miracles of satanic origin? Help us, Lord!

We read today that the people of Samaria believed Philip's gospel and were being baptized, having "received the word of God" (8:12-14). They were thoroughly born again. Yet we also read that the Holy Spirit "had not yet fallen upon any" of those thoroughly born-again believers (8:16). The Holy Spirit was inside them through the new birth, but He had not yet come upon them. They still needed to be clothed with power, and that is precisely why Peter and John journeyed to Samaria---"that they might receive the Holy Spirit" (8:15). This is one more indication that there is a second experience with the Holy Spirit that is available to every believer.

These truths are so plain and simple that only theologians can deny them. Nothing is said in this passage that this incident was some kind of one time, special event orchestrated by God so that the Samaritan church would have a visible divine endorsement that would never be needed again. It was nothing more than what Scripture says it was: The Samaritans who believed in Jesus were born again but had not experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit. So Peter and John traveled to Samaria to pray for them that they might receive the Spirit.

When Peter and John prayed for those new believers in Samaria, the Bible doesn't say that they spoke in tongues, yet we know something supernatural happened, because Simon saw something so spectacular that he tried to buy the ability to impart the Holy Spirit. He had already seen healings take place and demons being cast out (8:7), so whatever he witnessed must have been quite amazing. It seems safe to assume that they were speaking in tongues, just as Peter and John did along with 118 others on the day of Pentecost.

The story of the Ethiopian eunuch teaches us that God knows how receptive every person is, and that He will lead us to spiritually hungry people. This eunuch was ripe for salvation, reading from the most messianic chapter of the entire Old Testament, wondering what it meant! An evangelist's dream come true! We should ask God to guide us to receptive people.

Immediately after the eunuch made his confession of faith in Jesus, Philip baptized him in water. This was the first indication that the eunuch truly believed in Jesus. People who say they believe in Jesus but who are unwilling to obey His simple command to be baptized are fooling themselves.

Finally, notice that there was no way for Philip to "follow up" on his new convert, because he was immediately and supernaturally transported to another location. The modern urgent necessity of following up on new "converts" is an indictment against the impotence of the modern gospel. True disciples will abide in Christ's word, just as He said (see John 8:31). They won't need to be coerced to act like believers.

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