

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 11TH—12TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

## CONFLICT (ACTS 8:1-3) UNLEASHED

Far-from-God people do far-from-God things. Stephen's death emboldens opposition to the gospel, with severe persecution now taking place against followers of Jesus. What makes these people even more dangerous is they believe they are doing God's will when they are opposing God.

- **God's plans for His people sometimes include suffering and persecution.**

## THE GOSPEL WILL BE PROCLAIMED

Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1:8 that the gospel would go from Jerusalem into Judea, into Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. His plan to take the gospel to all people would be accomplished. What the persecutors thought would hinder the gospel only empowers it.

- **Christianity is both a "come and see" and "go and tell" calling.**

## MORE SIMILARITIES TO JESUS

Stephen responded to his stoning with the same attitude as Jesus—receive my spirit and don't hold this sin against them. We also see devout men burying Stephen, like Joseph and Nicodemus did for Jesus.

- **Deep love produces deep sadness and brave action. There's also peace through trusting in God's plans and purpose.**

## SAUL GOES TO WAR WITH THE CHURCH

Saul is doing everything he can to squash this (in his mind) heretical movement that declares salvation is found in Jesus alone. He ravages the church, dragging both men and women to prison. He thinks he is on God's side.

- **Christianity is a fight for the hearts and minds of people through the proclamation of the gospel. Violence will not bring conversion.**

## POWER (ACTS 8:4-8) MESSENGERS

The Believers leave Jerusalem, "gossiping" the gospel wherever they go. Philip (one of the seven from Chapter 6) leaves and goes to Samaria. Samaritans were the descendants of Jews and Assyrians who had intermarried. They had similar beliefs to the Jews but were hated by them.

- **If the gospel can't save the "worst" of us, it can't save any of us.**

## "YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER" (1:8)

Philip had the same Holy Spirit in him as the apostles did. Thus, he was empowered to both preach the gospel and demonstrate God's authority over the effects of sin and unclean spirits. As God worked in Philip, the people joyfully paid attention.

- **God's work through us is for His glory, not ours—and for the good of people.**

## THE MAGICIAN (ACTS 8:9-13)

### THE GOSPEL IS MEANT TO BE SHARED WITH ALL

Simon was a sorcerer who had garnered attention by amazing the people. He claimed to be somebody great and allowed the people to call him "the Great Power of God." Luke doesn't tell the source of Simon's power, but it clearly wasn't from God.

- **There are dark powers at work in the world which are not meant to be dabbled with.**

### ONLY GOD GETS THE GLORY

Simon sought the approval and accolades of the people and received them. This was one of many signs that Simon wasn't empowered by God.

- **One of the marks of a Christ follower is humility. Why? Humility demonstrates that Believers know anything good they do is only through the presence of God the Holy Spirit and not by their power.**

## JESUS OVER ALL POWERS

We don't know much about the specific city in Samaria where this took place, but they were at least superstitious, as seen in how they marveled at Simon's power. As Philip preaches the gospel, the people marvel at God's amazing grace through Jesus, believe in His name, and are baptized.

- **People are impressed by power, but only Jesus can change a heart.**

## BOTH MEN AND WOMEN WERE BAPTIZED

In contrast to both men and women being dragged to prison by Saul, both men and women were believing and being baptized.

- **Another pointer to the New Covenant and the elevation of women in the church is the sign of baptism. In Judaism, only men were circumcised. In the New Covenant, both men and women participated in baptism.**

## THE GIFTS OR THE GIVER?

Simon was impressed by Philip's power and saw that it was different from his power. Luke says Simon believed and was baptized. But instead of a transformation occurring, Simon continues to be amazed at the signs and miracles of Philip, rather than the God of Philip.

- **Is our goal Jesus or the things of Jesus (Heaven, health, relationships, prosperity)?**

## UNREPENTANT (ACTS 8:14-25) A NEW WORK NEEDING AFFIRMATION

This is the moment Luke has been building to since Chapter 6—the moment when non-Jews would come to faith in Jesus. Did Jesus die for non-Jews (Gentiles), too? The apostles were uniquely qualified to answer that question, so Peter and John were sent.

- **Peter and John had been the faces of the 12 and have been used mightily by God.**

## PROOF OF A "SECOND BLESSING"?

The message Philip preached was good. The Samaritans' faith was good. Their baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus was good. Why did Peter and John have to lay their hands on the people and pray for the Holy Spirit to fall on them? **While not becoming the ordinary practice, God kindly gave a "Pentecost" moment to non-Jews, affirming salvation for all who believe.**

## SIMON'S MOTIVE EXPOSED

When Simon sees the Spirit given through the laying on of hands, he offers money to be able to do the same. Peter calls out Simon's motive as wicked, revealing a heart poisoned by bitterness. Simon wants to control God and manipulate people for money, not humbly submit to Jesus.

- **We try to control God at our own peril for this attitude may reveal a heart far from God.**

## THERE'S STILL HOPE

Peter called Simon to repentance and prayer. This wasn't a false hope, as even the worst of sinners (i.e., Saul/Paul) can be saved if they will humble themselves, repent, and believe.

- **As long as we have breath in our lungs, we should hold out hope that anyone can repent of their sins and, by faith, trust in the finished work of Jesus. Anyone!**

## A LESSON LEARNED

Even Peter and John could learn from others. After seeing that Jesus saved the Samaritans, they preached to more Samaritans in more villages on their way back to Jerusalem. They embraced the Acts 1:8 commission from Jesus.

- **God is always revealing Himself at work in us, through us, and around us. Do we have eyes to see?**

## ACTS IS DESCRIPTIVE, NOT ALWAYS PRESCRIPTIVE

- **There will only be one first coming of the Holy Spirit, one birth of the Church, and one first-time move of the gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles. We must not take one-offs and make them regular practices.**
- **God is good to give us what we need to be pleasing to Him. The Bible is enough.**

## GOD WORKS WHERE THE GOSPEL GOES

- **God works anywhere and in any way He chooses. Instead of telling God what we think He should do, we must humbly submit to the work He is doing and join with Him.**
- **The gospel is not meant to make good people better but to save sinners.**
- **Jesus is the goal of the gospel. When we get Jesus, we get everything.**

## DON'T TAKE SALVATION FOR GRANTED

- **If we desire salvation to keep us from Hell but not to make us Christ followers, we may not be true Christians.**
- **Desiring salvation is the same as desiring Jesus. We must love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and body.**
- **Ask God to give us hearts for Jesus so we love Him supremely. He'll say, "Yes!"**