

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 11TH-12TH, 2026 //BOOK OF ACTS

SEVERITY & SUCCESS (ACTS 8:1-8) INITIATES STRONG PERSECUTION

Saul was probably in his early 30s when he began heavily persecuting Christians. He was an extremely educated Jew who also held Roman citizenship.

- Saul was defending Jewish belief and law, but he let religious practice cloud the revelation of the Savior.

THE PRESSURE LED TO EVANGELISM

As Saul was “ravaging the church” and “enter[ing] house after house, drag[ging] off men and women,” the Christians scattered and started to spread the gospel to other areas.

- Of course, the persecution was awful, but without the pressure to “scatter,” the message wouldn't have spread as rapidly.

GOD IS ALWAYS AT WORK

Though evil is never condoned, God still works and achieves His objectives when evil happens, and “**all things work together for the good of those who love God**” (Romans 8:28).

- **Sometimes God allows, or maybe even applies, pressure in our lives in order to get us to move.**

PHILIP THE DEACON

Philip was one of the men chosen with Stephen to administer day-to-day tasks of the church. Philip was also a Hellenist and, after the persecution began, went to a heavily Hellenist region, Samaria, to preach.

- Philip was pretty bold with his faith and also very effective.

“SO THERE WAS GREAT JOY IN THAT CITY”

Because the crowds were “paying attention to what Philip said,” they witnessed deliverance of “unclean spirits” and sick and paralyzed people were healed.

- The miracles are not the point as much as the gospel being received and people being saved and changed.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE

We read about God using certain people to reach certain demographics. It isn't that we can't reach different people, but that **God designs us to most effectively reach those we can relate to.**

- **If we will listen and obey, God will put people in our paths who we can minister to and be a part of their spiritual change.**

DON'T BE AFRAID, FIND COMMON GROUND

Christians are not called to isolate or be afraid of people different from them. We are to **build relationships** with all kinds of people using grace, love, wisdom, and communication skills to **know others, demonstrate Jesus, and eventually share the truth with them.**

COUNTERFEIT (ACTS 8:9-13)

SIMON THE SORCERER

Simon Magus, aka Simon the Sorcerer, was from Gitta in Samaria (West Bank). Gitta had become deeply involved in occult practices, and Simon was the lead practitioner of sorcery.

- More than likely Simon was just a scam artist who became popular by affirming the superstitions everyone already believed.

DISCERNING THE SPIRITS

The people in Gitta called Simon “the Great Power of God.” Though he apparently did spiritual signs, they were not of the true God.

- Satan is powerful, deceptive, and can present himself as “light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). This is **why we must lean into the Bible and the Spirit and not solely trust emotions.**

“CLAIMING TO BE SOMEBODY GREAT”

If the focus of the one doing “great” things is themselves, something is wrong. **God resists pride, and so should His followers.**

- Like Simon, **many are spiritually confused because their greatest concern is their image. Self-centeredness always leads to self-destruction.**

WAS IT A SINCERE CHANGE?

After many “believed Philip” and got baptized, “Even Simon...believed.” But it seems he was more intrigued with the gifts of God than God Himself because he “**was amazed as he observed the signs and... miracles.**”

- **The reward of Christianity is Christ.** God does bless us, but He should be the goal.

TRUE SELF (ACTS 8:14-25)

PETER AND JOHN HEAD TO SAMARIA

Peter and John heard about Philip's success and went and “prayed for them so that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit because He had not yet come down on any of them.”

- If we receive the Spirit at conversion and baptism (Acts 2:38; Ephesians 1:13), why didn't the Samaritans have the Spirit after baptism?

ACTS IS THE GENESIS OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 2:20 says the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with...Jesus... as the cornerstone.” Matthew 16 tells us Peter holds the keys to unlock God's work on earth.

- How the Samaritans received the Spirit is unique and shows **the importance of submission, authority, and accountability.**

NOT FOR SALE

“When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money” for that ability.

- This revealed the true heart of Simon. **He desired power and recognition more than other people and thought he could easily buy the favor of God.**

WE CAN ALSO FALL INTO THIS TRAP

Many Christians today gain attention, influence, and money through various avenues. It isn't that all of these are evil, but **often times it becomes more about self-promotion than the advancement of Jesus and the truth.**

- This is a great temptation that we can all succumb to if we are not careful.

SHOWING GRACE BUT USING WISDOM

With Simon and new Christians, we must **show grace** because it takes time to mature in our faith. We must also have **proper expectations** of non-believers.

- We show grace, but we must **also be wise about what we are subjected to and how we are influenced** (Matthew 10:16).

“MAY YOUR SILVER BE DESTROYED WITH YOU”

Peter strongly calls out Simon and tells him he has “no part...in this matter” because his “heart is not right before God.”

- **If we pursue Jesus for selfish gain, we are missing the point** and will eventually become bitter because the results are not what we want. This will lead to “wickedness.”

OUT OF A FEAR, NOT A LOVE OF GOD

It seems Simon didn't seek God's forgiveness because he asked Peter and John to “Pray to the Lord for me...so that nothing you have said will happen to me.”

- Though we should be aware of the consequences of sin, **repentance should be based in loving Jesus, not fearing hell.**

SIMON'S LEGACY?

From Simon we get the word **simony**, *using religion as a means to get wealthy*. Though the Bible doesn't tell us any more about Simon, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus claim he started Gnosticism and became a strong adversary of the church.

A DIFFICULT BUT MEANINGFUL MISSION

- Living for Jesus, truly loving others, speaking truth, and sharing the gospel will always garner opposition.
- Sometimes God will use pressure and opposition as a way to get us out of our comfort zone, to do His work, and to keep us dependent/focused on Him.

DISCERNING SPIRITS

- As we live out our faith, **we must remain full of the Spirit through prayer and the Word because we need the gift of discernment and the clarity of the Bible to know what is of God and what is not.**
- Without the Word and the Spirit, we will be confused and will drift towards evil.

GRACE AND WISDOM

- We must be **gracious** with new Christians and have **reasonable expectations** with non-Christians.
- We must have **courage to confront things that are untrue** for the sake of others. We must also use **wisdom to know when to separate ourselves from situations.**

MOTIVES

- The search for truth may begin for a lot of reasons, but when we discover Jesus, **we must move forward with proper motives or we will be disappointed, and that will eventually lead to bitterness and evil.**
- Improper motives are selfish gain or just a fear of punishment (hell).

PROPER MOTIVES AND OUR LEGACY

- Proper motives are **desiring to know true morality, to know God and our relationship to Him, to honor Him in how we live, to serve and contribute, to love people, to share truth, and to want others to experience what we have.**
- **Proper motives lead to a lasting legacy.**