

Acts

Part 22 – “The Goodness of the Good News”

Acts 8:9-25

The goodness of good news is better than man’s greatness. (vv. 9-13)

“A man who called himself great.” (vv. 9-11)

- Simon declared himself to be great. He had magic to prove it. People were amazed by it.
- *Application:* Don’t follow one who calls himself “great.”
 - Don’t be drawn in by superlative flash and hype. Look for the substance of the good news.

The goodness of the good news (vv. 12-13)

- The good news, the gospel - the living, dying and rising of Jesus for sinners who need a savior - is better than a magic trick. The message is validated by the miracles, but the message comes first.
- The good news speaks the miraculous into reality. It doesn’t gloss over sin, brokenness and death. It addresses the very heart of those issues by declaring, “Death is overcome.” Houdini couldn’t do that trick. Andy Kaufman couldn’t pull off that joke. Only the gospel speaks life to dead men. It’s not trite or tricks.
- *Application:* We must never let the great benefits of the gospel overshadow the gospel itself.

Simon’s “belief”

- Simon “attached” himself to Philip. (Acts 8:13).
 - This is an indicator of where Simon’s faith truly was. He was adhering to one man and amazed at the miracles that one man was doing. The text leads us to connect Simon’s amazement to the way people were amazed by his magic.
 - *Application:* We must be committed to the Word of God. One man’s greatness cannot be the foundation for the church. We must look to Christ and study the Word (Acts 17:11).

The goodness of the good news creates a new people. (vv. 14-17)

From division, the Spirit brings unity.

- The Apostles Peter and John go to Samaria. This is astounding. Peter and John follow Philip down into some 1,000 years of racial tension.
- This happens by the work of the Spirit with Apostolic (those who were chosen by Jesus to represent Him) witness.
 - Acts 2:38 sets up the pattern of being baptized into Christ and the Holy Spirit coming with that baptism
- The oddity of the reception of the Holy Spirit after baptism is a direct consequence of Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” The Holy Spirit comes in power upon groups of people in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4) and Samaria (8:17). It also comes upon Gentiles (representing the end of the earth) in Acts 10:44-45 and Acts 19:6. This is not a second baptism in the Spirit as if the baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus was somehow insufficient. These

groups of people received the Spirit in similar ways to declare that the dividing walls between Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles were not relevant in the church. The goodness of the good news is that “there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:11). The Samaritans are then included in the church. No longer are they a social pariah, but are Spirit-filled Christians.

- *Application:* This is what we mean when we talk about cross-cultural intentionality at Covenant Presbyterian Church (Rev. 7:9-10). We mean breaking down social, cultural, ethnic and linguistic barriers as a demonstration of the unifying lordship of Jesus Christ.

The goodness of the good news calls us from evil. (vv. 18-24)

The issue of money and the work of God (vv. 18-19)

- Simon sees this laying on of hands and wants to buy the trick. In doing so, two things are revealed:
 - Money reveals the intentions of the heart. Wickedness, greed and an impure heart are shown in Simon’s actions.
 - Money cannot buy the gospel or the benefits thereof. No matter what the flashy faced preacher man on TV says, money does not buy you a part in God’s kingdom or blessing.
- *Application:* We cannot “coerce God as a genie, rather than bowing to him as Lord.”
 - “Simon’s attempt to control and manipulate sovereign grace was especially crass, but we too have ways that we try to put God in our debt, or force his hand. Even our devotion, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice can be turned into tools to ‘leverage’ our desires from God.” (Dennis E. Johnson, *Let’s Study Acts.*)
 - Then we are stunned when it doesn’t go “our way.”

Good news calls us from our evil and depravity (vv. 20-23)

- As awful as Simon’s heart appears, Peter still gives harsh kindness in calling him to repentance. He declares to Simon the depraved state of heart.
 - Peter could have dismissed him, but instead gives him the faithful way to move ahead.
- *Application:* Put yourself in Simon’s shoes. Would you repent?
 - What is the state of your heart? Will you cry out, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Luke 18:13). “Hosanna, Lord save me!” Will you humble yourself and repent before God?
 - If you don’t know what to pray, there are prayers in the bulletin.

Simon’s response (v. 24)

The goodness of good news must go out. (v. 25)

- The good news is not just for me to store up and keep to myself. The good news by its very nature and the command of Christ, must go out to our neighbors and the nations.
 - The goodness of the good news cannot be stopped by Simon’s greatness and fickleness. The power of the Holy Spirit presses His people to share the gospel in “hostile” territory where they would not otherwise go.
- *Application:* Pray and go.