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THE GOSPEL IN SAMARIA

ACTS 8:4-40



Stephen's murder kicks off a serious persecution led by Saul, and the young Christian community is scattered away from Jerusalem throughout the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria (See: Acts 1:8). In the next four chapters (8-11), Acts moves from persecution to the gospel spreading across borders and boundaries: first to the Samaritans, then to the Gentiles. God's purposes continue to work through and overcome every obstacle, as what is intended to crush the movement becomes fuel for the gospel's advance.

PHILIP & THE MAGICIAN (8:4-25)

1. Read Acts 8:4-25. Samaria, the hilly part of the country between Judea and Galilee, was home to people whom the Jews on either side regarded with deep suspicion and hostility. The Samaritans kept to a form of Judaism but with significant elements changed. For example, they revered Moses but rejected the prophets. Given this background, what is remarkable about Philip's preaching and the response in verses 5-8?
2. Read Acts 8:9-13. How was Simon, the magician's life effected by the gospel? In what ways to people still try to gain spiritual authority for their own selfish ends?
3. According to verses 18-24, what did Peter teach Simon about following Jesus?

PHILIP AND THE TRAVELER (8:26-40)

The people Philip shared the good news with were different in rank, race, and religion. Yet, he preached to them the very same gospel. The Ethiopian was a black African, and possibly a Jew by birth returning from pilgrimage to Jerusalem or a Gentile “God-fearer” who believed in the one true God. As for rank, this man was a distinguished public servant in the employment of the Crown. What he wasn’t was a follower of Jesus Christ. Not yet, anyway.

4. What is puzzling the Ethiopian as he travels (8:30-34)? How does Isaiah 53 (quoted in 8:32-33) provide Philip with a great opportunity to share the good news about Jesus? What is the outcome of the chariot conversation (8:36-40)?

5. What role does Scripture play in the Ethiopian Eunuch’s conversion? What do Romans 10:14-17, Matthew 13:18-23, James 1:21 teach us about the role of Scripture in evangelism?

6. Christians practice different kinds of evangelism, such as door-to-door, friendship, mass, and tract evangelism. What different kinds of evangelism do you observe throughout this passage? How might the principles of evangelism you find here help you become a more effective witness?

7. What is one insight from Acts 8:4-40 that you would like to apply in your church, your marriage, your parenting, your friendships, your work, or some other aspect of your life? Share with the group.