**The Gospel in Samaria**

*Acts 8:4-25*

**Introduction**

1. Jesus spoke about the apostles’ work as it pertained to preaching the gospel and being His witnesses – **Acts 1:8** – gospel preached in Jerusalem, church established; then eventually reached Samaria as He said.
2. **Acts 8** records the fulfillment of Jesus’ words pertaining to the gospel spreading to Samaria.
3. The account of the gospel reaching Samaria yields important and powerful truths for our instruction and encouragement.
4. The Grace of God in Adversity **(v. 4)**
5. The gospel reached Samaria, in part, through the vehicle of persecution:
   1. **(vv. 1-3)** – Death of Stephen (impact – **6:5, 8** – significant member with great influence), church persecuted by Saul.
   2. **(v. 4)** – persecution led to them scattering – did the very thing which led to their persecution.
      1. Gamaliel – **5:38-39** – ***“you cannot overthrow it”***
6. Satan intends for adversity to break us individually, and as a church, but God’s grace is abundant and sufficient – **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**
   1. **(v. 7)** – ***“torment me” (NASB), “harass me” (ESV), “beat me” (NKJV, fn)***
   2. **(v. 9)** – grace sufficient, strength perfected (completed, consummated) in weakness.
      1. Thorn caused Paul to rely more upon God, and prevented him from credit/glory – ***“lest I should be exalted above measure”***
      2. Given a spirit of power (**cf. 2 Timothy 1:7**).
7. The only explanation for the events of **Acts 8:4** is the power of God’s grace communicated through the gospel in the hearts of those who believe.
   1. **Romans 8:28** – God took something bad and used it for good to His glory.
8. The Preaching of Christ **(vv. 4, 5, 12)**
9. Philip is said to have ***“preached Christ”*** in Samaria **(v. 5).**
   1. “We just need to preach Christ, and that’s all.”
      1. Amen – **1 Corinthians 2:2** – Christ and Him crucified.
      2. “We don’t need to worry about ‘doctrine,’ or ‘right living,’ but just Christ.” – What does preaching Christ mean though?
      3. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** – “core gospel”?
   2. What did Philip preach?
      1. **(v. 4)** – ***“the word”*** – Is that not Christ? (**cf. 1 John 1:1; 2:3**)
      2. **(v. 5)** – ***“Christ”***
      3. **(v. 12)** – ***“the kingdom of God”***
         1. Preach Christ (Messiah) without His kingdom? – That’s the whole Messianic focus – salvation in the kingdom.
         2. Kingdom, King, Rule – **Acts 2:30, 34-35 (cf. Isaiah 9:6-7** – Government)
         3. Kingdom/church – **Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:47** ***(“saved”)***
      4. **(v. 12)** – ***“the name of Jesus Christ”***
         1. ***“name”*** is referring to authority – **Acts 4:7, 10, 12 (cf. Luke 20:2** – ***“by what authority”)***
         2. **Colossians 3:1-4, 17** – doing all in His name – “in the name of the King…” (i.e. this comes from the one with authority)
      5. **(v. 12)** – ***“men and women were baptized”***
         1. Someone says, “We should only preach the gospel, which is Christ and Him crucified. Baptism isn’t a part of the gospel.” – **1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:2**
         2. **1 Corinthians 1:12-17** – wasn’t sent to baptize ***“in my name”***
         3. Sent to baptize in the name of Jesus – **Matthew 28:18-20 (cf. John 4:1-2 – can be sent to baptize by teaching the necessity, without actually doing the baptizing.)**
         4. To preach the gospel? Baptism not part of gospel? – **1 Corinthians 1:17; Mark 16:15-16**
10. The gospel includes all of Christ’s teaching/doctrine – **1 Timothy 1:10-11** (“sound doctrine” paralleled with “gospel”)
11. The Purpose of Miracles **(vv. 6-8, 12, 14-17)**
12. They believed what they heard him preach when they saw the miracles – **(vv. 6-8, 12)**
    1. ***“And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did.” (v. 6, ASV)***
    2. They responded to what Philip said when they heard him speak, and saw the signs he performed.
    3. I.e. the signs which followed/accompanied his message were confirming the message as being inspired of God.
    4. ***“miracles” (NKJV), “signs” (ESV, ASV, NASB), “attesting miracles” (NASB, fn)*** – *sēmeion* – “an event that is an indication or confirmation of intervention by transcendent powers” (BDAG)
    5. **(v. 12)** – stopped believing Simon and started believing Philip due to the obvious true divine power seen in stark contrast to sorcery.
    6. Miracles were for the confirmation of the message – **Hebrews 2:3-4**
13. The apostles sent Peter and John to impart spiritual gifts – give the Holy Spirit – **(vv. 14-17)**
    1. Why was this necessary?
    2. **1 Corinthians 12:7-12** – some for revelation, some for confirmation.
    3. **1 Corinthians 13:8-12** – for the infancy of the church, until “perfect” revelation.
    4. **1 Corinthians 14:12** – for the edification of the church.
14. The Triumph of Truth **(vv. 9-13)**
15. Luke elaborates on the circumstances of the conversions in Samaria after briefly describing them initially **(vv. 5-8)** – **(vv. 9-13)** – the details surrounding the conversions manifests the power of truth and gives a great deal of confidence.
16. They were greatly deceived by a fraud – **(vv. 9-11)**
    1. Sorcery – tricks, slight of hand – **cf. Galatians 5:20** (*pharmakeia* – sometimes with administering drugs to further deceive)
    2. **(vv. 10-11)** – whether he claimed it and they agreed, or they assigned it to him – thought the sorcery showed he was God’s representative (God was working power through him).
       1. ***“they all gave heed…heeded”*** (*prosechō*) – same as (**v. 6** – ***“heeded”***) – not just reference to more aggressive listening, but to action upon what is heard.
       2. *Prosechō* translated ***“respond to”*** in **Acts 16:14 (NASB**)(Lydia).
       3. They weren’t just accepting he was working miracles by God’s power but were obeying/following the message he proclaimed.
17. When the true power of God, and the message it confirmed was placed against the fake, it demolished it – **(vv. 6-8, 12-13)**
    1. A good counterfeit always seems true until it is set side by side with the truth.
    2. Contrast was so great, even Simon himself believed **(v. 13).**
       1. Not just the people, but the deceiver himself!
       2. Man’s wisdom may think he would not likely respond to the truth, but this shows the power of God.
18. Never underestimate the power of the truth:
    1. **2 Timothy 3:8-9** (Egyptian magicians) – the folly will be manifest to all. (Certainly, in the end, but to all honest hearts now.)
    2. **2 Corinthians 10:4-5** – God’s word will always triumph over error.
    3. **1 Timothy 1:15-16** – even the greatest of sinners can be saved if, in honesty, they observe the truth – we must give it to them.
19. The Longsuffering in Growth **(vv. 18-23)**
20. Simon was walking in the light – **(v. 13)** – continuing with Philip.
21. Who he WAS:
    1. ***“claiming to be someone great” (v. 9)***
    2. ***“he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time” (v. 11)***
    3. Contrast between Simon and Philip – Simon claimed greatness for himself (selfish ambition, pride), Philip placed all he did under ***“the name of Jesus” (v. 12).***
22. Simon’s sin – **(vv. 18-19)** – he reverted to his old ways.
    1. A change had been made – **(v. 13)**
    2. This was about his ego, pride, etc.
    3. **(vv. 20-23)** – separated him from God:
       1. **(v. 20)** – was to perish.
       2. **(v. 21)** – no part or portion – reason given shows it should not simply be limited to imparting of spiritual gifts.
          1. He wouldn’t have been able to do that even if his heart was right.
          2. ***“this matter”*** involved God’s will, edification of saints, progress of truth/church/salvation, etc.
       3. **(v. 22)** – wickedness, in need of forgiveness.
       4. **(v. 23)** – in the grips of sin again.
       5. “Simon was not a Christian.” (Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible) – but he was **(v. 13),** he had fallen back into sin.
          1. Barnes denies possibility of apostasy.
          2. Simon’s case shows one certainly can apostatize.
    4. “Old habits die hard.”
       1. We must constantly be on guard. (This is not an excuse – **1 Peter 4:3; 5:8**)
       2. We must understand that God’s grace can transform us – **Ephesians 4:20-24** – we must let it.
       3. God doesn’t want us to perish, so is giving us time to grow as a new man in Christ – **2 Peter 3:9, 14-15, 17-18**
          1. Does not excuse sin.
          2. However, grants us time to conquer it by His grace. (Not to be used as time to sin more – **Romans 2:4** – leads to repentance). (**v. 22** – called to repent.)
23. The Provision of Pardon **(vv. 22, 24)**
24. Peter expressed in clear language the lost state of Simon, but followed with the hope of forgiveness – **(v. 22)**
    1. This forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance. Simon could not possess the same heart if he was to be forgiven – ***“the thought of your heart may be forgiven”***
    2. It is also conditioned upon prayer.
    3. **1 John 1:9; 2:1-2** – God will forgive us if we confess our sins to Him, and ask forgiveness.
25. Simon needed to ask God himself, but also requested the prayers of Peter – **(v. 24)**
    1. Prayer is effective – **James 5:16**
    2. It won’t be forgiven one who doesn’t repent – **1 John 5:16-17** (sin not to death is sin repented of)

**Conclusion**

1. The Holy Spirit revealed and preserved details for us about the gospel reaching Samaria.
2. These facts grant us wisdom from heaven, and are wonderful aids in our walk to serve God.