



Sermon Text: Acts 8:4-25

Sermon Date: November 26, 2017

As the church is scattered following Stephen's martyrdom, Luke zeros in on the ministry of Philip in Samaria. Something unprecedented is occurring in our text as the kingdom of God pushes outward beyond the borders of Israel. Walking through our text, we focused on three points.

A COMMITMENT TO INCONVENIENT EVANGELISM

The first point we discovered is that Philip was committed to inconvenient evangelism. As Americans, we prize convenience, and our fascination with convenience has shaped our evangelism. Often we want God to make evangelism safe, easy, and effortless. Yet, the early church was dedicated to evangelism even when it was inconvenient. We saw this with Philip in two ways.

1. **Philip was a refugee.** His friend and ministry partner, Stephen, was just murdered. He's fled for his life from Jerusalem. In his flesh, Philip probably wasn't "in the mood" to share the gospel; yet, he did. Filled with love for Christ he could not stop telling others about Jesus.
2. **Philip crossed a cultural divide of hatred and separation.** The Jews and the Samaritans passionately despised one another, and they had done so for centuries. Yet, Philip was committed to crossing that deep chasm of separation and contempt even though it was far from convenient.

THE DANGER OF FALSE CONVERSION

Most of Luke's account, however, doesn't focus on the Samaritan's joyful response but the unusual case of a sorcerer named Simon. Simon had long captivated the hearts of the Samaritans with his dark magical powers; however, with Philip's arrival he was no match for God's power. In fact, it would appear that Simon believed the gospel since he was baptized. Yet, as the story unfolds it seems Simon's profession of faith was counterfeit. He sought to purchase the ability to give people the Holy Spirit and didn't personally repent when confronted by Peter. While none of us should presume to think we are the infallible judge of one another's salvation, this story shows us the haunting possibility of false conversion. James Montgomery Boice says that Simon's "case is a warning to anybody who thinks that just because he or she has made a profession of faith or has gone through certain motions expected of Christians that he or she is right with God for that reason. That is not the case."

THE IMPORTANCE OF A UNIFIED CHURCH

A major interpretive challenge in our text is why God delayed giving the Holy Spirit until the Apostles came from Jerusalem. Is this delay normal? Can a person be a Christian and yet not have the Holy Spirit? Looking at both the Apostle's regular teaching and their normal practice, we learned that this situation was unique and abnormal. Since this was the first occasion of the gospel being proclaimed outside of Jerusalem and to non-Jews, something historic was occurring. To ensure that the long-standing rift between Jew and Samaritan wouldn't continue, God delayed His normal operation so that He could confirm to both the Apostles and the Samaritans that they were united as His new people. In doing so, we see the importance of a unified Church (big "C"). In the Church, a new day has dawned and the lines of sinful division are being erased by the gospel of Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. Are you committed to sharing the gospel in every situation and with every type of person, even when it is inconvenient and uncomfortable?
3. How does the story of Simon the Sorcerer challenge your understanding of the world and the gospel?