



## 'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #10

### Acts 8:4 – 9:9 (NASB)

Pages 124 -142 in 'Acts For Everyone' (Part 1) by N. T. Wright

#### Acts 8:4-25 (NASB95)

Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. <sup>5</sup> **Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.** <sup>6</sup> **The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.** <sup>7</sup> **For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.** <sup>8</sup> **So there was much rejoicing in that city.** <sup>9</sup> **Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;** <sup>10</sup> **and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."** <sup>11</sup> **And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.** <sup>12</sup> **But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.** <sup>13</sup> **Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.** <sup>14</sup> **Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,** <sup>15</sup> **who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.** <sup>16</sup> **For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** <sup>17</sup> **Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.** <sup>18</sup> **Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,** <sup>19</sup> **saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."** <sup>20</sup> **But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup> "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup> "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup> "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."**

<sup>24</sup> *But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."* <sup>25</sup> *So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.*

#### Q: What is significant about Philip going to Samaria?

- The Samaritans had been regarded as half-breeds, idolaters and persecutors of God's people for centuries.
  - The Samaritans wanted to be involved in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple after the Babylonian exile. The Jews rejected their offer because of their compromised "almost Jewish" worship practices, so the Samaritans tried to prevent the rebuilding ([Ezra 4](#)).
  - The Jews hated the Samaritans so much they wouldn't even walk through their land, which lay between Galilee and Judea on the west side of the Jordan. Instead, Jews preferred to go out of their way and walk through Gentile lands on the east side of the Jordan.
- "Yet it was part of the agenda which Jesus set for His followers, at the start of Acts, that they should be His witnesses not only in Jerusalem and Judea, but Samaria – and on, to the very ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)." P. 128
  - Jesus doesn't care about taboos and old grudges. There is no one He doesn't want!

#### Q: With all this tension between Jews and Samaritans, how would you expect the gospel to be received in Samaria?

- We might expect hostility and rejection; but instead they gave attention to what Philip said ([Vs. 6](#)), and many were baptized ([Vs. 12](#)).
- Jesus said the harvest was ready but we needed to pray for workers ([Luke 10:2](#)).
  - If we are working for Jesus, like Philip, we need to go even where we don't think people will be interested, and to people we don't like, and let the gospel bear fruit ([Col. 1:6](#))!

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## EXTRA THOUGHTS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT:

**Q: Why did the apostles need to go and lay hands on the Samaritans before they could receive the Holy Spirit? Isn't that supposed to happen at baptism ([Acts 2:38](#))?**

- The Holy Spirit did indwell them ([1Cor. 3:16](#); [6:19](#); [2Tim 1:14](#)) at their baptism, but having the Holy Spirit “fall” on them was a different thing.
- **When the Holy Spirit falls on people, He empowers them to bless others.**
  - In the Old Testament, the Spirit would come and go, empowering people for service, but not necessarily remaining with them ([Judges 15:14](#); [1 Chronicles 12:18](#); [Psalm 51:11](#); [Ezekiel 11:5](#)).
  - In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit falling on people enabled them to do things they couldn't normally do ([Acts 2:4](#); [10:44-47](#); [1Cor 12:4-11](#)), but always for the common good of the believers.
  - In other words, the Holy Spirit fell on these Samaritans to empower them for special service, much like He did in the Old Testament.
- **The indwelling of the Spirit blesses the believer by:**
  - Confirming our adoption as God's children and co-heirs with Christ ([Romans 8:15-17](#)).
  - Helping us understand God ([1Cor 2:12-16](#); [John 16:7](#)).
  - Helping us pray ([Romans 8:26-27](#)).
  - Helping us learn how not to sin ([Gal 5:16](#)).
  - Producing Spiritual Fruit in our lives ([Gal 5:22-23](#)).
  - Sealing us, and guaranteeing our inheritance ([Eph 1:13-14](#)).
- Laying on of hands was a symbolic ceremonial act both in the Old Testament and the New.
  - In the Old Testament, it was primarily done with sacrifices ([Lev. 1:4](#); [3:2](#); [4:4](#); [Num. 8:12](#)); when the priest would symbolically transfer sins to the sacrificial animal by laying hands on it.
  - But it was also used to set one apart for special office... like Moses and Joshua ([Num. 27:18-23](#)), and to give blessings ([Gen. 48:12-19](#)).

- **It seems that the apostles were setting some of these new believers apart for special work, and blessing them.**
  - It is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit fell on people through the laying on of the Apostles hands, but not through Philip.
  - Philip had received this special gifting from the Holy Spirit ([Acts 8:13](#)), but was not able to pass it on to others... only the Apostles could do that.

**Q: Does the Holy Spirit still fall on people in the same way today? Do Christians still have the ability to do the same signs and wonders Paul talked about in [1Cor 12:4-11](#)?**

- Some contend this special empowering of the Holy Spirit was only intended to last for a short time, and ended when the last person who received this gift from the apostles' laying on of hands died.
- Others allow that it could still occur if the Spirit chooses to fall again like He did at Pentecost ([Acts 2:4](#);) and at Cornelius' house ([Acts 10:44-47](#)).
- Many people today do claim to possess these special gifts of the Spirit. An important consideration in determining if it is true would be to compare what they claim is a gift from the Holy Spirit to gifts recorded in the Bible, and to ask if they are really serving the same purpose Paul identified—the common good of the believers, and the building up of the church ([1Cor. 12:4-14:18](#)).
  - People who hope to be seen as spiritually important or as having received confirmation of their salvation through gifts of the Spirit, may be falling into the same trouble Simon the magician did!

## Acts 8:26-40 (NASB95)

But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) <sup>27</sup> So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and **he had come to Jerusalem to worship,** <sup>28</sup> and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and **was reading the prophet Isaiah.** <sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." <sup>30</sup> Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" <sup>31</sup> And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. <sup>32</sup> Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: **"HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. <sup>33</sup> "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."** <sup>34</sup> The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?" <sup>35</sup> Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. <sup>36</sup> As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch \*said, **"Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"** <sup>37</sup> [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] <sup>38</sup> And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. <sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup> But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

**Q: The Eunuch was most likely not Jewish; and being castrated, he couldn't have been a proselyte to Judaism. Why would such an "outsider" go to such lengths to get to Jerusalem to worship?**

- "But there was something about the Jewish God and the Jewish way of life which had attracted him, as it did so many in the ancient world (if you think of the kind of gods that were worshiped by other nations, and the kind of practices that were often associated with them, you might well see Judaism as a wonderful oasis of clean, calm wisdom.)" P. 133

**Q: What is the significance of the passage the Eunuch was reading?**

- He was reading from [Isaiah 53](#), a passage the Jews saw as a description of the kind of suffering savior it would take to bring Israel back from exile.
- [Isaiah 53](#) describes how God would end Israel's exile, and the one through whom He would accomplish it.
- [Isaiah 54](#) describes the New Covenant (or partnership) God would make with His people in order to bless the whole world.
- [Isaiah 55](#) describes the new creation that lies ahead.
- [Isaiah 56](#) describes how no one, not even eunuchs (Is. 56:3-5), will be excluded from God's presence.

**Q: Why was the Eunuch so excited when he saw water?**

- "Jesus was the one through whom the slow and winding story of God's people had reached its destination, and with it the moment of redemption for the whole world. No wonder the Ethiopian was excited. **When you tell the story of Israel like that, with Jesus at its climax, it opens up to include everybody, including people like him, doubly excluded and now wonderfully welcomed.** No wonder he wanted to share in the death and resurrection of this Jesus by being baptized, by having the whole story become his personal story." P. 135

## Acts 9:1-9 (NASB95)

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, <sup>2</sup> and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; <sup>4</sup> and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, **"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"** <sup>5</sup> And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, **"I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,** <sup>6</sup> but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." <sup>7</sup> The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. <sup>8</sup> Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

**Q: Why does Jesus tell Saul that He is the one Saul has been persecuting?**

- Jesus feels what happens to us, and suffers when we suffer, because we are His body ([Ro. 12:5](#); [1Cor 6:15, 10:16, 12:12, 12:27](#)).

**Q: Why did Jesus convert Saul instead of killing him?**

- Because Jesus doesn't want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance ([2Peter 3:9](#)).
  - Because Jesus knew what Saul could become.
    - Saul was once the greatest persecutor of the Church, but Jesus has made him one of the biggest blessings to the church from that day to this.
    - You never know which person hurting Christians the most today, will become the one who blesses countless more tomorrow!
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## Follow Up Assignment

Q: Are there any "Samaritans" in your life?

- Is there someone you think would never accept the gospel?
- Is there anyone you wouldn't want to come to Christ?

Q: Who are the "outsiders" in your life who are attracted to God, but don't know they can be insiders?

- What can you learn from Philip about how to tell them God's story?

Q: There will always be someone who will persecute you for telling God's story and spreading the gospel. Is there someone who is persecuting you?

- If not, is it because you aren't telling God's story, and spreading His gospel?
- If yes, do you hope and pray God will punish them, or convert them?