



WEEK 8  
01.24.16

# THE PENTECOSTAL REVIVAL IN SAMARIA AND BEYOND

## FOCUS VERSE

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### Acts 8:5

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

## LESSON TEXT

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### Acts 8:1–8

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.



## FOCUS THOUGHT

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The revival spread beyond Jerusalem to Samaria in an ever-widening circle.



# CULTURE CONNECTION

## Diversity in God's Kingdom

**W**hen Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to the people, he broke through a formidable social barrier. The Samaritans were a hated segment of society because they were descendants of Jewish stragglers left in the land and the colonists brought in by the king of Assyria. This made them socially unacceptable to both Jews and Gentiles.

If we think we have racial problems today, we need to consider this situation. Geographically, Samaria, the principal city of the area of Samaria, was surrounded on the north by Galilee and on the south by Judea. The shortest distance to travel between Judea and Galilee was to pass through Samaria. But many refused to do so. They would either go

by sea on the west or go through the desert on the east to avoid going through Samaria.

This was why it was commendable that Philip went to Samaria to preach the gospel. He followed Jesus' example when the Savior went through Samaria on the way to Galilee and ministered to the woman at the well. (See John 4.) The Samaritans responded to the gospel message, and a great revival came to Samaria.

What a challenge this should be to us today not to allow racial division to keep us from sharing the gospel with every ethnic group. Our calendar may be different from that of the first century, but the culture around us is not. It is as diverse as it was when Philip shared the gospel with the Samaritans.

### OUTLINE

#### I. THE NEW FOE: PERSECUTION

- A. The Focus
- B. The Fury

#### II. A NEW FIELD: PREACHING CHRIST

- A. Philip's Ministry of the Gospel
- B. Philip's Fruit in the Gospel
- C. Philip's Fame in the Gospel

### CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

The Pentecostal revival that was ignited on the Day of Pentecost quickly spread to Judea, Samaria, and beyond. Much like a forest fire that leaps roads and rivers, this fire that began in the upper room quickly spread to other regions, leaping both natural and spiritual boundaries.

Satan attempted to contain this conflagration, but it spread quickly from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to regions beyond. Satan is a notorious fire extinguisher, but God often changes what was meant to extinguish into something that further ignites.

Satan cannot seem to learn his extinguishing agents become as gasoline on the fires of revival.

The upside of this persecution was "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). During this time Philip went down to Samaria, where a great revival broke out. (See Acts 8:4–8.)

Then God called Philip from the revival in Samaria to go to a desert area south of Jerusalem on the road to Gaza to minister to one man—an Ethiopian eunuch returning home after having been in Jerusalem to worship.

The revival did not stop there. The Spirit carried Philip to Azotus, and he preached in all the cities until he came to Caesarea. (See Acts 8:39–40.)

### SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

#### I. THE NEW FOE: PERSECUTION

*"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Timothy 3:12).*

To the fledgling church born on the Day of Pentecost, the persecution that immediately followed was a new foe. This persecution is reminiscent of stories of young animals' survival in the wild. The first days and weeks of a young animal's life are hazardous. Predators are constantly prowling to harm unsuspecting little creatures. In like manner the devil "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

Satan, as the predator of all ages, soon recognized the young church as a desirable delicacy. He pounced on the fledgling church, doing his best to make a meal of the young body of Christ. Striking at one of the church's most effective voices, he was successful in silencing Stephen. But silencing this one voice served only to increase the volume of the other voices spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Although the new foe was persecution, it was personified in Saul of Tarsus. Not only did Saul consent to Stephen's martyrdom, but he also "made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). Though Satan achieved a singular success in the martyrdom of Stephen, his project of persecution was a failure. The disciples who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the gospel.

New converts to the gospel may face opposition, which they find confusing. Having been on the side of sin, they may feel when they choose to side with righteousness that life should be smoother. But Satan does not take too kindly to losing a follower. Satan was not a friend when they served him, but he is their archenemy now that they have switched sides.

Believers must keep in mind ultimate victory is the goal of the church. Satan may inflict persecution and cause setbacks, but these represent only temporary defeat for the church and temporary victory for Satan. He knows in the end he will suffer the most significant defeat of the ages by being bound and cast into the bottomless pit. (See Revelation 20:1-3.) Satan also knows the church is destined for the most glorious victory of the ages. This knowledge is painful for the devil, so he goes about trying to make believers miserable. It

seems he does this so he will have company in his misery. Let us not fall for this ploy. Rise up, be encouraged, and sing with the saints, "Victory, victory shall be mine."

## A. The Focus

The focus of the early church was evangelism. Knowing the heart of their Master and Lord was to save souls, the believers' preeminent goal was to spread the gospel. For this reason they refused to become distracted by things of this world.

It is Satan's business to distract the church from its goal of evangelism. He attempts to accomplish this by causing its members to focus on other things. He not only creates noise that diverts their attention, but he also tempts them to become involved in so many other activities that they have little or no time to witness.

We have a tendency to go where we are looking. For example, it is difficult to stay in the proper lane while driving if we are not looking straight ahead. When we look to one side for any length of time, we have a tendency to go in that direction. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee" (Proverbs 4:25).

Before we can concentrate we must consecrate, for there can be no concentration on the things of God without consecration. And there can be no concentration without focus. Concentration and focus are made possible by obeying Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." And Paul wrote, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2).

Spiritual blindness and nearsightedness are the result of carnality and sin. After giving a list of virtues, Peter said, "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off" (II Peter 1:9). A remedy for the lack of focus is given in Revelation 3:18: "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

Satan also uses sound to distract believers. Voices of discouragement have caused many believers to turn from the way. The cacophony of the carnal crowd has distracted many souls who were not listening attentively to God's voice. Personable media ministers who preach "feel good" sermons while ignoring the biblical truths of sin and

salvation may attract many followers, but at what cost to the unwitting souls who follow personality instead of the precious truths of God's Word?

Try as we might, we cannot totally avoid all ungodly sights and sounds. In the course of daily living, we may overhear suggestive conversation or profane language or see someone dressed immodestly on the job, in the store, walking down the sidewalk, or in the shopping mall. However, we can avoid deliberately bringing such things into our homes by way of modern media.

Should we unavoidably see or hear ungodly things, we can keep our minds from dwelling on them. We can ask God to cleanse us "from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9) and consciously replace the words or mental images with wholesome thoughts. We can choose what we think about.

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Concentrated effort is required to ignore the sights and sounds with which the enemy tries to distract us. Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). The only way to "press toward the mark" is to keep our focus on the goal without veering to the right or to the left. (See Deuteronomy 5:32; 28:14; Joshua 1:7.)

## **B. The Fury**

Satan unleashed the brunt of his fury against the young church, knowing it was more vulnerable in its beginning stage. But Satan underestimated the resilience of the church. Believers withstood the persecution and continued to preach the Word.

*"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).*

*"If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).*

When two equal forces oppose each other, there is no movement in either direction, forward or backward. But when one force is stronger than the opposing force, there is movement in the direction of the stronger force. Because Satan is weaker than God, and we have the power of God, Satan cannot cause us to regress. Believers who trust God's power can progress, causing Satan to regress. His opposition may be furious, but it is a feeble fury compared to the power of God.

## **II. A NEW FIELD: PREACHING CHRIST**

*"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5).*

After Stephen's death, the men who buried him did not bury the church. The church was scattered, but it was not stopped. Satan's plan to destroy the church was foiled.

Believers were so focused that the fury of Satan did not obscure the opportunity of a new field. Samaria became a new field in which to sow seed. A new field always presents a challenge. No two fields are alike. In the natural, one field may be flanked by a stand of oaks while another may be edged by a river. One field may be hilly and another flat. So it is spiritually. Each field presents a new set of challenges that willing workers are excited to tackle.

Regardless of the spiritual terrain, all fields have something in common. They all need Christ. Preaching Christ is the equivalent of a farmer sowing seed. Whether the field is flanked by trees, edged by a river, hilly, or flat, it must have seeds in order to produce a crop. So it is with the field of the world. It must have the seeds of the gospel to produce a harvest.

We should also remember that as the terrain differs, the applications differ. Each field

has its own set of requirements. This does not mean there is a difference in the seeds. The gospel message remains unchanged from field to field. But the uniqueness of the field dictates the needed method of application of the gospel. At harvest the crops may look the same, but how they were brought to harvest may vary. For this reason we should not look at an adjacent field and compare applications. Paul said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

## A. Philip's Ministry of the Gospel

*"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" (Acts 8:5).*

*"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35).*

Acts 8 contains the record of Philip preaching Jesus to the city of Samaria as well as to the Ethiopian eunuch. Knowing the necessity and power of the gospel, he used the only message capable of fixing the human heart. The gospel, which is the good news of Jesus Christ, is the world's panacea.

Philip preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, and God dispensed the gift of the Holy Ghost. Romans 1:16 tells us the gospel of Christ is the power of God to everyone who believes. Acts 1:8 says, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

The gospel of Christ will lead to new birth in those who hear and believe the preaching of the Holy Ghost. This is what happened in the city of Samaria. Philip preached Christ, and the individuals who believed his message "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16). When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they began praying for and laying hands on those who had been baptized, and they received the Holy Ghost. (See Acts 8:14–17.)

When Simon the sorcerer saw that the Holy Ghost was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:19).

Some who do not want to accept that speaking in tongues is the Bible sign of receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost may say Acts 8 does not record people speaking in tongues when they received the Holy Ghost. But Simon saw and heard something that made him want to buy the ability to lay hands on people and give them the Holy Ghost. He saw and heard something supernatural. But his vain request brought a strong rebuke from Simon Peter.

*"But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:20–23).*

From the city of Samaria, Philip's ministry extended southward when the angel of the Lord said, "Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert" (Acts 8:26). With nothing more specific than this divine directive, Philip arose and went.

*Our work for the Lord is successful if we are doing what He called us to do whether or not large numbers respond.*

God was watching an Ethiopian eunuch returning home after worshiping at Jerusalem. Seeing he was reading Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet and knowing he was sincere but lacking spiritual knowledge, God arranged their rendezvous. After Philip made

his acquaintance and was invited to join him in his chariot, he began at the verse the Ethiopian was reading and “preached unto him Jesus” (Acts 8:35).

As the chariot approached a pool of water deep enough for baptism, the Ethiopian responded to the gospel message and asked, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). He commanded the chariot to stop, and Philip baptized him. The Ethiopian “went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:39).

The Ethiopian eunuch and Philip left the baptismal site immediately, but they each left by different means. Before the eunuch continued southward in his chariot, Philip made his exit in a much more dramatic way. “The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more” (Acts 8:39). The next verse says, “Philip was found at Azotus,” which was many miles from the area south of Jerusalem.

“He preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea” (Acts 8:40). Apparently Philip settled in Caesarea, for Acts 21:8–9 records, “And the next day we that were of Paul’s company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.”

## B. Philip’s Fruit in the Gospel

*“And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake” (Acts 8:6).*

When people give heed with one accord to the preaching of the gospel, revival comes. It may be a small revival with only a few being saved, or it may be a large revival with great numbers finding God. Whether small or large, a revival is a blessing.

Philip’s fruit was abundant and could be calculated in large numbers, at least in Samaria. But his next assignment was to minister to one man in the desert. Although both endeavors were successful, they varied numerically but not miraculously. Our work for the Lord is successful if we are doing what He called us to do whether or not large numbers respond.

Revivals are always a cause for rejoicing. In Samaria, people who received deliverance and healing rejoiced. Those possessed with unclean spirits were delivered. The palsied were healed. The lame walked. “And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:8). Where there had been demons and disease, there was now celebration and praise.

Philip and those traveling with him joined in the jubilation, for revival had truly come to Samaria, causing great joy in their hearts. When hungry hearts obey the gospel, those who have been born again as well as those who ministered to them joyfully join in worship, praise, and thanksgiving to God.

*We should not seek the limelight or attempt to exalt ourselves. We should exalt Jesus Christ.*

## C. Philip’s Fame in the Gospel

*“But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries” (Acts 8:9–11).*

Samaria had long been attracted to the chicanery of one called Simon. Using sorcery, he had successfully deceived them to the extent that they followed him without question. In fact they said, “This man is the great power of God” (Acts 8:10).

However, with the wonders and miracles that accompanied the ministry of Philip,

the people of Samaria turned from Simon to Philip. Their choosing to follow Philip brought fame to Philip. Though Philip was not seeking fame, it came as a result of his faithfulness.

Seeking prominence runs counter to humility. We should not seek the limelight or attempt to exalt ourselves. We should exalt Jesus Christ. But if our faithful service brings us prominence, let us accept it humbly.

*“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:10).*

*“Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psalm 75:5–7).*

Comparing Philip and Simon makes quite an interesting study. Simon was “giving out that himself was some great one” (Acts 8:9). Philip, on the other hand, was humbly going about his business doing the work of the Lord.

When Simon saw the amazing results of Philip’s ministry, he was impressed. The miracles and wonders so moved him that he believed and was baptized. At this point in the narrative it seemed Simon was sincere. The miraculous power of God often moves

the moral and the immoral, the pure and the impure.

Philip’s fame not only reached the local degenerates, but it reached all the way to Jerusalem. The apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria to join Philip in ministering in the revival.

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

The word *revival* literally means “life again,” which implies there is a need after one is born again to be renewed again and again. This harmonizes with Paul’s statement in II Corinthians 4:16: “The inward man is renewed day by day.” Not only is revival the response of those believers reached with the gospel, but it is the believers’ daily renewal.

In our witnessing we must never forget that the life we are offering others is the life that sustains us. Failing to remember this would be like a cook failing to eat. In preparing food and serving others, the cook must remember that what is so vital to those he serves is vital to himself also.

This lesson underscores the necessity of sharing the gospel with those around us as well as those beyond us. Unfortunately, some people have a tendency to be burdened for the lost of distant regions while ignoring the needs of those nearby. Believers should be as burdened for the lost across the street as for the lost across the ocean. We should be involved in revival around us and beyond. ■

## REFLECTIONS

- Discuss the positive effect of persecution on the church.
- Discuss our need for faith for God to save evil men of Saul’s stature.
- Discuss why God told Philip to leave a great revival in Samaria and go to the desert to witness to one man.
- What is the proper response for an individual who may receive acclaim as a result of his ministry?