

WORSHIP SERVICE - 6.29.2025

PART 21 - SCATTERED, BUT NOT SILENCED

I. INTRODUCTION

- What would we do widespread persecution of Christians began to take place in our city tomorrow?
- Would we as a church shrink back or would we spread out and continue to proclaim the gospel?
- Those were questions the early Christians didn't get an opportunity to ask or even have a moment to consider; from one day to the next, they were scattered by force.
- Things look bleak for the young church. Darkness threatens to engulf them.
- But that's not the end of the story. What the enemy meant for evil, God, through his divine purpose used for his glory.

Acts 8:1-8 And Saul approved of his execution.

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. **2** Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. **3** But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. **5** Philip went down to the city[a] of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. **6** And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. **7** For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. **8** So there was much joy in that city.

II. PERSECUTION AND PROVIDENCE

- We are immediately drawn into the chain of events resulting from Stephen's death.
- First, beginning the day of this death, great persecution arose against the church at Jerusalem with a terrifying ferocity.
- Second, great persecution led to a great scattering of the church.
- The persecution did not stifle the spread of the gospel, it propelled it forward.
- The believers were scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria.
- That what Jesus instructed his disciples to do in Acts 1:8,

- This was God's plan all along—persecution cannot stop the gospel's advance.
 - Third, the great persecution that led to the great scattering, resulted in great evangelistic effort.
 - V4 Those who were scattered went about preaching the word.
 - The scattered Christians scattered the good seed of the gospel everywhere they went.
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- The enemy's attack on the church had the opposite effect of what he had intended.
 - Christ is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).
 - Persecution succeeded only in propagating the gospel.
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- Sometimes God will place us in unpleasant and uncomfortable situations to disrupt us from our comfort and complacency.
 - God uses these situations and circumstances to further his purposes with you and to spread the gospel through you to others.
 - Closed doors, unexpected changes, job disruptions, are opportunities to press in and see how God is using these things to sanctify you and move you along in his purposes.
 - Persecution, suffering does not mean that God is absent. He is sovereign even in suffering and persecution.
 - We need to remember the scattered believers weren't apostles—they were ordinary men and women.
 - Share the gospel wherever you are and wherever you go.
 - Your Job is not just your place of employment or your career—it's your mission field; it's a context for gospel witness.
 - We all will face the temptation to shrink back when we feel pressure and push back from others.
 - But wherever God has placed you, you are there to be a witness—so speak up!

III. PROCLAMATION IN SAMARIA

- Philip, like Stephen, was one of the seven chosen and appointed to table service at the Jerusalem church.
- He was a church member held in high esteem by the church, a man full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
- He goes down to the city of Samaria and proclaims Christ to the Samaritans.
- Like Stephen, his faithful proclamation is authenticated by signs following.
- People paid attention to him when they saw these mighty acts through this Spirit-empowered witness.
- The announcement of the gospel brought much joy in that city!
- The gospel brings healing, liberation, and hope. It is good news and those who receive it find joy.

JEWS AND SAMARITANS

- It's not possible to overstate the remarkable boldness Philip displayed taking the gospel to Samaria.
- The Jews and the Samaritans were sworn enemies.
- The hostility between them went back a thousand years.
- It started with when the kingdom of Israel divided.
- The Northern kingdom of Israel set up rival worship centers to prevent their people from going to Jerusalem.
- In 722 BC, The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel.

- A large percentage of the population were deported and foreigners were imported to repopulate the land.
 - The foreigners intermarried with the remaining Israelites creating a mixed race who became known as Samaritans.
 - From the Jewish perspective, Samaritans were ethnically impure, half-breeds who had corrupted the worship of Yahweh with pagan practices.
 - In the 6th century BC, when the Jews returned to the land, they refused the help of the Samaritans in the rebuilding of the temple.
 - In the 5th century BC, the Samaritans built their own rival temple on Mount Gerizim, they kept their own version of the Pentateuch (first five books of Moses) and they rejected the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.
 - Recall the story in John 4, Jesus encountering the Samaritan woman at the well.
 - Jesus asks her for a drink and she replies, *"How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"*
 - John sums it up, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."
 - To the Jews, the Samaritans were apostates who had corrupted the bloodline, distorted doctrine, were ceremonially unclean and were to be avoided.
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- That history is important to understand to see how amazing it is that Samaritans are included in the Messianic community.
 - The good news is that those who were far off, the outcasts who had been cut off from full fellowship with the Jews, are now brought into the same gospel family.
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- The gospel is the great equalizer!
 - Paul would later write that in Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)
 - When the gospel is embraced, even the most entrenched divisions are healed.
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- Who do you least expect to welcome the good news?
 - Who in your life have you written off as unreachable?
 - From the gospel's perspective, there is no group that is so outside the bounds that they are excluded from our evangelistic effort.
 - We as a church must be welcoming to all and we must be willing to go to all!
 - The gospel compels us to leave our cultural and social comfort zones
 - We have to believe that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe!
 - If the gospel can reach Samaritans it can reach anyone!
 - What we perceive to be a barrier to the gospel are not obstacles to God!

THE DELAY IN THE GIVING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Acts 8:14-17 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.
- Word gets back to the apostles that the Samaritans are receiving the word of God with great joy.
- That phrase "received the word of God" is the same language Luke used of those who "received the word of God" at Pentecost (2:41), and he will use it again after the conversion of the gentile Cornelius, when the

apostles heard the the Gentiles also had “received the word of God (11:1).”

- The phrase is a technical expression Luke employs to describe a new stage in the advance of the gospel.
 - So the apostles send two of their own, Peter and John, on a fact-finding investigative mission.
 - Upon arriving they discovered the Samaritans had received the gospel and were baptized, but they had not yet received the Holy Spirit.
 - How can it be that through Philip’s ministry the Samaritan believers only received baptism but not the Holy Spirit?
 - Haven’t we already established that we receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion and not through some second experience?
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- Luke explains why the Samaritans don’t have the Spirit.
 - V16, “for he had not yet fallen on any of them...”
 - He then asserts that “they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”
 - Both of those phrases give us a clue that this is not what is to be normally expected.
 - The only other time we see something similar to this is in Acts 19, when Paul encountered some disciples who had only received John’s baptism but not the Holy Spirit when they believed (19:1-7).
 - Some could interpret this passage that the Samaritans’ faith was not genuine saving faith and that they only believed with the preaching of the apostles.
 - Or that maybe they did get the initial gift but now with the ministry of the apostles they receive some charismatic manifestations of the Spirit.
 - We have previously discussed how passages like this one are a major proof text for the Pentecostal doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit being a two-stage process or second blessing.
 - We will agree that the Samaritans’ experience was certainly a two-stage event, but we have to ask, Is it what we should normally expect?
 - The answer will be the same as previously given—no!
 - The general apostolic teaching in Scripture is that the Christian experience of receiving the Holy Spirit is a single-stage event.
 - We receive the indwelling Spirit of God when we are brought into union with Christ.
 - No laying on of hands is necessary in this initial saving work of God.
 - There is no need to seek a second type of experience to receive the promise of the Holy Spirit.
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- What makes the most sense in the context of Luke’s narrative and Christ’s instructions?
 - The most natural explanation of the delayed giving of the Holy Spirit is that this is the first time in which the gospel is proclaimed outside of Jerusalem.
 - Considering the history of the conflict between Jews and Samaritans, this exceptional circumstance functions almost as a Samaritan Pentecost.
 - It is a moment of great significance in the advance of the gospel, but considering the long-standing rift, will the division continue? Would the Samaritans be welcomed by the Jewish believers?
 - God providentially delays the giving of the Spirit from the Samaritan converts for the apostles to investigate, pray for the converts, lay hands on them as a sign of fellowship, and as the Spirit of God comes upon them, they are in fact received as bona fide Christians, who are now incorporated into the community of the redeemed just like the Jewish believers.
 - The apostles are convinced of God’s love for the Samaritans as they witness the Spirit being poured out on them.
 - The Samaritans also had to know beyond a shadow of a doubt they really are a part of Christ’s church, that they are connected and not

separate from the Jewish believers, the original pillars of the church.

- From that moment forward, the Samaritans would be admitted into the Christian community without distinction.
- V25 tells us that the apostles make their way back to Jerusalem, after preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.
- *“An unprecedented situation demanded quite exceptional methods.”* - John Stott

CONCLUSION

- The story of the scattering of believers reminds us of God’s sovereignty over all things.
 - Nothing is happening in this world apart from God’s eternal purposes to unite all things in heaven and earth under Christ.
 - We are called to scatter the seed of the gospel everywhere we go.
 - We need to be a Philip, carrying the gospel message with us by the power of the Spirit, and that means sometimes God will take us to places we would never have gone to otherwise—to talk to people we never would have talked to otherwise.
 - No one is beyond the reach of the saving arm of the Lord.
 - Is there someone in your life that you written off?
 - The gospel gives us the confidence to be bold and courageous because the gospel is unstoppable—it cannot be confined, it cannot be silenced.
- And as we proclaim the good news, as we preach Christ, in our neighborhoods and communities—may we see the glorious effects of the good news as it is received with joy.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?