

Philip The Evangelist
Acts 8:1-25
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“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,” notice that, “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 is, the believers in Jerusalem, “were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” Acts 8:1-4

Remember last Wednesday night we concluded with the stoning of Stephen. Stephen was the first martyr of the Church. His name “Stephen” is the name “Stephanos.” It means crown. There are two crowns mentioned in the Bible, one is “Stephanos,” the victor’s crown, and the other is “diadem” or king’s crown. Stephen or “Stephanos” means the victor’s crown, and he wore that victor’s crown. The Bible says, “...to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Stephen, this deacon, one of the seven chosen to be waiting on tables back in Acts 6, was actually used by God to preach the gospel and many heard the gospel. One of them in the crowd that heard the gospel was a man by the name of Saul. Turn back with me to Acts 7. I want to point that out to you. Actually, go back to Acts 7:54.

“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart,” that is, the people listening to Stephen preach, “and they gnashed on him with their teeth. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost,” referring to Stephen, “looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,” Son of man, a title for the Messiah taken from Daniel 9. “Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep,” a metaphor for the believer’s death, “he fell asleep,” because one day his body would be resurrected and reunited with his soul and spirit in heaven.

What I wanted to point out is that Saul was there watching Stephen stoned in Acts 7:58. This Saul, and we’re going to get to know him quite well in the next few chapters, becomes Paul the apostle. You’ve all heard of Paul the great apostle, and in the book of Acts it starts with the focus on Peter, then shifts the focus on Paul. It’s really all about Peter and Paul, and we’re in the transition period between Peter and Paul. We get a little ministry of Peter tonight, but before Paul was converted, he was going by his name Saul. The name “Saul” means asked for. He was probably named after the first king of Israel. His name “Paul” actually meant little or short of stature. It was more his Greek name. When he began to minister to the Gentiles, he took on

his Greek name, the name "Paul," and became known as Paul the apostle.

When you start in Acts 8:1, again Saul is mentioned. "And Saul was consenting unto his death." Whose death? He was consenting unto Stephen's death. In the Bible, when it was originally written, there were no chapter-verse divisions. That's why Acts 8 starts with "And," so it goes from Acts 7 to Acts 8, "And Saul was consenting," the word "consenting" means giving active approval unto his death. In verses 1-4, which we just read, we see that the Jerusalem church is going to be scattered from the persecution that starts as a result of Stephen's stoning. This is a very pivotal point in the book of Acts and in the history of the Church. The stoning of Stephen begins the very first official organized persecution of the believers. Thus far, it had just been the Jewish Supreme Court kind of attacking the apostles, but now it's a full-on, full-blown persecution against all of the Christians, all of the believers. Saul is going to be the leader of the hate-Christ club on his high school campus or college campus. It's going to fall to his lot to kind of lead the charge. Years later, after his conversion, this would still bother him, that God would call him by His grace to preach the gospel, that he once sought to persecute and that he actually killed Christians.

Saul was consenting to Stephen's death. Those that stoned Stephen were lying their coats down, and Saul was the one that said, "I'll watch your coats. I'll watch your watches while you stone this guy." By the way, I don't want to get sidetracked, but stoning was a horrible way to die. The way they did it was by actually pushing you off a cliff...I just thought you'd all like to know how this works, by the way. They'd push you off a cliff, and if the fall doesn't kill you, they'd begin to throw rocks at you, literally throw rocks at you, until you are dead. You die literally by being stoned to death. That's what happened to Stephen as he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he prayed his prayer.

I believe that Saul, and we'll develop this more in Acts 9 at his conversion, listened to Stephen's sermon. He heard the word of God, and the Spirit spoke to his heart. He watched Stephen die and listened to Stephen pray. He saw Stephen's face as it had been the face of an angel, and God was going to use Stephen's life to impact and bring about Saul's conversion. When Saul is converted in Acts 9, and the Lord says, "...it is hard for thee to kick against the goads," He is referring to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I believe that it was a result of God convicting Saul through the life of Stephen's preaching, through the life of Stephen's presentation, the way he preached the gospel, the things that he did, and the prayers that he offered.

It's interesting how God can take what seems to be a tragedy in the death of Stephen and out of that you have a Paul the apostle. Not only out of that you have a Paul the apostle, but in the context here of these first four verses, you actually have the Church being scattered. Someone put it like this: Stephen's death resulted in persecution, verse 1, then resulted in dispersion or the Church being scattered. They were all kind of like a little holy huddle in Jerusalem, yet Jesus had said that when the Spirit comes upon you, you're going to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judaea, and catch this, Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the earth. Jesus also said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." They weren't doing that. They were just kind of huddled in Jerusalem, so God allowed persecution to scatter

them. I believe that God sometimes will kind of rock the boat for us or shake us up or pull the rug out from under us or bring persecution in our life to kind of break us out of our comfort zone and force us out to depend on Him and maybe even take the gospel somewhere else. God was using this for His glory. Even though Satan intended it for evil, God meant it for good. God was turning it around, and the gospel would go out.

As in Acts 1, Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, uttermost parts of the earth, we now go to Judaea, specifically Samaria, and then it will go to the uttermost parts of the earth. The Church begins to spread out. It's like a fire started and Satan tries to stomp on it, but it just sends out the flames and spreads it even greater. I want you to go back with me and notice this, "...great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered," these are the everyday believers, the body of Christ, many thousands of them. Perhaps not every single one, but the majority of them were being scattered, except the apostles. Notice that in verse 1. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem. It doesn't tell us why, but they stayed there in Jerusalem and that still continued to be the headquarters of the Church.

It says (verse 2), "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him." Bible students are kind of unsure. They kind of argue over these "devout men." Who were these "devout men" that carried Stephen to his burial? The term is used for two different groups. They're used for Jews that are devout and love God and keep the law, and it's used also for believers. Most often it's used for nonbelievers that were pious, religious, and devout Jews. We don't know for sure who these devout Jews were, but one of the best theories, I believe, is that perhaps they weren't believers but actually Jews who liked Stephen and believed that his stoning was a horrible thing. Maybe they were even friends of Stephen that hadn't become believers yet but sympathized with Stephen and with the cause that he had and the preaching that he was doing, and they carried Stephen.

It's possible that because now you have official persecution that the believers were limited. There is even Church history that says that the Jews did not allow the Christians to bury Stephen. The other Jews that were devout had to do that, so they wanted to make sure he had a proper burial, which would explain why they made great lamentation over him. Not that believers don't lament or cry when someone they love dies as a Christian, but the Bible does say, "...that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." They made great lamentation which means literally to beat the chest and beat their head. They were lamenting and wailing over Stephen's death. It could be that they were just some pious Jews that felt sympathetic towards Stephen's cause.

"As for Saul, he made havock..." that word "havock" in my King James translation literally means to make a savage out of. It was used for a wild beast that would tear into another animal. He was just making savagery out of the Church. He was going into every one of their homes and arresting them. He was doing it to men and women, committing them into prison. Not only the men but even the women, and he was imprisoning them. "Therefore they," here it is, verse 4, "that were scattered abroad went every where," and when they were scattered what did they do? They preached the good news. They preached the Word. They preached the

gospel. That phrase literally means to evangelize. The word “evangelize” or “evangelistic” or “evangelical” actually means the idea of proclaiming good news. That doesn’t mean that they necessarily were evangelists, that they rented out a stadium and had a crusade, but it means that wherever they went they shared the Word. I believe that everyone of us as believers are to go everywhere and share the gospel. The whole Church is to share the whole gospel with the whole world. Amen?

You may not be an evangelist in that sense, but we’re all to evangelize. I believe that with all my heart. You may not be given the “gift” of evangelism, but we are called to evangelism. It’s not just giving it to someone else, we need to pray, we need to go, we need to give, and maybe one-on-one when you’re going about your business in the city encountering people. We, as Christians, everyday should pray, and we’re going to get into it more next week. We’re going to talk about how to share your faith, but we should all be saying, “God, use me today. Open up the door for me to talk to someone about You, maybe during lunch break or maybe in the office, or maybe when I go to the store, or maybe when I encounter a neighbor. Lord, help me to be sensitive in the conversation to bring it around to the gospel and to share the good news with others.”

They, “went every where...,” the word “scattered” in verse 4 is used of the scattering of seed. When they sowed seed in those days, Jesus told the parable of the sower and the seed, men wore long, flowing robes. They would actually pull the robe up and gather it in their hand forming a basket in front of them. They would fill it full of seed and go down the furrows of the field throwing the seed, just throwing the seed as you go down. I saw a neighbor in my neighborhood the other day. He had a bucket and was just throwing seed on his grass. I’m going, That dude’s a professional, man! That guy really knows how to throw the seed! I thought, Maybe I can talk him into coming over and doing my yard, you know. He was just whew whew whew. His hand was just going really fast. It reminded me of this—the seed that is just scattered. This is what the persecution did. The Church has never been hindered by persecution. It only fans the flame. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church; and the seed just starts getting thrown everywhere, and God starts using their witness. He breaks them out of their comfort zone (verse 4) as, “...they that were scattered.” It went from persecution to dispersion to evangelism, “preaching the word,” as they shared the gospel with all that they met, and so should we.

Verse 5, “Then Philip,” now we’re introduced to our second individual who was actually, back in Acts 6:5 along with Stephen, chosen as one of the seven deacons to wait on tables. Remember when there was the argument in the church between the Grecian and Hellenist widows? The Greek widows felt like they were being neglected in the distribution of the food, so the apostles said, “We shouldn’t leave the Word of God to serve tables. Pick seven men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to take care of this matter.” Two of those seven, the first was Stephen and he became a preacher and was stoned, and the second was Philip. By the way, you don’t hear it much, but the name “Philip” means lover of horses. It doesn’t have any deep, profound super spiritual meaning to it. That’s kind of what the name means, and it has kind of always stuck in my brain. If you’re a “Philip” tonight, your name means you love horses. I don’t

know if that's true or not, but Philip maybe was really into horses and they said, "Your name is Philip."

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria," and what did he do? "...and preached Christ unto them." In verse 4, "they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word," and you know what it means to preach the Word in the context here—they went everywhere (verse 5) preaching Christ. This is the mission of the Church. It's great to feed people. It's great to educate people. It's great to build homes for people. It's great to get jobs for people, but the job of the Church is to preach the Word, to preach Christ. We need to get back to the business of preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Amen? That's what the Church needs. That's where the power lies. Paul the apostle said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation...to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." We need to get back to preaching the gospel. Ministers need to preach the gospel. The people in the pew need to preach the gospel. We need to go everywhere preaching the gospel. Just take the group here in this Wednesday night service, can you imagine if all of us left here tonight with the determination that this week we're all going to share Jesus Christ with somebody who needs to hear the good news? Think of how many people would hear the gospel this week if we all just said, "Lord, here am I, use me. Help me to share with my gardener. Help me to share with my grocer. Help me to share with somebody at the store, a neighbor. Just help me to be faithful to preach the gospel, to tell someone."

Philip went to Samaria and preached the gospel. "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," which are demons, "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." There's a lot we can talk about, but I don't want to miss this. Notice verse 1, "great persecution;" verse 2, "great lamentation;" and verse 8, "great joy." There are three "great's" mentioned in those first eight verses: great persecution, great lamentation, great joy. Wherever the gospel goes, there is great joy.

Philip, as I pointed out, was one of the seven deacons chosen, again, to wait on tables; but faithful in the little things, God raised him up and he became an evangelist. Again, I believe with all my heart that if you want to be used by God, don't despise the day of small things, okay? If you really want to be used by God, you won't just sit around and wait for Billy Graham to call you on the phone and say, "Can you preach for me at my next crusade?" You'll teach a Sunday school class, you'll be a greeter at church, or an usher. You'll come and help clean pews, vacuum, or dust. It's just, What can I do to serve the Lord? I just want to be a blessing. I just want to use what I have. I just want to do anything I can do to serve the Lord. When you're faithful in little things, then God will open up the door for greater things. It's being faithful and doing it as unto the Lord, for the glory of the Lord. You're just saying to God, "I'm here. I'm available. I want to serve You."

By the way, this great evangelist, Philip, is the only individual in the Bible who is actually called an evangelist—Philip the evangelist. Later on, (Acts 21:8) he's known as "Philip the evangelist,"

as we find Dr. Luke and Paul stay with him in his home in Caesarea. Philip was faithful, and God used him.

What was Samaria (the city of Samaria where he preached Christ), and who are the Samaritan people that he preached Christ to? Again, a very, very significant pivotal point in the book of Acts. Basically, Samaria was in the central part of the land of Israel. (We have a map we want to throw on the screen. Actually, I haven't seen it yet; and I don't have my glasses on, so hopefully I can see it. Aaron enlarged the font for me.) In the north you have Galilee. Just to the right of that you have Lake Galilee. Running from Lake Galilee down to the Dead Sea is the Jordan Valley with the Jordan River. Then, you have the central area known as Samaria, and there you see the city of Samaria. To the south, you have Jerusalem, and that's in the area of Judaea. The regions there are Galilee in the north, Samaria in the center, and Judaea in the south. I wanted you to see proximity. We have Jerusalem, where the church was, and upon the persecution of Stephen, it actually transferred up into Samaria. (You can take the map down now.)

Who are the Samaritan people? During the Old Testament time, it was actually 722 B.C. when the nation of Israel split into two groups: ten tribes in the north and the two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, in the south. The tribes of the north, the northern area of Israel, were taken away captive by the Assyrian Empire. This is the first diaspora or dispersion. By the way, that scattered seed is the concept of dispersion or diaspora. When we opened up the book of James on Sunday morning, he was writing to the twelve tribes who were scattered. There's that same word, the scattering of the seed, the diaspora. These Jews in the northern area of Israel, known as the ten tribes, were taken out of the land by the Assyrians. A very small number of them remain. The Assyrian Empire, simply stated, would conquer other nations and actually displace the people they conquered. They would take people from other nations and put them in the land of Israel. These Gentiles, that were conquered by Assyria and placed in the land of Israel, intermarried with these Jews. Samaritans were (and this is the important point) half Jew, half Gentile. They were half-breeds as far as the Jews were concerned. They weren't full, pure Jews. They were intermingled or intermarried with Gentiles, and there was a great, great racial prejudice and hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans.

In John 4, Jesus stopped at a well in Sychar, which is in Samaria. By the way, that's in what's called the west bank today. Unfortunately, you don't get to go there to visit that on a tour to Israel. Jesus sat down, and a woman of Samaria came to get water. You know the story. Jesus ended up sharing that He could give her living water and so forth, exposing her sin, and she believed in Him. She made the statement to Jesus that kind of describes the hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. She says, "Why is it that You're talking to me, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." You don't talk to Samaritans, and though the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, God so loved the world. Amen? As far as evangelism goes—get it very clearly—there is no such thing as limiting the reach of evangelism to certain nations saying, "Well, we don't like those kind of people." There are no racial barriers when it comes to reaching lost people. It doesn't matter. Every tribe, every kindred, every tongue, every nation, every ethnic group, and any part of the world, "Go ye into all the world, and

preach the gospel.” “Well, we don’t like this people group,” or “We don’t like that people group.” “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,” the gospel is for the whole world, and we should go to the whole world. Amen?

Now the Samaritans (this can be significant in just a moment) had their own religion and temple. When Nehemiah came back from captivity and started to rebuild the temple, the Jews wouldn’t let them participate in rebuilding. They got all upset and went up to Mount Gerizim and built their own temple, and they had their own form of worship. There is actually still a small sect of Samaritans there in Israel who still have their form of worship. They had their own separate religion. They had their own kind of worship. They despised Jews, and Jews despised them. There was no intermingling then, but God wanted to reach out to these people in Samaria. The apostles and Philip went there and began to preach Christ unto them.

Notice that God was using Philip not only to preach but miracles were being performed. “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.” He labored in preaching the gospel, and God used him. Miracles were performed, and there was great joy. The work of the Holy Spirit or the fruit of the Spirit is always joy.

I want you to notice, beginning in verses 9-13, that now Satan tries to hinder that work of evangelism in the city of Samaria. It says, “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: 10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.” Anytime you have somebody saying they’re the great one and they’re not pointing you to Jesus Christ, and people think they’re the great power of God, you know you’re in trouble—you know not to follow that person.

“And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries,” but God’s anecdote for deception, I love this, “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” Again, there’s a lot that we can go into here, but I want to keep the story in the narrative flowing. Basically, Philip goes to Samaria. There’s a great revival. People are being healed. People are being saved. Many are being baptized. There is great joy in the city, and then there’s a guy that lived there. His name was Simon. In church history, he’s known as Simon Magus, which is the Greek word for sorcery. He’s famous for being an apostate. Some feel that he might have been truly saved, but certainly the Scriptures seem to indicate that his conversion wasn’t genuine or real. My theory or hypothesis is that he just got caught up in the miracles, the excitement, and didn’t have a real, genuine conversion. He kind of joined the Christian movement, but he was all about himself. He was all about having power. He was all into signs, wonders, and the miracles. His focus wasn’t on Jesus Christ.

Beware of people who focus on the miracles and not the miracle giver. I’m all for God doing

miracles, but the focus needs to be about the One who did the miracle, not the miracle itself. It's really hard for people to stay focused on Jesus when miracles are happening. By the way, the greatest miracle is the conversion of a life! We get all excited because God heals a sick person, and that's awesome, that's wonderful; but I promise you whoever God healed that sick person, eventually, if the Lord tarries, they're going to get sick and die sooner or later. I just thought I'd encourage you. They say, "Aw, well forget it then. Just be sick. We're going to go to heaven all the earlier." Think about that. Sooner or later your body is going to go POOF! It's just going to go the way of all flesh. The real miracle is salvation—that God would open the eyes of an unbeliever and show them their sin and grant them repentance. The Bible says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ...old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." That's a miracle. Amen?

Simon was all enamored by the miraculous, and the people were being deceived by him. By the way, be careful. As I mentioned, there are many deceivers that are gone out into the world today, and if there's anything the Church needs, it needs discernment based on the Word of God and given by the Holy Spirit. I love the fact that Philip preached Christ. He preached "...the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." The question in verse 13 is whether Simon the sorcerer was truly converted. Just because it says he believed doesn't really mean that it was saving faith. In James, we're talking about there is a faith that's not real because it doesn't produce works, it doesn't change the life. Just because someone says they're a Christian and comes to church, and just because someone has been baptized, and just because someone walks down an aisle and prays the sinner prayer doesn't mean that they automatically are going to go to heaven.

It says, verse 14, "Now when the apostles which were in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John," notice the two apostles that are sent to Samaria, Peter and John. Peter is going to pass off the prominent place in the book of Acts. A little footnote here, John the apostle, this is the last time he appears in the book of Acts. He will be mentioned one time later, but this is his last appearance in the book of Acts. Another interesting tidbit is that John is being sent with Peter down to Samaria to check out what is going on. They would lay hands on the Samaritan believers for them to receive the Holy Spirit, (I'll talk about that in just a moment) but John, in Luke's gospel, records that during the ministry of Jesus, because the Samaritans rejected Him, John with his brother James said, "Lord, would You like us to call down fire from heaven right now and roast 'em on the spot, consume them on the spot?" You talk about being a fiery preacher. That's like going witnessing with a flame thrower. "Turn or burn!" (Sound of flame thrower) Jesus said, "No. You don't know what manner of spirit I am of." I haven't come to destroy men's lives, I've come to save them. This is why he was given the nickname, a son of thunder. He and James were called sons of thunder because they wanted to bring down fire on these very people that now they're going to minister to. I can imagine, as Peter said, "John, we need to go down to Samaria." "Why?" "There's a revival there. They're getting saved, and we need to go check it out." He says, "Those are the people I wanted to roast a few years ago, and now you want me to go pray for them?" Again, we need to have a heart for the whole world.

Verse 15, "Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." I probably could preach, should preach, and would like to preach, but I'm stuck now because I'm covering a lot of other stuff, kind of a whole study just on these verses right here about going to Samaria and laying their hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit. This is the reason why. The question is: How is it that the Samaritans received (verse 14) the word of God and earlier it says that they were baptized? It seems that they were genuinely converted and saved and became believers but didn't receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John showed up (it would've been at least a few days later) and laid hands on them for them to receive the Holy Spirit? Well, again, it's hard for me because there are volumes I could say, but let me say just a few things and keep it as simple as I can.

Remember what I talked about earlier in my study of the book of Acts that whenever you interpret the book of Acts you need to understand the type of literature you're in. You're in an historical narrative, a book of history. The book of Acts needs to be interpreted through the lens of the epistles, the doctrinal teachings. You need to be a little bit careful when you build a doctrine on a narrative passage from an historical book whether it be the Old Testament, the gospels, or here in the book of Acts.

Now, why do I say that? Because the question is: Is this normative for the Church today? Is this what happens today? Can you believe in Jesus and be saved and not have the Holy Spirit? My answer to that is no. It's not normative. No, that doesn't happen. The Bible is very clear that, "...if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The moment you believe in Jesus Christ, the moment you trust in Jesus Christ, the moment you receive Him as your Lord and Savior, you are born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. You can't be a Christian without the Holy Spirit, so it's impossible for you to be saved without the Holy Spirit. Here we have an example, I believe, because it's transitional and because of the enmity and hostility and hatred that existed between the Samaritans and the Jews and the fact that they had their own religion and the Jews had theirs. There was a great danger. Listen to me very carefully. I know that some people might say, "Well, you can't interpret the Bible just from an historical perspective," but listen to me very carefully. The danger was that the Church could become too divided between the Samaritan and Jewish Christians. The Church could've been split into two groups, two bodies; and we know that the Bible teaches there is only one true Church. There is only one body of Christ. That they might understand they were brothers in Christ and accepted by Christ, there was the delay of the Holy Spirit given until the apostles went down and laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. This isn't what happens normative today.

What happens is people take this historical narrative, this story, build a doctrine on it, and go about a thousand different ways. There are all kinds of shades and variations where they teach that you can be a Christian but not have the Holy Spirit or that you can be a Christian and you're not baptized in the Holy Spirit or you can be a Christian but you're not filled with the Holy Spirit. I do believe the Bible teaches the moment you are born again, you have the Holy Spirit.

He is dwelling in you. He becomes a permanent possession, and you are baptized instantly by the Holy Spirit into Christ, which is your union in Christ. Every believer shares in that same experience, 1 Corinthians 12:13 makes that very clear. You say, "Well, why is there the delay here?" So that they could know that Jews and Gentiles were one. "Why is it not normative?" Because as we go through the book of Acts, and I'll point it out, this hasn't happened in every instance, nor is it necessary for an apostle or somebody in direct succession from the apostolic chain to lay hands on you to receive the Holy Spirit, nor is it necessary for somebody to lay hands on you right now to receive the Holy Spirit. They laid hands on them to show that there was a unity, a bond, and a fellowship between the Samaritans and the Jews.

Basically, what I'm arguing is that it's not normal. Not everything that took place in the book of Acts can we say must happen or does happen. Can it happen? I suppose God is sovereign and can do whatever He wants. I'm not going to try to limit a sovereign God. Basically, I don't believe that's normative, and that's not what the Scriptures teach. The moment you are saved, you get the Holy Spirit. We are commanded to be filled by the Spirit, and that's an ongoing, continual, appropriation of the Spirit's power in our lives. We'll talk more about this as we get into other sections that deal with the subject. I believe the idea that there is only one Church (one body, not two), Samaritans and Jews, but only one body in Christ.

"Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power," evidently, he saw the change in their lives or some theorize possibly, it doesn't say, that they spoke in tongues and began to praise God or got bold and preached, but something happened. Simon saw the power when the Spirit came. Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou has thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21 Thou has neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me."

Simon, this guy that was a sorcerer, supposedly converted, sees the power of God come on these people and says, "I want to buy that. If I give you some money, can you give me this power?" This is why in church history it was known as simony, the buying of a position in the church or paying money for a favor and a blessing from the church. It was an abomination, is what it was. Peter had the discernment, I believe, given to him by the Holy Spirit and said, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou has thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." We're not so far off today. There are people today that think if you give money, God will bless you. Will God bless you? He'll bless you, but it's almost like kind of a direct correlation—the more you give, the more God blesses you—and if you give one hundred fold, then God will bless you. It's true, you can't out give God, but it's not like rubbing a magic Genie lamp and BOOM! you get a bunch of money.

I remember sitting, as a baby Christian, in a church service and the minister was...actually I was getting ready to put what little money I had in the offering which, not that it matters, but it was \$5. I was just a saved hippie that had very little, so I put my little \$5 in the offering. They went on for such a long time emphasizing that you must give to God, you have to give to God, and if you give to God, God will bless you; if you give to God, God will double it back. I just thought, I could use ten bucks! I'll put five in and get ten? That's pretty cool! That's a good deal! Then, I stopped myself and thought, This is stupid. This isn't like the bank of Heaven, you know, the offering plate goes by and you put a five in and get ten back. You may not be buying a position in the church, but some people think they can buy favor from God or merit, earn, or deserve blessing from God; or if you give God...if I go to church once a week, then, "God, You've gotta bless me. Make sure You take note of that, I'm at church on a Wednesday night. You better write that down. Don't miss it." We think that we can purchase the blessings of God with our activity or with our money.

The question is whether Simon the sorcerer was really saved or not. He said, "...for thy heart is not right in the sight of God," and he called him to repent. I suppose it's possible that he was a real Christian, but I have a theory that he wasn't. Justin Martyr, who lived in Samaria 100 years later in church history, said that Simon became a gnostic, which was an apostate, denying the true doctrine of Jesus Christ. By the way, let's not be naive. Not everyone in the church is saved. Not everyone preaching in the church, not every so-called "minister" in the church is saved. You better pay attention to what people believe doctrinally, not just their personality or that they're nice or you like them or the church is big or it's a great place. You better pay attention to the doctrine that they believe and hold to and consider the truth of the Word of God. Let's not be naive. Peter said, "For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." God sees our hearts. Some might have thought that Simon was truly saved, but God knew his heart.

In verse 25, in closing, "And they," that is, Peter and John, "when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans." Peter and John go back to Jerusalem. On their way, in all the little hamlets, villages, and little towns, what did they do? They preach the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. They're evangelizing as well.

Here's what the Church is all about. First, we're called to worship God. That's our upreach. You were doing that tonight in song. You're worshipping God right now as you hear His Word. I'm worshipping God as I share His Word. When you give to the Lord of your treasure or your time or your talents, you're doing that as an act of worship. That's our upreach. Secondly, we have inreach. We're here to encourage one another, to pray for one another. You're in the right place tonight. You're with the family of God, the body of Christ, people who love and can encourage you. I really exhort you if you're discouraged or struggling tonight, find someone to pray for and with you. The other pastors, members of the prayer team, and I, we're all up here in front of this platform. We stay here as long as we need to to pray for you, but you can pray for each other. I think it's kind of cool when you turn and pray for each other, and I can go home. Pray for one another that you may be healed. That's our inreach.

Then, we have outreach. We reach up in worship, we reach in in fellowship, and we reach out in evangelism. Amen? Let's go tonight...let's leave this place...The minute you leave this church, you are entering the mission field. Philip became a missionary. He was chosen to wait on tables, and then God sent him to Samaria and people were saved and healed and delivered. There's no telling what God can do with your life if you'll just say, "Here am I, Lord, use me." God can start a revival in your place of work or in your neighborhood. Just ask God to fill you with His Spirit, and open your mouth and begin to tell other people about Jesus Christ. That's our outreach. Let's pray.