

Acts 8.1-25

Gospel Seed Scattered by Gossip and Grief

NEWS HeartBREAKING Suffering / Terrible Attacks angst Defenseless

From COMFORT of our Hawaii > Watched FAMILIES on the Run

ISRAEL / Bombing in Gaza / Drones in Ukraine / Killing in Nigeria

Acts 8 – Family of God in DISTRESS > Fires of Persecution SPREADS

1st MARTYR – STEPHEN – Many MORE have Followed, More WILL...

7.58 witnesses laid down garments at the feet of a young man named Saul

Man who Delighted in DEADLY Stoning is NOT YET FINISHED....

v. 3 Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison

1. God's Plan

a. Sending > SPREADING GOSPEL is Very HEART of Christianity

All 4 GOSPELS End w the WORD 'GO' > Acts OPENS with GO!

1.8 receive power when Holy Spirit comes on you...my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

God's ETERNAL PURPOSE revealed to COVENANT Father Abraham
...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you Genesis 12.3

earth will be full of the knowledge of LORD as waters cover sea Isa 11.9

Momentum of SENDING TANKED in Jerusalem > Acts 1-7 = 10 Years

NO Place like Home: Fires, Home Cooking, Home Boys, Home Teams

b. Suffering God turns UP HEAT on those COZY HOME FIRES

vs. 1-2 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. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.

Seems that SUFFERING has STOPPED the Sending > Look Again...!

Godly men buried Stephen // GREAT RISK > Identify w 1st MARTYR

Jewish LAW FORBADE Public MOURNING of Executed CRIMINALS

“WHERE is YOUR JESUS NOW??” – Where is this Stephen??

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 1 Thessalonians 4.13-14

Stephen > Flying STONES 7.60 when he had said this, he fell asleep.

GRIEF > Normal, Natural, NEEDED > NOT HOPELESS Grief

Separation on Earth will bring REUNION with Jesus in Heaven

Sending and Suffering > Preaching and Persecution

Gospel is Message of SUFFERING > INNOCENT Man Nailed to CROSS

Friend > Bible Translation Scholar > Bibleless People

Dec 15, 2023, our dear sister/colleague Rachel passed away. Lung cancer key person for the Mora Bible translation team, faithful until death co-workers > sorrow and pain: Ask comfort & task estab Mora church

Peter serious accident, falling down rough mountain road & break skull recovering without any major damage to his life or brain. Peter is a faithful minister who translates the Bible into the language of his own people.

Joshua suddenly hospitalized in November, myocardial infraction condition very critical / few minutes delay could have cost him his life. Lord saved Joshua, pillar of the Bible translation team for Yara people.

Reuben and Gabriel key ministers take care of Bible translation teams suffered persecution and intimidation in 2023. Because of involvement in BT called to unwanted places, interrogated, threatened, and harassed.

Pray Lord will heal, protect, new strength: rise again & serve their people. The peoples they serve are without the Bible in their own language.

SEEMS OUT of Season for Church in Jerusalem > MESSIAH Murdered

Apostles IMPRISONED, FLOGGED / Leader of SEVEN > STONED!

Risen Lord of Church > Rules SEASONS > Faithful to His PROMISES

SPARED Physical Suffering?? Social, Economic, Spiritual, Political

Every Xtian called to CROSS BEARING > Know HIM in HIS Sufferings

2. God's People

a. Planting > Running for their Lives > WITH Jesus, FOR Jesus

v. 4 Those scattered went about preaching/**gossiped** the word

Wd. Scattered = Scattered SEED > Wind of Persecution blew SEEDS
 Were more like MISSIONARIES than Refugees > God's DIASPORA
 People of God SCATTERED in OT > Babel, Exiles to Assyria, Babylon

dispersion of church was a sign of God's judgment, not on the scattered but on the scatterers, on persecutors...whose zeal to destroy the church only served to spread the word about Jesus more broadly.
 D. Johnson

b. Preaching > MESSAGE of GOOD NEWS for WORLD

v. 12 Philip...preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ
 Message is Jesus > Redemption & RULE > LORD of ALL our LIFE

v. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ

Luke NOT say WHICH Samaritan CITY > IMPACT on Entire REGION

PROCLAIMED = HERALD > Announces the MESSAGE of the KING

Samaritan Hope: Heard from Woman at Well: Messiah / Restorer / Christ

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he." John 4.25,26

Philip > 1 HOPE FOR has COME to Stay: Emmanuel RISEN JESUS

PHILIP > One of 7 – Perhaps DEACON – Set apart in Chapter 6

1st & Only Person in NT to be called 'Evangelist'(chapter 21)

ORGANIZED Work of God / EVANGELIZED the World for God

v. 25 they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord

c. Praising > Wonderful, Work of God, Deep Appreciation, Joy

vs. 6-8 crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him & saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, & many who were paralyzed or lame were healed... much joy in that city

JOY > Good News, Delivered from Physical Affliction, Demons, Sins

Gospel built BRIDGE across Wide Chasm of Ancient PREJUDICES

kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. 1 Corinth 4.20

3. God's Principles

a. The Church is One

Hostility between Jews and Samaritans for 1000 yrs. / Since 10th C BC

From DIVISION of Kingdom AFTER SOLOMON > Northern Kingdom

Had OWN King – Temple – Priesthood – Expected Restorer to COME

The Samaritans were despised by the Jews as hybrids in both race and religion, as both heretics and schismatics. John Stott

For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

John 4.9

BUT JESUS Did > Invites SAMARITAN Woman for LIVING WATER

Teaches that GOOD NEIGHBOR is a GOOD SAMARITAN

Only Healed Leper who RETURNS to say THANKS is SAMARITAN

vs. 14-17 when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received word of God, they sent to them Peter & John, who came down & prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them & they received the Holy Spirit

2-STAGE Process of Salvation? First Salvation, Later the Holy Spirit?

NORMAL Experience of Christians?? What should WE SEEK Today?

Luke records Historical Event of 2nd Blessing > Because was UNUSUAL

vs. 16 the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus > *LIT 'only'*

Preaching of Philip was NOT Defective > Nothing Missing

Apostles Prayed THERE Only > Not Preach > No Apostolic Supplement

1st Preaching of Gospel of Risen Lord > OUT of Jerusalem, IN Samaria

Gospel Welcomed by Samaritans > Would Jews welcome Samaritans?

IRONY that God sent JOHN?! to SAMARIA – Same John was Refused Food by Samaritan Village: “John saw this, they asked, ‘Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?’” Luke 9.54

Fire DID Fall from Heaven > God’s Saving Grace, Mercy: Spirit of God

Unusual Event in Heavens because of UNUSUAL Event on Earth

1000 Yrs of HATRED is Overcome by Followers of JESUS

Pentecost > Day of Salvation HISTORY > Unrepeatable, Once for ALL!

3 Historical/ Religious/ Geographic Stages – Jerusalem, Samaria, Gentiles

The delay in giving the Spirit to the Samaritans was a divine veto on schism in the infant church, a schism which could have slipped almost unnoticed into the Christian fellowship, as converts from the two sides of the ‘Samaritan curtain’ found Christ without finding each other. That would have been the denial of the one baptism and all it stood for. Michael Green

NO Parallels Today > NO Samaritans and NO Apostles Today

Now Receive Filling of Spirit along with Forgiveness of Sins

If anyone does not have Spirit of X - not belong to X Rom 8.9

ONENESS in Spirit was SEEN in Samaria > Apostles Came & Affirmed

DO We SHOW Others in Other Places, Other Churches, We are ONE!

MLK Jr. 1964 Sunday 11 am most Segregated Hr of Week, 60 yrs Later

9.31 church thruout Judea, Galilee & Samaria enjoyed a time of peace

b. Leaders minister in Teams > STRUCTURE & Mutual Submission

Acts 1-5 Church led by APOSTLES > PREACHERS and POINT-MEN

Acts 6 > Seven SERVANTS > Also SPIRIT-FILLED Preachers, Miracles

Apostles > Stayed in JERUSALEM > + Holding Fort / - Fear, Isolation

NEW LEADERS take Ministry to NEW LEVEL

APOSTLES > No PROBLEM Continuing IN TEMPLE WORSHIP

7 > Temple will BE DESTROYED > Church NEEDED to MOVE ON

Church of Risen Jesus // Caterpillar needs to Burst Out of COCOON

STEPHEN > Theological Foundation for GLOBAL CHURCH

PHILIP > Practical Example of CROSSING CULTURAL BARRIERS

Now Willing to FOLLOW Philip's Example v. 25 Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages. /LAST Ref to Apostle John in Acts

c. The Gospel is Free

Gospels CONFLICTS with MONEY > Ananias and Saphira

Simon // DALI LAMA > a god with GREAT POWERS

vs. 9-11 there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. They all paid attention to him, from the least to the "This man is the power of God that is called Great." & paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic

Religious Professionals ROMAN World > Good Money in Temples

TODAY > Would HOST OWN SHOW on GOD CHANNELS of TV

He AMAZED others, Now is AMAZED by Jesus POWER

vs. 18-20 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money!"

GOT Attention of SIMON for GREAT COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL!

Simon Not want FILLING of Spirit wants FINANCES from the Spirit!

PETER > Literally says 'you and your MONEY can GO TO HELL!'

v. 23 see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity

Peter: TERRIBLE DAMAGE Simon's CORRUPTION bring to Church

...anytime we seek spiritual power or abilities to put ourselves forward we make the same error. Preaching to gain recognition...serving with an eye to advancement... seeking spiritual gifts for the promotion of oneself is simony. R. Kent Hughes

d. Choice is Ours SIMON wants to AVOID JUDGMENT

Wants to be Temporarily SPARED NOT ETERNALLY SAVED

Salvation more than FIRE INSURANCE > LOVING God with ALL...

Greatest Desire His Glory – Greatest JOY ADVANCE of His Kingdom Song of Heaven

“Worthy is the Lamb” / Simon “I did it MY WAY!”

NO EVIDENCE of True, Sincere REPENTANCE and FAITH in Jesus

CERTAINLY Among the CROWD of Excited NEW BELIEVERS

v. 21 APOSTOLIC INSIGHT > You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

vs. 22,23 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

v. 24 Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

NOTICE > NO MENTION of PETER'S PRAYER > SILENCE

Simon wants God's POWER, NOT a PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

Wants the GIFTS of GOD > Will NOT Talk to the GIVER

NEVER depend on MAN for SPIRITUAL GROWTH

I Cannot Solve Your Problems > I Cannot Solve MY OWN Problems

If you are IN SIN > YOU Must REPENT > YOU Must SEEK GOD

Luke's FOCUS Advance > Gospel, Kingdom, Word, Church
 KILLED MESSENGER – BUT COULD NOT STOP THE MESSAGE
 Holy Spirit TORE Down Samaritan Curtain > ONE FAMILY in Christ

1860 Russian Orthodox Archbishop Nikolai began M work in JAPAN
 Work Identifying with JAPANESE People – Language, Culture, Food
 1904 Relationship Severe TEST > WAR btwn Russia & Japan / 44 yrs!!
 Japanese Gov't NOT Force Out M's, Russians NOT Insulted or Attacked
 Russian Archbishop Nikolai PASTORAL Letter to Japanese Flock

Brothers and sisters, carry out all the duties that are demanded of you as loyal subjects in this situation. Pray to God that he may give victory to your imperial army... Those of you who are called to the field of battle must fight without regard to your own lives, not out of hatred against the enemy, but out of love for your own people... But in addition to your earthly fatherland, we have another, a heavenly fatherland. To this all men belong without distinction of nationality... This our fatherland is the Church, in which... the children of the heavenly Father in very truth make up one family. It is for that reason, brothers and sisters, that I do not separate myself from you, but remain in your family as my own. Archbishop Nikolai

Nikolai DIED 1912 – 52 yrs of Service to Jesus and Japan
 Orthodox Church: 33,000 Memb, 266 Congs, 35 Japanese Priests,
 106 Catechists, 82 Students in Seminary.

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Heavenly Father, we thank You for the godly witness of Stephen and Philip. Both of them devoted their lives for your Gospel. You filled them with your Holy Spirit and they gave their lives preaching the Gospel and pointing people to Jesus. By nature we choose the path of least resistance. We know our brothers and sisters in Jesus are facing hardship and adversity all around the world. And you've placed us in a land of beauty and peace.

Thank You for the lessons we learn from the bold witness of these early disciples. who were ready to stand fast on the gospel of truth and die for their faith. Thank You that Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father and that, by grace through faith, we are seated with Him in heavenly places. Open my eyes, more and more, to see Jesus and to pray into Your will for my life. This I ask in His name, AMEN.