

Acts 8:9-40

The Sorcerer & The Eunuch

? What is something impulsive you've done? Why did you feel compelled to do what you did right then?

Previously in Acts

So far in Acts we've seen how God is building the early church in Jerusalem. In Acts 7 we see the church coming under persecution with the stoning of Steven and Saul's attacks on Christians. At the end of chapter 7 and the beginning of chapter 8 we learn that because of this persecution the believers were scattered through Judea and Samaria. However, as the disciples fled from persecution, they continued to share the Gospel. Here in chapter 8 we'll see the impact that these disciples had as they preached in Samaria.

Simon the Sorcerer

Acts 8:9-25 (NIV)

9 Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, 10 and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God." 11 They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. 12 But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.

14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money 19 and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. 23 For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."

24 Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me."

The passage notes that the Samaritans did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came and placed their hands on the people, even though they already believed and had been baptized. This giving of the Holy Spirit is probably connected to Acts 2. God used the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts to affirm his presence among the Church.

25 After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

? Why did the people of Samaria follow Simon and say he was the “Great Power of God”?

? How do people today mistake things/people who are not God for God?

? Why do you think Simon asked to pay for the power to give the

Holy Spirit to people?

? Simon sees the power of the Holy Spirit as a way to get ahead personally and potentially make money for himself. Are there any ways you see yourself or you’ve observed others use their Christianity for self-promotion or personal gain?

? What should Simon’s reaction/request to Peter and John have been when he saw the work they were doing with the Holy Spirit?

? How does Peter’s rebuke in verses 20-23 redirect Simon? What hope does it offer for Simon?

? Based on Peter’s rebuke of Simon, how should we respond when we are confronted by sin in our own lives?

The Eunuch

Acts 8:26-40 (NIV)

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

31 “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” 34 The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. 40 Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

? What sort of role do directions from God seem to have in Philip’s life? How do we see Philip’s response to those directions glorify God?

? How can we learn from Philip’s example? Can you think of a time when you felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to do something? What were the results of your action or inaction?

? What is the Eunuch's reaction to hearing the “good news about Jesus?” What does this say about his heart?

? How does the Eunuch's wealth and position impact his decision to follow Christ?

? Compare Simon and the Eunuch's reaction to the “good news about Jesus”. Who should we model our response after?

For Discussion and Accountability

? Are there ways you are using your faith for personal gain that you need to repent of?

? Are there things God is asking you to respond to immediately?