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By Dan Maines

Acts 8

Acts 8:1

Now Saul approved of putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles.

† Saul consented to Stephen's death, marking the beginning of widespread persecution. The scattering of believers fulfilled Jesus' words in Acts 1:8, extending the gospel to Judea and Samaria.

† Josephus (Wars 2.13.3) describes unrest in Judea at this time, providing historical backdrop to the turbulence.

Acts 8:2-3

Some devout men buried Stephen, and mourned loudly for him. But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house; and he would drag away men and women and put them in prison.

† Saul's zeal for the Law drove him to violent persecution. His later conversion would display God's transforming grace.

† The Mishnah (Sanhedrin 9.6) records harsh penalties for those considered heretics. Saul acted in line with Pharisaic zeal, though wrongly.

Acts 8:4

Therefore, those who had been scattered went through places preaching the word.

† Persecution could not silence the gospel. Scattering became a means of spreading the word.

Acts 8:5-8

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming the Christ to them. The crowds were paying attention with one mind to what was being said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed or limped on crutches were healed. So there was much rejoicing in that city.

† Philip, one of the seven, preached in Samaria, fulfilling Jesus' commission to reach Samaritans. Signs confirmed his message, bringing joy.

† Josephus (Antiquities 11.8.6) records hostility between Jews

and Samaritans, highlighting the radical nature of this outreach.

Acts 8:9-11

Now a man named Simon had previously been practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; and all the people, from small to great, were paying attention to him, saying, "This man is the Power of God that is called Great." And they were paying attention to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic arts.

† Simon Magus represents counterfeit power. His sorcery deceived many, but it was no match for the gospel.

† Irenaeus (Against Heresies 1.23.1) identifies Simon as the father of Gnosticism, showing his enduring influence.

Acts 8:12-13

But when they believed Philip as he was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were being baptized. Now even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was repeatedly amazed.

† The gospel overcame sorcery. Even Simon professed belief, though his heart would soon be tested.

Acts 8:14-17

Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they would receive the Holy Spirit. (For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

† The apostles confirmed the Samaritan believers by laying on hands. This demonstrated unity of Jew and Samaritan in one Spirit.

Acts 8:18-21

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could acquire the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this matter, for your heart is not right before God."

† Simon sought to buy spiritual authority. This sin, later called "simony," revealed his corruption.

† Cyprian of Carthage (On the Lapsed 6) condemned this as the root of church corruption.

Acts 8:22-24

"Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart will be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of unrighteousness." But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

† Peter called Simon to repentance, showing that even grave sin could be forgiven if truly repented of. Simon's reply reveals fear but not clear repentance.

Acts 8:25

So, after solemnly testifying and speaking the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

† The mission expanded further. The apostles embraced the Samaritans, breaking long-standing barriers.

Acts 8:26-28

But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Get ready and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) So he got ready and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading Isaiah the prophet.

† God orchestrated an encounter with an Ethiopian eunuch, showing the gospel's reach to Gentiles and outcasts.

† The Law excluded eunuchs (Deuteronomy 23:1), but Isaiah 56:4-5 promised a place for them in God's covenant. Fulfillment arrives here.

Acts 8:29-31

Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

† The eunuch needed guidance to understand Scripture, highlighting the necessity of Spirit-filled interpretation.

Acts 8:32-33

Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "He was led like a sheep to slaughter; and like a lamb that is silent before its shearer, so He does not open His mouth. In humiliation His justice was taken away; who will describe His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth."

† The eunuch read Isaiah 53, the prophecy of the suffering servant. This passage perfectly pointed to Christ's crucifixion.

Acts 8:34-35

The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

† Philip showed the Old Testament found fulfillment in Jesus. Christ is the suffering servant of Isaiah 53.

Acts 8:36-38

As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he ordered that the chariot stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

† The eunuch's baptism showed immediate response to faith. Nothing prevented his inclusion in Christ. The excluded was now welcomed.

Acts 8:39-40

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities, until he came to Caesarea.

† Philip's Spirit-led ministry continued. The eunuch returned to Ethiopia rejoicing, symbolizing the spread of the gospel to the nations.

† Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History 2.1) claimed this eunuch became the first fruits of Christianity in Ethiopia.

How it applies to us today

- † Persecution spreads the gospel rather than stopping it.
- † The gospel breaks barriers: Jew, Samaritan, Gentile, and outcast are all included in Christ.
- † The Spirit guides believers to those seeking truth in Scripture.
- † Baptism is the covenant sign of inclusion, open to all who believe.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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