

## **THE WIDENING CIRCLE**

### **Acts 8:1-25**

#### **Introduction:**

- 1. When I was a boy, I would stand on the banks of a pond or stream and throw rocks in the water.**
  - a. The impact of the rock would create a series of circular waves.**
  - b. The waves would expand in ever widening circles.**
  - c. The Gospel of Christ went out from Jerusalem in ever widening circles.**
  
- 2. Jesus told His apostles they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).**
  - a. Approximately seven years had passed since Pentecost.**
  - b. The Gospel had spread throughout Jerusalem and Judea.**
  - c. It is now ready to be taken to Samaria.**
  
- 3. The Lord can over-rule evil to bring about good.**
  - a. A great persecution scattered the church in Jerusalem.**
  - b. The Devil brought about the persecution.**
  - c. God over-ruled providentially and the persecution resulted in the spreading of the Gospel.**

#### **Discussion:**

- I. PERSECUTION SCATTERED THE SAINTS AND SPREAD THE GOSPEL (1-4).**
  - A. Stephen was stoned by an angry mob (Acts 7:54-60).**
    - 1. The witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.**
    - 2. Luke informs us that "Saul was consenting to his death."**
  
  - B. Saul "made havoc of the church."**
    - 1. He went from house to house searching for Christians.**
    - 2. Those he found were bound and dragged to prison.**
  
  - C. Christians fled Jerusalem to save their lives.**
    - 1. Only the apostles remained behind in Jerusalem.**
    - 2. Those who fled preached the Word wherever they went.**
  
- II. PHILIP PROCLAIMED CHRIST IN SAMARIA (5-13).**
  - A. Philip, one of the seven, had had hands laid on him by the apostles (Acts 6:5,6).**

1. As a result, he had the ability to work miracles.
  2. This is Philip the evangelist, not the apostle (Acts 21:8).
- B. There was a long standing feud between Jews and Samaritans.**
1. The Samaritans were a mixed race (2 Kings 17).
  2. In Jesus' day, "Jews had no dealings with Samaritans" (John 4:9).
  3. Jesus broke down the prejudice (Luke 10: 25-37).
- C. The multitudes were amazed at the miracles Philip worked.**
1. Luke notes, "There was great joy in that city."
  2. The people had previously been under the influence of a sorcerer named Simon.
  3. However, they believed the Gospel Philip taught.
    - a. He preached the kingdom of God (the church).
    - b. He preached the name of Jesus Christ (His authority).
    - c. Both men and women (no infants) believed and were baptized (Mark 16:15,16).
    - d. Simon also believed and was baptized.

### **III. PETER AND JOHN GAVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (14-17).**

- A. There were two ways miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given.**
1. Directly - the apostles in Acts 2 and the household of Cornelius in Acts 10 were baptized in the Spirit.
  2. Indirectly- the apostles laid hands on others and they received the ability to work miracles.
  3. When the last apostle had died and the last person on whom an apostle had laid hands had died, miraculous gifts ceased.
- B. The apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria "that they might receive the Holy Spirit."**
1. "Holy Spirit" here is a "metonymy of the cause" standing for that which the Holy Spirit gives.
  2. Philip the evangelist was not an apostle so he could not give miraculous gifts by the laying on of his hands.
  3. The Samaritans had received the gift of the Holy Spirit promised in Acts 2:38 when they were baptized.
    - a. This gift comes to all who are Scripturally baptized.
    - b. The miraculous gifts were conferred only by the hands of an apostle laid on those who had been baptized (Acts 19:6).
  4. Miraculous gifts were necessary until "that which is perfect has come" - The New Testament (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

**IV. SIMON SOUGHT TO PURCHASE THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (18-25).**

- A. Simon offered Peter and John money to buy the ability to confer miraculous gifts.**
  - 1. This gift was only given by God and only given to the apostles.**
  - 2. Simon had no part in this matter.**
  - 3. His heart was not right in the sight of God.**
  
- B. Peter sternly reprimanded Simon.**
  - 1. “Your money perish with you for your heart is not right.”**
  - 2. “You are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.”**
  
- C. Peter told Simon to “repent and pray.”**
  - 1. He did not tell him to “repent and be baptized for the remission of sins” for he had already done that.**
  - 2. God has two “laws of pardon.”**
    - a. The sinner who is out of Christ must believe, repent and be baptized to be saved (Acts 2:38; 8:12).**
    - b. The Christian who sins must repent and pray for the forgiveness of his sins (8:22; 1 John 1:7-9).**
  
  - 3. Some have said Simon was not saved to begin with or else he would not have sinned.**
    - a. A child of God can sin and fall from grace (1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 5:4).**
    - b. Simon had believed and been baptized (Mark 16:16).**
    - c. If he were not saved, the Holy Spirit would have made that plain.**

**Conclusion:**

- 1. God’s two laws of pardon are clearly set forth in the book of Acts:**
  - a. The sinner outside of Christ who believes must repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38; 8:12).**
  - b. The Christian who has sinned must repent and pray for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 8:22).**
  
- 2. Have you, sinner friend, obeyed God’s law of pardon for your soul?**
  - a. If you are an alien sinner, you must believe, repent, and be baptized.**
  - b. If you are an unfaithful Christian, you must repent and pray.**
  
- 3. Do not delay! Obey God today!**

### Review Questions

1. Where were the apostles to be witnesses of Jesus?
2. Approximately how many years had passed from Pentecost to the persecution of the church led by Saul?
3. Who ultimately was behind Saul's persecution of the saints?
4. How did good come from the persecution?
5. What was Saul's attitude toward the death of Stephen?
6. How did Saul make havoc of the church?
7. When the Christians fled, who remained behind in Jerusalem?
8. How did Philip receive the ability to work miracles?
9. Why did the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans?
10. How and when did the Samaritans originate?
11. Who believed and were baptized as a result of Philip's preaching?
12. What was Simon's profession before he became a Christian?
13. What was included in the Gospel Philip preached in Samaria?
14. How did Simon become a Christian?
15. What are the two ways miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given?
16. What is the difference between the gift of the Spirit in Acts 2:38 and the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit?
17. When did miraculous gifts end?
18. What did Simon want to buy?
19. What did Peter tell Simon to do?
20. What must a sinner out of Christ do to be saved?
21. What does an erring child of God need to do to be saved?
22. Prove that Simon had been saved.
23. Give Scripture to show that a child of God can fall from grace.
24. What are God's two laws of pardon and for whom?

