



The Story of Philip

Acts 8:5-8:40

(Lesson #13)



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OUTLINE of Acts Chapter 8:5-40

- 1) Because of the persecution in Jerusalem, Philip travels to Samaria and proclaims Jesus there (8:5).
- 2) His preaching was accompanied by signs and miracles and many believed and great joy swept across the city (8:6-8).
- 3) Then we are introduced to a man, Simon a magician who had tricked the people for a long time, into believing that he was the power of God (likely through demonic activity) (8:9-11).
- 4) Along with many Samaritans we are told that Simon also believed and he too was baptized and he began to follow Philip and was amazed by the miracles that Philip performed (8:12-13).
- 5) When the apostles learned about what was happening in Samaria, they dispatched Peter and John (8:14-15a).
- 6) Peter and John came down, saw all that was happening, and that the believers had not received the Holy Spirit, and prayed that they might receive the Spirit (8:15b-17).
- 7) When Simon saw the apostles give the Holy Spirit to people through the laying on of hands, he offered money to the apostles to purchase this same power (8:18-19).
- 8) Upon hearing the offer, Peter rebuked Simon (8:20-23).
- 9) Simon asked Peter to pray for him (8:24).
- 10) Then Peter and John returned to Jerusalem preaching the gospel to many Samaritan villages along the way (8:25).
- 11) Then an angel of the Lord directs Philip to the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza and Philip goes (8:26-27a).
- 12) There on the road from Jerusalem, Philip runs into an Ethiopian eunuch and shares Jesus with him (8:27b-35).
- 13) As they were traveling, Philip was sharing, the Ethiopian eunuch requested to be baptized, and Philip baptized him (8:36-38).
- 14) Philip was carried away to Azotus and ultimately ended up in Caesarea (8:39-40).

8:4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. **5** Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. **6** And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. **7** For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. **8** So there was much joy in that city.

Vs 4 - So this is where we ended last week. We ended learning that **severe persecution** followed the killing of Stephen. It scattered the disciples who were in Jerusalem.

Vs 5 - Just to remind you, this is **Phillip the Deacon**. Luke told us about Stephen the Deacon and the amazing sermon he delivered to the Sanhedrin, here Luke brings up another Deacon and some amazing things that God did through him.

As best we can tell Stephen fled from Jerusalem to the city of Samaria. The city of Samaria is some forty miles north of Jerusalem. It was the ancient capital of the Northern Kingdom.

In Samaria, Philip **began to proclaim to the Samaritans the gospel of Jesus Christ**. The verb tense of proclaim is **imperfect**, which generally represents repeated action. **He proclaimed and kept proclaiming**.

The Greek word translated **proclaim** is **κηρύσσω (kerusso)** is the word that is **normally translated preach**.

We should see Philip, in Samari, preaching that Jesus is the promised Messiah, that Jesus is the one who came so that people could be saved.

Vs 6 - The crowds, in one accord, with one mind, paid attention to what was being said by Philip.

Again, the Greek tense of paid attention is **imperfect**. They kept paying attention, they kept giving Philip their attention.

Philip had an **amazing message** about Jesus, and **his message** was accompanied **with amazing signs**.

Vs 7 - Here Luke tells us specifically what he means **by signs**. Unclean spirits would cry out with loud voices and come out of people. So, people who were **demon possessed** would be delivered under the **preaching of this Deacon, named Philip**.

But also, **many** people who were **paralyzed** and people who were crippled in various ways, were healed.

These are not **hangnails and headaches**. We are talking about people who could not walk, people who were paralyzed and they are being healed under Philip's preaching. As you might imagine the people are **giving close attention**, and as the verb tense tells us **they kept giving heed** to what Philip is saying.

Vs 8 - So we are to told the city was overflowing with joy! There was great (megas) joy in this city of Samaria.

9 But 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. 10 They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." 11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

Now before we talk about Simon, scholars are divided on whether or not Simon was saved. I think we would all agree that there is true saving faith and false faith (Mat 7:21; Mat 13:24-28a).

So Scholars disagree on the eternal status of the man we will meet today named Simon.

Vs 9 - In this city there was a man named Simon. **Σίμων (Simon)** which is a Hebrew name, so we would imagine this man is either Jewish or a Jewish proselyte.

This man Simon had previously **practiced magic** in the city and amazed the people of Samaria. This word that is translated "**practiced magic**" is a **Hapax Legomenon**, but it brings with it the idea of **using magic or sorcery**.

Notice his magic, in times past, had **amazed the people of Samaria**. The word means to be **amazed**, to be **astonished**, to be **astounded**!

The people of Samaria had, in times past, been astounded by the magic of Simon, and they believed that, based on what they saw him do, **and his own declaration** about himself, that he was a **GREAT person**.

Just a point of application: Pride is a very heady and a very dangerous potion (Pr 16:18; IPet 5:5b-6).

For sure, Simon's view of self will need to be altered!

Vs 10 - In the past “**all**” **had paid attention** to what he was saying and what he was doing. This included **everyone on the socioeconomic ladder**, from the least to the greatest.

In fact, they **believed** and even **declared** that Simon “**is the power of God that is called great.**”

Vs 11 - **Luke reiterates**, they **paid attention** to him, they **listened to him**, they **held him in high regard**, because for a long time he had **amazed the people with his magic**.

We do not know exactly what he did, but we should imagine it was **larger than parlor tricks**.

Vs 12 - **But along comes Philip**, preaching Jesus is the Messiah, and you can be saved by placing faith in him. Philip is preaching the **good news about the Kingdom of God** and the **name of Jesus Christ**.

Philip is preaching that **Jesus of Nazareth** is the **promised Messiah** and he will save anyone and everyone who comes to Him by faith (including Samaritans)!

Many **believed in Philip’s message** and were **baptized**, both men and women.

It was a **better message**, with **better promises**, than whatever magic Simon might have been doing.

Philip’s message was accompanied by real amazing undeniable miracle. **Many believed and were baptized.**

Vs 13 - In fact, not only did **many believe**, but Luke records that even **Simon believed**.

Now again theologians are divided on if this means Simon was saved or not. It is clear he believed something about Jesus.

It is equally clear that simply believing that Jesus is somebody important or even powerful is not enough (Jam 2:18-91).

What saves **is repentance and faith** (trust in the finished work of Jesus), belief that He paid the debt for one’s sins, died for one’s sins, was buried, and rose again the third day and we turn from my sins to Jesus.

Simon believed and was baptized by immersion, in water, and notice it appears that he began traveling with Philip, he continued with Philip.

As Simon followed Philip he saw the signs, he saw the **undeniable great miracles** that were being performed by God through Philip and **he was amazed**.

In verse 9 we were told Simon amazed the people. Again in verse 11 the same word, Luke reiterates that Simon amazed the people.

Then here in vs 13, we are told that Simon was amazed at the signs and miracles that Philip was performing.

This shows you the radical difference between whatever Simon had been doing in the past to what Philip is doing in the present. He saw the **amazing** power of God and **he was amazed!**

The one who had amazed the people with his magic, is now **himself amazed by the real legitimate miracles and signs** that are accompanying Philip’s preaching!

14 ¶ Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

Vs 14-15 - So word gets back to the apostles in Jerusalem **that Samaritans are receiving the Word of God** and placing faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah.

What are the apostles thinking? This is Samaria with their own temple and their own mixed-up religion. It is likely there was **some degree of concern**.

We can imagine that this **came as a surprise**, this is something they **had not likely seen coming**. They had understood that God worked outside the boundaries of Jerusalem, but outside the boundaries of Jews and Jewish proselytes. **I imagine they were a wee bit surprised**, after all these are **Samaritans**.

The apostles decide to send **Peter** (as best we can tell the spokesman for the apostles) and **John**.

By the way this is the **last time the apostle John** is mentioned in the **book of Acts**.

Vs 15-16 - So Peter and John arrive and sure enough, these men and women have placed faith in Jesus **Christ**, they **have been baptized by immersion, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ**, but for some reason they **have not received the Holy Spirit**.

OK, is this **prescriptive or descriptive?** Yes, we are simply having something described to us. Again, Acts is a transitional book.

This is a non-normative, unique situation, in which believers did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John showed up:

First non-normative (see Ro 8:8-9; ICor 12:112-13).

This is weird and we can only speculate why this is so. What if they had received the Spirit immediately?

- 1) Ensures that two churches do not develop.
- 2) Ensures the Jews will see the Samaritans are in the true church.
- 3) Ensures the Samaritans are under the authority of the apostles.
- 4) Ensures the Samaritans will recognize that they are in the same church as the Jews.

But Peter and John **pray** that they might be **baptized by the Spirit**, they **pray that these Samaritans might receive the Spirit**.

Vs 17 - So they **laid their hands on them**. By the way this is the **second time** we are seeing the apostles' lay hands on someone. **The first time was the seven deacons**.

Now Peter and John lay hands on the Samaritans who have **professed faith**, had **already been baptized**, and **prayed that they might receive the Spirit**. AND, they received the Holy Spirit!

Vs 18 - Now Simon who is following Philip, watches all this happen. He sees Peter and John pray and he sees something the indicates that **the Spirit was given by the laying on of the apostles' hands**.

Now we are not told, but clearly it was evident that they received the Spirit.

Although we do not know for sure, we can guess they **possibly spoke in other languages**. Maybe you are thinking **why would we guess that?** We will see **this happens two more times** (Acts 10:44-47; Acts 19:4-7).

Peter was preaching to those people in Cornelius' home, Cornelius was a Roman Centurian (these were at best Jewish proselytes), and we read this:

In Acts chapter 2 the Spirit fell on Jews in Jerusalem as evidenced by their speaking in tongues. Here in Acts 8, the Spirit fell on Samaritans, and there is some type of evidence, I suspect they spoke with other tongues.

BACK to OUR STORY: Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the **laying on of the apostles hands** he **offered money** that he might purchase this power from the apostles.

Vs 19 - He saw what the apostles did, how that the Holy Spirit was conveyed through the laying on of hands he offered the apostles money, to buy this ability so that anyone on whom he laid his hands would receive the Holy Spirit.

Philip's miracles were awesome, but this blew that out of the water and so Simon offered Peter and John money so that he could have this **great power**.

He desires the ability to dispense this power, for this moves him **back up the food chain**. The **prestige** he lost when Philip showed up can be restored, if he can have this great power.

Thus, he offers **money** to be able to **dispense this great power**. Simon wanted the apostolic authority he saw in Peter and John.

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." 24 And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." 25 Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Vs 20-24 - Peter looks at Simon and says five things. I will walk you back through them all:

- 1) Let your **money perish with you** for you think you can **purchase the gift of God**.
 - a. The idea "let your money **perish with you**", seems to imply, that Simon is not saved.
- 2) You have neither **part nor lot in this matter**.
 - a. **Part** refers to something **present** while lot refers to something in the **future**.
- 3) Your **heart is not right before God**.
 - a. A heart that is not "right" before God would seem to be a heart that is **not yet saved**.
- 4) **Repent that this wickedness of yours**, if possible "if so be", that the intent of your heart **would be forgiven you**.
 - a. Repent, so that you might be forgiven. You see the serious nature. You must repent.
- 5) For I see **you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of sin**.
 - a. The bile of wickedness and still in the bonds of your sins.
 - b. This seems to imply a bitter, harsh, and distasteful condition.

It seems that Peter, with the **discernment of the Holy Spirit**, is able to look right into the **heart of Simon!**

Each of these alone, seem to indicate that Simon may not be saved. **But together it is a horrible indictment.**

Simon had a wrong view of self, a wrong view of salvation, and a wrong view of God.

Vs 24 - After hearing Peter's inditement, rather than praying for himself, he asks Peter to pray for him.

Vs 25 - Now after Peter and John had testified and had spent some time speaking the words of Jesus, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel, and it **appears they went through a few Samaritan villages proclaiming Jesus.**

Now that the Spirit has been poured out in Samaria, others can be saved and will receive the Spirit, but not at first. **Interesting???**

At first, it seemed to require a visit from the apostles (at least Peter and/or John). But once the door is opened, the door appears to be opened.

26 ¶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. 27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot."

Vs 26 - So Philip was fleeing from persecution and ended up sharing the gospel with **people in Samaria.** Then the apostles dispatched Peter and John, many are saved in Samaria, and now we read that an angel of the Lord "said" to Philip.

We do not know what this looked like, we would assume Philip knew it was an angel of the Lord, for Luke learned that from someone.

REMINDER: God is not looking for **our ability** he is looking for **our availability.** He reaches into his toolbox and finds a tool that is clean and close.

Then, apparently while Philip is in Samaria, the angel of the Lord gives Philip additional instructions: Rise up, go towards the south, to the **road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.**

Gaza was one of the five chief cities of the Philistines, along with Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath.

NOTE: This is not a chance encounter, this is a divine date. The Spirit of God is orchestrating this event for the glory of God.

APPLICATION: God still does this today! He speaks into the heart of one of His disciples to get the gospel to someone who is seeking. There is no such thing as luck in God's economy!

Vs 27 - So Philip rose and went.

APPLICATION: I pray that when God lays things on my heart I would rise and go, rise and do.

As we have discussed, when God has something He wants done, He normally picks up a tool, from his toolbox, one that is close and clean and uses that tool. Paul expressed it this way to Timothy (IITim 2:20-21).

Philip arrives and there is an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians.

Ancient Ethiopia is now known as Nubia. This man is a Gentile, but something has drawn him to Yahweh. His full involvement with Judaism is unclear. But this man is a powerful man from Nubia, in Africa.

This Eunuch is in charge of Candace's treasure, and he had come to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh. He is more than likely a proselyte to the Jewish faith. He is a eunuch, which means he has likely been **castrated to work among women.**

He is likely wealthy, and he is a man of “**great authority**”.

He is after all Candace’s treasurer. In modern term we might call him the Minister of Finance or the Secretary of Treasury. Candace is not a name, but a title (much like Czar or Pharaoh). This title was used for the Ethiopian queens.

Vs 28 - He is apparently returning from Jerusalem. He is seated in his chariot, and he was reading from the prophet Isaiah. It is likely he has a charioteer, and it is also likely that he is reading out loud.

Vs 29 - An angel may have told him where to go, but now the Spirit says to him: ***Go over and join this chariot.***

In the Greek, what the Spirit said to Philip was go over and **glue yourself**, go over and **fasten yourself to this chariot!** This was a very powerful man, likely traveling with an entourage, yet Philip is unshaken and is instantly obedient.

30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

Vs 30 - Notice **Philip runs to him**. Philip is not only instantly obedient, but he also runs to his next mission.

Upon getting close to the chariot, Philip hears the eunuch reading (out loud the prophet Isaiah) and **he asks the eunuch; do you understand what you are reading?**

Vs 31 - The eunuch responds, how can I understand unless someone guides me. Further, the eunuch invites Philip up into the chariot with him, to sit with him.

God has set up this whole encounter, Philip’s involvement was to be ready (to declare the word) and be obedient when the command to go came.

Vs 32-33 - Now the passage from the Old Testament (by the way it is likely he is reading from the Septuagint) is n(Isa 53:7b-8a).

34 And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Vs 34 - Then then Eunuch says, who is the “he” that was like a sheep led to slaughter, who is the “he” that was like a lamb silent before its shearers, who is the “he” who in humiliation was denied justice, who is the “he” whose life was taken away? Is the prophet **speaking about himself** or is he speaking about **someone else?**

Vs 35 - Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with **Is 53**, Philip unpacked the **good news** about Jesus of Nazareth, that he was the **promised Messiah**.

APPLICATION: Philip was knowledgeable enough in the Scriptures to meet the Eunuch where he was. We too, should endeavor to be ready to meet people in their confusion and lead them to the Savior.

Peter wrote about this in (IPet 3:15).

Vs 36 - As they are going along, so there is a charioteer, they came upon a place where there was water.

So, in this discussion Philip had talked about placing faith in Jesus and he has talked about making that declaration public by being immersed in water.

As they are going along, the eunuch now says to Philip, see here is water, what is preventing you from baptizing me here. The eunuch is declaring his faith in the one that Isaiah prophesied about and the one whom Philip the Deacon has explained.

Vs 37 - This verse is not contained in earlier versions and appears to be a verse that someone added along the way. Quite possibly for clarity. What it says is true. But the best evidence indicate this was a late addition.

Vs 38 - And the eunuch commanded the chariot to stop, and they both got out of the chariot and **went down into the water** and there, Philip baptized the eunuch.

Vs 39 - When they came up out of the water, we are told the **Spirit of the Lord** carried Philip away.

We have no idea what that looked like, but somehow in what was quite likely supernatural, Philip was carried about by the Spirit of the Lord.

All that were in this African caravan say a startling miracle, further validating the message of the messenger!

The eunuch saw him no more, but he left that interaction rejoicing, for he was saved, he had given his life to Jesus Christ. He was born again; he was a new creature in Christ.

He went back home with two new things: new life in Christ Jesus and a heart filled with joy. He went on his way rejoicing at what God had done! As joy had filled Samaria, now joy fills the heart of this Ethiopian Eunuch (Joh 15:11; Ro 14:17; Gal 5:22).

Vs 40 - But Philip ended up at Azotus, the Greek named for Ashdod, one of the five chief cities of the ancient Philistines. It is about 20 miles north of Gaza.

As he passed through (Azotus), the Deacon Philip preached the gospel to all the towns he passed through, until he came to Caesarea. Caesarea is over 50 miles north of Ashdod.

It seems this is where Philip stopped. In fact, many years later, in **Acts 21:8** we will read more about Philip.

If there is a **lesson to be had**, of which there are many, likely the main lessons revolve around Philip. A man who answered God's call to serve in what was, at least on the face an **administrative position**.

Because God is not looking for ability, but availability, God is looking for tools that are clean and close, Philip ended up being used by God in some **amazing and profound ways**:

You and I have no idea what **God can and desires to do through us**, but it takes our willingness to put our **eyes on the table**.
