

Acts 8

Sometimes, for good or bad reasons, we get stuck and need a shove to move us on in our lives. There is a lovely verse in Deuteronomy where God says to the people, "You have been going round this mountain long enough, go north." They had been learning about God dependant on His provision of the manna for long enough, the generation that had rebelled had died out and NOW was the time to move on and to approach the land that God was going to give them. In a way, this is what is happening in this chapter. The church has been in Jerusalem steadily growing, learning the faith and all about Jesus from the apostles, but now it's time to branch out and go elsewhere.

Of course, God could have just sent the apostles out - up to Samaria and off elsewhere, but instead He used what at first sight looked like a disaster. With the death of Stephen, Saul (and no doubt others) emboldened by their success against the church, go all out to destroy it. But God moves in mysterious ways.... What this does is to actually spread the church as Christians, thrust out of Jerusalem go all over the place, gossiping the gospel as they went.

This chapter consists of a few examples centred around Philip, one of the other "7" appointed to administer the food to the widows in Jerusalem. In seeing what happened in Philip's ministry we gain new insights into the work of the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 8.1-3

- Why do you think that Saul was so intent on the destruction of the church?
- What do you think might have been going on inside him (probably subconsciously)?
- Why was it important that the apostles stayed put?

Read Acts 8.4-8

- Do you think Philip planned to go to Samaria to preach or did it just happen on arrival?
- What backed up the message?

Read Acts 8.9-13

- What was going on in the story of Simon the sorcerer?
- What made Simon start on his journey to Christ?
- What was lacking in Simon's 'conversion'? What does that teach us about people coming to Christ?

Read Acts 8.14-25

- Why do you think it was important that the apostles came when they heard about what was going on in Samaria?
- What was Simon's motivation in wanting this power?
- What, in contrast is God's way to receive power?
- Are we guilty of Simon's sin (perhaps in a different way) - of wanting power but not God's way?

Read Acts 8.26-40

- How was Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian the beginning of the witness to "the ends of the earth"? (Acts 1.8)
- What were the three "nudges" that Philip got by the Spirit in this story?
- Philip talks about Jesus, beginning where the Ethiopian was in his understanding. Does our talking also speak of Jesus? If not why not?
- Why do you think that the Spirit whisked Philip away so quickly?

Reflect on how the Spirit works in this chapter and therefore in our lives.