

**Acts 8:1b-25 - The Conversion of Saul**  
**November 22, 2020 - Outline and Scripture**

**Outline**

- 1. Greet one another, begin with prayer, and read Acts 8:1b-25 [5 minutes].**
- 2. Remind the class about the events of Acts 6 and 7 [5 minutes].**
- 3. Discuss the persecuting, scattering, & evangelizing in Acts 8:1b-4 [10 minutes].**
  - First systemic persecution of the entire church erupts after Stephen’s stoning
  - Everyone flees except for the apostles, who stay behind to provide leadership
  - Saul identified as the ringleader of the persecution: word translated “began to destroy” (NIV) or “was ravaging” (ESV) is *lymainomai*, expressing a “brutal and sadistic cruelty” (William Neil quoted in John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, p. 145)
  - But what do the dispersed Christians do? Proclaim the gospel everywhere!
  - *How is God’s providence at work during the dispersal of the Jerusalem church? How is His providence at work in your life at present?*
  - *“Evangelism provokes persecution while persecution energizes evangelism” (Ajith Fernando, NIV Application Commentary: Acts, p. 268). How do you explain this counter-intuitive synergy? What are some examples?*
- 4. Discuss Philip’s Samaritan mission in Acts 8:5-13 [15 minutes].**
  - “The city of Samaria”: Samaria is a region, not a city; but the city of Sebaste used to be called “Samaria” until Herod the Great changed the name
  - Philip one of the deacons called by the church in Acts 6
  - Great racial and cultural enmity between Jews and Samaritans, yet Samaritan men and women professing faith in Christ and being baptized, even Simon
  - *Describe Philip’s evangelism. Why do you think it’s so successful? What can we learn from it today?*
  - *We live in a time of heightened racial and cultural barriers. How does the reconciliation in Christ between Jews and Samaritans speak to us now?*
- 5. Discuss the visit from Peter and John in Acts 8:14-25 (10 minutes).**
  - Peter and John investigate; the Samaritans haven’t received the Spirit
  - Peter and John lay hands on them and the Spirit comes, allowing Peter and John to see God is with the Samaritans too
  - Simon seeks to buy the power (buying religious influence still called “simony”)
  - But Peter cuts to the heart of the matter: Simon is not right with God
  - Peter and John return to Jerusalem, evangelizing in Samaria on the way
  - *The Holy Spirit comes upon the Samaritan Christians in Acts 8 later than He comes upon the Jewish Christians in Acts 2. Why is this? What is significant about this departure from the way the Spirit comes in Acts 2?*
  - *Simon appears to be a Christian until Peter confronts him. How do people say and profess the right things, and yet still miss the mark?*
- 6. Close in prayer.**

### Scripture (New Living Translation)

**1** A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. **2** (Some devout men came and buried Stephen with great mourning.) **3** But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.

**4** But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. **5** Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah. **6** Crowds listened intently to Philip because they were eager to hear his message and see the miraculous signs he did. **7** Many evil[a] spirits were cast out, screaming as they left their victims. And many who had been paralyzed or lame were healed. **8** So there was great joy in that city.

**9** A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, amazing the people of Samaria and claiming to be someone great. **10** Everyone, from the least to the greatest, often spoke of him as “the Great One—the Power of God.” **11** They listened closely to him because for a long time he had astounded them with his magic. **12** But now the people believed Philip’s message of Good News concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. As a result, many men and women were baptized. **13** Then Simon himself believed and was baptized. He began following Philip wherever he went, and he was amazed by the signs and great miracles Philip performed.

**14** When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had accepted God’s message, they sent Peter and John there. **15** As soon as they arrived, they prayed for these new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. **16** The Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, for they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **17** Then Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.

**18** When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. **19** “Let me have this power, too,” he exclaimed, “so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!”

**20** But Peter replied, “May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God’s gift can be bought! **21** You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God. **22** Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, **23** for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin.”

**24** “Pray to the Lord for me,” Simon exclaimed, “that these terrible things you’ve said won’t happen to me!”

**25** After testifying and preaching the word of the Lord in Samaria, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. And they stopped in many Samaritan villages along the way to preach the Good News.

### Footnotes

8:7 Greek *unclean*.