

The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter Eight The Church Expanding

Focus Verse: Acts 8:4

“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”

I. Study Introduction

- A. Up until chapter 8, Christianity has remained only in Jerusalem, even though Jesus said in Acts 1:8 to go “to the _____ part of the earth”
- B. When the Christians would not do what God needed them to do, it showed that they needed some “correction” which came in the form of persecution. They were no stranger to persecution - it was just that, now it was getting rough, and instead of the by-product of the troubles causing the new Christians to give-up on Christ and God’s word, it transformed them into a fluid army of able soldiers of the cross, taking the Gospel that had transformed them to the world Christ called them to go to! They were finally in motion!
- C. Chapter 8 outlines **why** a church grows, and **how** it all happens!

II. Study Outline - Acts Chapter Eight - The Church Expanding

A. NT Christianity Expands By _____ (2:4,11; 7:54)

1. Preaching is fuelled by the following ingredients
 - a. Prayer - much prayer (10 days of it in the upper room)
 - b. Surrender to obedience to God’s will (James 1:22)
 - c. The power of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18)
 - d. Faithfulness to the message (2 Cor 2:17)
2. Bible preaching focuses on the following topics:
 - a. The _____ of Scripture (2:15,16) - prophecy, lives transformed, demonstration that God is involved in life!
 - b. The _____ of Scripture
 - 1) Life is short (2:20)
 - 2) People are wicked to the core (2:22; 3:13-15; 7:51,52)
 - c. The _____ of Scripture
 - 1) It humbles (Isa 66:1,2)
 - 2) It saves (1 Peter 1:23)
 - 3) It comforts and encourages (Rom 15:4; 1 Thes 4:18)
 - 4) It _____ (Eph 6:17; Matt 4:4; Rev 19:11,15)
 - d. The _____ of Scripture (1 Cor 1:18,23)
 - 1) He has the answer - to everything we go through.
 - a) *Salvation* - get sin taken cared-of (Acts 2:21; 4:12)
 - b) *Service* - get busy growing and serving your Lord like you used to serve the devil and yourself!
 - c) *Sanctification* - stay clean - work at it, don’t take a break!
 - d) All of life’s problems are related to our handling of those three areas!
 - 2) He cares enough to give us the answer - all in Christ (1 Cor 1:30; Philp 1:21; Gal 2:20)
3. Bible Preaching results in the following things
 - a. A decision being made, for or against Christ - glad or mad!
 - b. A softening or a hardening of the heart
 - c. A life being lived more for Christ, or for the devil!
 - d. There is no such thing as a middle, neutral ground!

B. NT Christianity Expands in Response to _____ (8:1-4)

1. Satan hates God and anything related to God (2 Thes 2:3,4)
 - a. Satan _____ you, and looks forward to people dying (8:1; 1 Pet 5:8; Mt 7:15; John 8:44; Gen 3:3-7; Mk 5:5)
 - b. If Satan cannot kill you, then he will try and _____ you
 - c. If he cannot suppress you, then he will attempt to invalidate you - make you incapable of doing anything for God

2. Satan loves _____ - it takes the glory away from God!
 - a. Religion is what man DOES for God (Gal 1:13; James 1:27)
 - b. Salvation is what God DID for sinful man (Eph 2:8,9)
3. Satan uses people's dedication to religion, and tradition to try and stamp out a Christian's dedication to the living God (John 16:2). This turns out to be a time of GREAT persecution (8:1)
4. But God's people are not normal anymore (Acts 5:35-37)
 - a. New Testament Christianity does not die when scattered - they _____! When they hang around in one location, they die - stagnation. Get caught up in themselves (Rev 3:14-17)
 - b. When Christians stagnate, God allows troubles and persecutions to arise to get us going again (Ps 119:67,71,75)
5. So, here comes trouble - Saul of Tarsus (8:1)
 - a. He is the major focus of Acts from chapter 13 on
 - b. He was a Pharisee, of the tribe of Benjamin (Philp 3:5)
 - c. He personally persecuted "the Church" at Jerusalem (8:1,3) - these are Christians who simply loved Jesus above all else!
 - 1) Made havoc of the body of believers - ruin, wasted, devastation (or at least tried to) of the people's lives
 - 2) Broke into people's homes - like Gestapo; inquisition
 - 3) Dragging (hauling) men and women to prison and leaving them there to die - all in the "name of God"
 - 4) He personally hurt and **beat** people (Ac 22:19; 1Ti 1:13)
 - 5) He forced people to _____ Jesus' name (Act 26:11)
 - 6) He even went to foreign cities to persecute (Acts 26:11)
6. And yet, notice the effect (Acts 8:1,4) - *The world is reached*
 - a. Christians were scattered into areas that needed the Gospel - God was more concerned about the _____, than the comfort of the saved (Lk 15:3-5) - He pushed them into the next regions
 - b. The word was **PREACHED** - they couldn't help it (Jer 20:9)
 - c. The word was preached _____ and churches sprang up!

C. NT Christianity Expands by _____ (8:5-8) - Miracles

1. *The Miracle of _____*
 - a. That someone would declare Christ to this world - all new cults form on the basis of Biblical dedication to Christ
 - b. That someone would gladly be identified as a fool for Christ (1 Cor 1:21-23; 2 Cor 4:5) - their identify is lost in Christ's!
 - c. That someone would preach **only** the Bible (Act 8:4; 20:27)
2. *The Miracle of Reaching Different _____* - The Gospel is not bound by cultures - it over-rules culture (i.e., it judges all cultures by going beyond cultural differences, and shows what is right in God's sight, and what is wrong; i.e., 1 Cor 11:14,15)
 - a. A Jew preaching the good news to Samaritans
 - b. A white man preaching to a black man and being heard
 - c. A black man preaching to an Asian man and being heard
 - d. An Irish person witnessing to an Englishman
 - e. A Gentile preaching to a Jew and being heard
 - f. All because God crossed-over and became man to reach man!
3. *The Miracle of _____ (8:6-8) - Greatest Miracle!*
 - a. People hearing, and loving the Gospel - instead of rejecting
 - b. People obeying and living the Gospel - gave heed (Ro 6:17)
 - c. Lives transformed - Satan's dominion rejected (Ro 6:18)
 - d. Health restored - many people's illnesses are due to a lifetime of worry, and confusion, and deceit
 - e. Real Joy apparent in the lives of people again!
4. *The Miracle of _____ that all this is of God*
 - a. Philip did miracles like the Apostles - he never failed
 - b. The miracles backed up what Philip preached - just as Jesus did (John 10:37,38) - The outstanding miracles were for the Apostles, and for the first deacons until the Bible was completed (Mk 16:20). But miracles are also for today!
 - c. Types of miracles performed:
 - 1) Removal of "_____ spirits"
 - a) Spiritual demons that are unclean - they defile, ruin
 - b) They control, and blind people

- c) They can be overpowered by the truth (John 8:32) and by faith in the Son of God (John 8:36)
 - d) Engage a person head on (Act 26:18; 2Ti 2:24-26)
- 2) Healing of impossible diseases - crippling palsies

D. NT Christianity Expands by Perception (8:9-24) - Discernment

1. Introduction
 - a. Not everyone who says that they are “saved,” is (Mt 7:21,22)
 - b. There are _____ sown in among the wheat (Mt 13:24-40)
 - c. Satan works not only from the outside, but from the inside
2. Simon the _____ (8:9-11) - this where the term “Simony” came from - purchasing religious positions and powers!
 - a. A sorcerer - used magical trickery (witchcraft) to deceive
 - b. A channeler - attempted to prove that “he” was what God used to do great miracles - all “through” him
 - c. Stuck on himself - very proud, as the _____ (Isa 14:12-14)
 - d. A charismatic (gifted) leader - people gladly followed him
 - e. Primarily used sorceries (healings, magic) toward his own end - emphasised the “proof” of his claims, so that all the Samaritans of the area would look to him for revelation
3. Philip’s effect on the Samaritans (8:12,13)
 - a. Total _____ - they dropped Simon, and believed Philip:
 - 1) Philip never focused on himself
 - 2) He preached about the kingdom of God - salvation
 - 3) He preached about Jesus Christ as the only answer!
 - 4) He challenged everyone to _____ of their religion, get baptized, and follow only Christ - which they gladly did!
 - 5) He miracles were “different” - they were long lasting, and focused on eternity, and holiness - not excitement
 - b. Total defeat for Simon - he couldn’t beat them, so he joined!
4. Simon’s “fruit” from his life was wrong (8:13-18; Mt 7:16)
 - a. Simon sees the Apostles give the seal of the Holy Ghost
 - b. Simon is used to doing “miracles” and wants that ability
 - c. His real problem was *no* _____ (Acts 20:21) - Jesus was just another “power” to connect with and get in-tune with
5. Peter sees through Simon’s “innocent request” (8:19-23)
 - a. We need to see the wolves - _____ (Acts 20:21)
 - b. John the Baptist had this discernment (Mt 3:1,2,5-8)
 - c. Maintains clear lines of distinction, and purity (1 Pet 2:9)
6. Simon learns to fear God first, and then trust and love Him (8:24)
 - a. If repentance is hard for you, then something is wrong
 - b. Maintain a soft heart towards God (Pr 13:1; 15:31; 2Ti 4:2)
 - c. Examine yourself & develop real Christian fruit (2Cor 13:5)

E. Christianity Expands by Personal Work (8:25-40) Soul-Winning

1. Personal Work is _____ work (8:25)
 - a. The majority of work that it takes to build and establish a local group of believers into a church is NOT done by the leaders, but by the BODY itself (Cf 8:1,4)!
 - b. A church that is built by the labours of the “few” is like a human body that is only operating with one hand, and an eye - classified as “invalid,” “sick,” and “crippled.”
2. Personal Work is _____-led work (8:26)
 - a. It is spiritual work - not looking to “feed the world” even though that is important - more interested in the starving souls (Amos 8:11)
 - b. Philip is already working at this (8:4,5) already in motion.
 - c. Philip is listening for guidance instructions (Zech 4:6) - He is “tuned-in” (Ps 46:10) to the spirit (Eph 5:18)
3. Personal Work is _____ driven (8:27) not convenience driven
 - a. There is no debate in Philip’s mind whether he would obey!
 - b. There is NO faith without obedience (Rom 10:17; Jam 1:22)
 - c. Every Christian must learn to desire to find out what God wants done through their lives, and then do it (Rom 12:1,2)
4. Personal Work is _____ rewarded (8:27,28)

- a. God will always lead you to sinners - they are everywhere!
 - b. God places ___ people in your path - people that can and will affect others
 - c. God brought Philip to meet a very special man
 - 1) He is an Ethiopian - black central African
 - 2) He is an Eunuch - treasurer under queen Candace
 - 3) A seeker of the true God
 - a) He had previously changed from idolatry to Judaism - a _____
 - b) He was a believer in the Bible- bought his own copy
5. Personal Work is _____ work (8:29-38)
- a. You have to _____ to (get to) the person - he “ran”
 - b. You have to _____ (find) a “point of contact” - a common issue that the other person understands and relates to:
 - 1) The Eunuch had lots of misconceptions about the Bible
 - 2) God can use anything - current events, troubles, etc.
 - 3) Philip uses the man’s need for “interpretation”
 - c. You have to _____ the person to face the Scriptures
 - d. You have to _____ the person to use his brain (8:34)
 - e. You have to _____ the Gospel from the Scriptures (8:35)!
 - 1) All scripture portions point to Christ (Acts 10:43)
 - 2) You ought to be able to take any Scripture and point out Christ in them:
 - a) In Isa 53 Jesus is the suffering servant
 - b) In Gen 3 Jesus is the promised seed of the woman
 - c) In Exod 12 Jesus is the Passover Lamb of God
 - d) In Song of Solomon, Jesus is the Lily of the valley
 - f. You have to _____ instruct people until they grasp the truth of the Gospel (2 Tim 2:24,25) - Instruct people about:
 - 1) The requirements of God for perfection
 - 2) The inability of any human to meet them
 - 3) Christ’s life, death, burial and resurrection
 - 4) Repentance, and faith only in Christ (20:21)
 - 5) Commitment, and baptism
 - g. You have to _____ people’s depth of understanding and conviction (8:37)
 - h. You then have the _____ of seeing a new birth, and what a joy it is to see them seal their faith in Christ with their baptism (8:38)!
6. Personal Work is _____ work (8:39,40) - You never tire of it
- a. The Eunuch went away rejoicing - there is always JOY with salvation - both in heaven (Lk 15:10), in the heart of the soul just saved, and in the soul-winner (John 4:31-34)!
 - b. Philip found strength to keep going
 - c. God had more “appointments” for Philip ahead - Caesarea

III. Conclusion and Study Questions