

Stage Two Paper: Sermon Manuscript for Acts 8:4-25

A Paper

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Sermon Title: The Transforming Work of the Holy Spirit

Setting: Baptist Collegiate Ministry weekly worship night. I'm preaching mainly to college students.

Passage: Acts 8:4-25

Theme: The Power of the Holy Spirit transcends racial barriers and can only be attained through faith, not by good works or money.

Three points:

- No race brings about the work of the Holy Spirit
- No good work guarantees the work of the Holy Spirit within us
- No amount of money can buy the power of the Holy Spirit

Before the sermon: read the passage out loud while the congregation follows along in their own copy of God's Word. After reading the passage, pray for the Lord's guidance and for **the Holy Spirit to speak through you.**

Manuscript:

Introduction

Have you ever thought about the concept that I just prayed for? You always hear people pray for the Holy Spirit to speak through them before preaching, but what does that actually mean? What does it mean for the Holy Spirit to speak through you? **When we pray for the Holy Spirit to work through us in any form, we are asking the Lord to allow us to tap into the incredible power of the Trinity.** It's a miraculous thing that the Holy Spirit wants to use us as His vessels, but we often don't realize what a spectacular thing that truly is.

When we pray for the Holy Spirit to speak through us, we are asking Him to use us as His tools to bring others to him, which isn't something that we should take lightly. The passage that we're going to study tonight comes from the book of Acts chapter 8, and it talks about the power of the Holy Spirit. As we study this passage together we're going to discuss how the Holy Spirit works in this passage and what that means for modern day believers such as ourselves. So if you guys could please open your copy of God's Word so we can read this passage together, we're going to start in verse 4.

Read the Passage Out Loud

Before we can really dig deep into the passage, I first want to give you guys a little bit of context into what is happening at this point in the early church's history and why Luke might have written the book of Acts in the first place. The book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. In fact, when Acts was first written, it was circulated with the book of Luke as one copy, called Luke-Acts. Acts kind of serves as a continuation of Luke. While the gospel of Luke tells the story of Jesus' ministry on earth, the book of Acts goes into detail about what happened with the local church after Jesus ascended back into Heaven.

So up to this point in chapter 8, Jesus has come to earth, accomplished His resurrection from the dead, and in Acts chapter 1 He is about to ascend back into Heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. Some of His last words to His disciples can be found in chapter 1 verse 8 where he states:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (ESV)

Up until this point where we pick up in chapter 8, the church was mainly focused in Jerusalem. However, because of persecution, we see in verses 4 and 5 that the believers were scattered throughout Samaria, following the pattern that Jesus laid out in chapter 1. Though it wasn't necessarily on purpose, the believers are obeying Jesus' command, sharing the gospel as they're being scattered around. It is at this point that Luke decides to give specific details concerning the mission in Samaria here in this passage that we're studying.

Transition to Point One

Up until this point in Acts, everything has taken place in Jerusalem. Samaria is the first place that Luke mentions outside of Jerusalem, and this is significant when you consider who the Samaritans would have been to the Jews. Basically, the two groups hated one another. The relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans was one of racial tensions and hatred because the Samaritans saw themselves as the “true Israel” because they weren't taken into exile by the Assyrians after the destruction of Jerusalem in 722 BC. However, the Roman Empire, who was taking over the world during the time of the Acts events, refused to see Samaria and Israel as separate nations, so the tension between the two nations increased because of that. All of this led to so much hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans much that they even had separate versions of the Law. All of this to say, the Jews saw any positive interaction with Samaritans as a betrayal to Judaism, and vice-versa.

But why is this background information about the Samaritans important to understanding Acts chapter 8? Well, it would have been extremely controversial for the Jewish believers to go into Samaria to preach, and it was even more strange that the Samaritans believed anything the Jewish believers said. Starting in verse 5, Luke begins to describe the specific ministry of Philip, who was one of the deacons of the church in Jerusalem. Philip brought the power of the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans, healing them physically and spiritually, causing much joy among the people.

This brings me to my first main point that I want us to get out of this passage:

the Power of the Holy Spirit transcends racial barriers.

One of the last things Jesus commanded before ascending into heaven was that the apostles share the Gospel with all of the world, and we see here in chapter 8 fulfillment of that command. The Jewish believers, specifically Philip, scattered to Samaria and brought the gospel to those who they had previously considered their enemies. Even Peter and John, who were leaders in the church in Jerusalem, came down to Samaria in verse 14 to see what was going on because the work in Samaria was so unique. When Peter and John saw what was happening, they laid hands on the Samaritan believers, they were validating them and uniting the church in Jerusalem with

this new church in Samaria. Even after Peter and John left the city, they continued preaching the gospel to many other Samaritan villages as they traveled back to Jerusalem.

*****Application of Point 1 to the Modern College Student*****

In the same way that the churches in Jerusalem and Samaria united and were able to overlook their prejudices against one another, so we should follow their example. Here's the thing, {insert campus} has international students from all over the world. They sit next to you in class, eat with you in the cafeteria, and they live life with you. Often times, we don't like to get to know people from other places because it's awkward. But in this passage, we see Philip and the other Jewish believers letting down their guard and sharing the gospel with people who are different from them. The local church, all of us here today, are responsible for setting aside our own prejudices and preaching the gospel to all people. Let's think about a few practical ways we can accomplish this in our modern context:

- We can get to know our fellow students who come from other cultures and become their friends. Invite them to spend time with you and begin to open the door for possible gospel conversations.
- Participate in missions opportunities, both overseas and local, through your local church and serve others for the sake of the Gospel.
- Praying for those who come from cultures different from our own. Pray that the power of the Holy Spirit will be bestowed upon them and that the Lord will send someone to be a Philip and preach the good news to them.

These three things can be summed up in this way:

As we see in Acts, the Holy Spirit makes His power available to all people, regardless of ethnicity, and our local churches today should reflect this in our ministries by praying, reaching out, and serving all people no matter what culture they come from.

*****Transition to Point 2*****

Though this passage in Acts 8 gives positive examples of the Samaritans believing and being baptized, Luke does portray one Samaritan character in a negative light, and that is Simon the Sorcerer. Luke introduces Simon in verse 9, and to start out we see that he has been captivating the Samaritans with his own magic long before the Jewish believers and Philip make their way to Samaria. But Simon's magic is contrasted with the miracles Philip performs because he was more interested in advancing himself and making his own name great, while Philip used his miracles as a way to point the Samaritans to the one true God. The passage states that Simon has been using his magic as a way of self-glorification, causing the Samaritans to worship Him. They even called him "This man is the power of God that is called Great." Philip's power came from the Holy Spirit, and Simon recognized that the power that Philip possessed was greater than his own.

Luke tells us that Simon believes the gospel and was baptized in verse 13, but it seems that Simon was more amazed by the miracles Philip performed as opposed to the source of the power which Philip preached. Simon's attitude didn't change just because he was baptized. He still reverted back to wanting authority and power that he saw Peter and John express when they

came to Samaria to check out what was going on. We see later in the passage starting in verse 20 that Peter rebukes Simon for his unrepentant heart and actually curses him because he is still more interested in authority and self-glorification even after he is baptized. He wants the power that the Holy Spirit offers more than he wants to repent of his prideful attitude.

This shows that Simon's baptism doesn't necessarily mean his heart is changed, and in turn it demonstrates that good works do not bring about the Holy Spirit's power, only a truly repentant heart can do that. This brings me to the second point that I want us to understand from this passage:

No good work guarantees the power of the Holy Spirit within us

Even though Simon believed and was baptized, his heart did not change and he still saw the Holy Spirit as a means to gain authority over his fellow Samaritans. He states in verse 19 that he wants the ability to bestow the power of the Holy Spirit on anyone who he lays hands upon, and even after Peter tells him to repent in verses 20-23, he asks for prayer so that Peter's curse will not come to fruition. He is more concerned with the consequences of his sin rather than the sin itself, showing no heart change despite being baptized.

*****Application of Point 2 to the Modern College Student*****

Simon's attitude is one that we as the local church can relate to because we often like to think that our good works will earn us our salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit. When I was in college, I often thought that because I was doing all of the right things, reading my Bible and being a nice person, that I was earning the favor of God. I got into a routine, and my relationship with God actually suffered because I was focusing on the things that I could do in my own power rather than relying on Him to work through me.

Don't get me wrong, as believers, we should strive to do good works. The Bible teaches that our good works should reflect our faith in Christ. In James 3:15-17, it states,

“If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself.”

What James is saying here is that our faith is dead if we aren't doing good works, but that doesn't mean that our works save us. It means that our faith should produce good works in our lives. In the case of Simon, he tried to use his works to gain authority and favor with God rather than letting his faith dictate the way he lived.

I want you to think about your own lives for a second. What is your motivation for doing good things? Is it to make your own name known like Simon or are you pointing others to the gospel through your actions?

Transition to Point 3

Simon not only tried to use his good works to gain the Holy Spirit's power, but he went a step further and tried to purchase the Holy Spirit's power with money. In verse 18, we see Simon offering money to Peter and John stating, "Give me this power too, so that anyone I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit." Up until this point in Simon's life, he had been using his power to captivate the Samaritans, and he very well could have been making money through his magic. Trading secrets of magic for money was common for the culture in this day, so Simon's attempt to purchase the Holy Spirit's power was not against the cultural norms. Even after his conversion and baptism, he likely was still stuck in this market mindset and believed that he could use his money to gain authority like that of Peter and John.

But we see that this doesn't go well for Simon, and Peter and John end up cursing him rather than laying hands on him. In verses 20 through 23, we see Peter cursing, not only Simon, but his money as well. This brings me to point number three that we can learn from this passage:

The power of the Holy Spirit cannot be reduced to an earthly monetary transaction. It requires a repentant heart.

Peter doesn't just curse Simon and his money, but he asks Simon to repent of his ways and change his intent. The Holy Spirit is more concerned with our heart's intent rather than our earthly possessions, and he wants us to examine our motivations for our actions.

However, we also see that Simon didn't exactly show signs of repentance after Peter cursed him. He asked Peter for prayer, not because he desired forgiveness, but because he didn't want anything which Peter predicted to happen to him. Simon was more concerned about the consequences of his actions than having a repentant heart.

Application to the Modern College Student

When I was in college, I struggled with lying. Usually it would take the form of exaggerating stories or saying I had done something that I never did like seeing a certain movie or something. Sometimes I would find myself getting caught in a lie, and I immediately regretted ever trying to lie in the first place. But my motivation wasn't that I lied, it was that I got caught in the lie. This pattern still continues in my life today, and I'm sure many of you can relate. Maybe it isn't lying, but rather cheating on homework or stealing something from your friend and never confessing it.

This brings me to ask you guys, do you relate to Simon in the sense that when you sin you're more concerned with the consequences than your sin itself? We all sin. There is no point in pretending that we don't because the Bible says in Romans 3:23 that we all have sinned. However, when we do recognize sin, we need to understand that we are disobeying the God of the Universe. Yes, the consequences aren't fun, but that is not why we repent. We repent because we love God and we recognize the evil of our disobedience.

Conclusion

As you can see, this passage in Acts chapter 8 teaches us a lot about how the Holy Spirit works. Luke wants his readers to understand I'm going to go over the three points briefly one last time.

The first was that **the power of the Holy Spirit transcends racial barriers**. Through his account of the Samaritan mission, Luke was showing his Jewish audience that the gospel is for all peoples no matter what their background is. The Jewish believers looked past their preconceived prejudices to reach those who they previously considered their enemies, and the Lord blessed their efforts and saved many Samaritans as a result.

Both the second and third points came from Luke's account of the life of Simon. The second point is that **no good work guarantees the power of the Holy Spirit within us**. Even though Simon was baptized, he experienced no heart change and still saw the Holy Spirit as a way to gain authority over his fellow Samaritans. When Simon tried to purchase the Holy Spirit's power, he proved that he still reverted back to his old ways of self-glorification.

The third point says that **The power of the Holy Spirit cannot be reduced to an earthly monetary transaction. It requires a repentant heart**. Simon tried to use money to buy the Holy Spirit's power because he saw the authority that Peter and John exercised over the Samaritan people. Not only did Simon not get the Holy Spirit's power, but Peter actually ended up cursing him and calling him to repentance. But after Peter's rebuke, Simon was still only concerned with the consequences of his sin and not the sin itself, proving once again that he experienced no heart change.

When you as college students think of the Holy Spirit, know that He wants to work through you. The Holy Spirit can use people of all cultures and backgrounds as He did with the Samaritans, but He requires a repentant heart in order to work.