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### Revival in Samaria!

**Lesson Text:** Acts 8:1-17

**Focus Verses:** Acts 8:15-17 - <sup>15</sup>Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: <sup>16</sup>(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) <sup>17</sup>Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

**Truth About Covenant:** God calls His church to be His witnesses to everyone.

**Covenant Context:** Up until this point in Israel's history and the church's short history, God's covenant had been primarily to the Jews. However, once persecution spread the Hebrew Christians out of Jerusalem, God led a Greek-speaking Jew named Philip to the city of Samaria where God invited the Samaritans into covenant with Him through the gospel and the born-again response to the gospel.

The persecution of the early church pushed the disciples to evangelize quicker than they may have done otherwise. In the days following the Day of Pentecost, the believers were still largely clustered together in Jerusalem. However, when the murderous Saul began to seek out Christians to martyr them, the new believers scattered from Jerusalem into the surrounding countryside, including the region of Samaria. The promise of Acts 1:8 was already beginning to take shape. The followers of Jesus had witnessed in the city of Jerusalem and the region of Judea, and now they would witness to people who were not fully Jewish in Samaria. The gospel was beginning to reach all nations.

Philip preached to the Samaritans the saving message of Jesus Christ and the entire city was compelled by his preaching and miracles. The entire city experienced great joy upon experiencing Philip and his ministry. But Philip looked over the revival and Samaria with concern. He was not satisfied. Philip knew that until the Samaritans had received the Holy Spirit, God's work in Samaria was not finished. He was so concerned about the absence of the Spirit outpouring that he reported this to the apostles still dwelling in Jerusalem. Peter and John, upon receiving this word, traveled to Samaria despite the constant threat of persecution. Peter and John knew any risk was worth it to make sure the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit.

**The outpouring of God's Spirit on the Samaritans was yet another sign of God's desire to be in covenant with all of humanity.** This new covenant, which Jeremiah prophesied would be written in their hearts, was now being poured out on a notorious foe of the Jews—the Samaritans. The Jews viewed the Samaritans as impure half-breeds; the Samaritans viewed the Jews as arrogant elitists. However, Jesus saw both Jews and Samaritans as souls in need of salvation. Jesus was completing a work in Acts 8 that He had begun in John 4. Just like Jesus needed to go to Samaria in John 4, the Holy Spirit needed to be poured out in Acts 8. Jesus was extending His covenant promise to the Samaritans just like He had to the Jews.

Just like Philip, we must purpose in our hearts not to exclude anyone as we witness. Every person we interact with is created in God's image, and God deeply wants to be in covenant relationship with that person. This truly means everyone: the people we like and the people we do not like as much, those who speak our language and those who do not, those with different skin tones and cultural norms, and even those whose previous life of sin seems insurmountable. We need to desire to see others as God sees them. Since God loves them and wants to save their souls, we should be willing and eager to witness to them.

No matter what persecution or opposition may come our way, we must purpose within ourselves not to allow anything to stop us from spreading the gospel. Even if new believers have experienced healing in their bodies and feel great joy and have been baptized in Jesus' name, if they have not yet spoken with tongues as God gives them the ability, God wants to complete their new-birth experience by filling them with the Holy Spirit. Allow God's power to flow through you to witness about the absolute necessity and wonder of receiving the Holy Spirit. We are a living example of what could happen when we live to share the gospel with everyone, regardless of any perceived barriers that may stand in the way.