SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 8

Joy in Samaria, Joy on the Road — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The persecution meant to stamp out the church scatters it like seed, and the word goes to Samaria and down a desert road toward Africa. God's gift cannot be bought, only received — and wherever Christ is preached and believed, there is joy.

00 The Text

ACTS 8 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.

3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.

6 The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

7 For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

8 So there was much rejoicing in that city.

9 Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;

10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."

11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,

15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

21 "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

22 "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

25 So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)

27 So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,

28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.

33 "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."

34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?"

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]

38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death" — Sin / warning
- **v1** "a great persecution began against the church" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "those who had been scattered went about preaching the word" — Command / instruction
- **v5** "began proclaiming Christ to them" — God — His character & actions

- **v8** “much rejoicing in that city” — Promise / blessing
- **v9** “claiming to be someone great” — Sin / warning
- **v12** “the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” — God — His character & actions
- **v13** “Even Simon himself believed” — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** “Samaria had received the word of God” — Time / place / contrast
- **v17** “they were receiving the Holy Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v18** “he offered them money” — Sin / warning
- **v20** “you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money” — Sin / warning
- **v21** “your heart is not right before God” — Sin / warning
- **v22** “repent of this wickedness of yours” — Command / instruction
- **v23** “the gall of bitterness” — Sin / warning
- **v23** “the bondage of iniquity” — Sin / warning
- **v26** “Get up and go south” — Command / instruction
- **v29** “Go up and join this chariot” — Command / instruction
- **v30** “Do you understand what you are reading?” — Command / instruction
- **v31** “unless someone guides me” — Time / place / contrast
- **v32** “HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER” — God — His character & actions
- **v35** “he preached Jesus to him” — God — His character & actions
- **v36** “What prevents me from being baptized?” — Time / place / contrast
- **v39** “the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away” — God — His character & actions
- **v39** “went on his way rejoicing” — Promise / blessing
- **v15** “Holy Spirit” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v12** “baptized” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

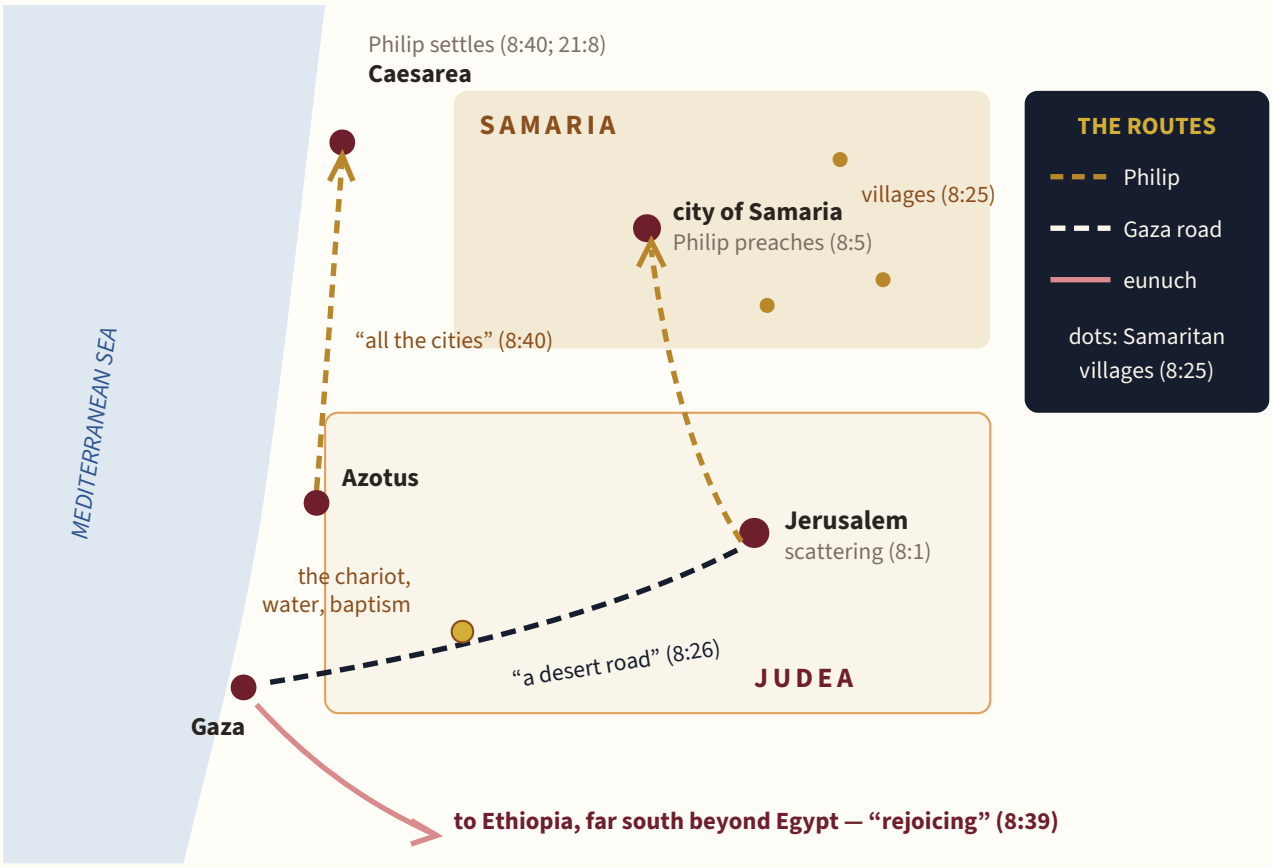
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 8:5

"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and △began proclaiming Christ to them."

FIGURE · PHILIP'S ROADS



Philip goes north to Samaria, is sent south to the desert road toward Gaza, and finishes on the coast at Caesarea — while the Ethiopian heads on south toward home.

Setting. The day of Stephen's burial in Jerusalem (vv1–3). The scattered believers go out through Judea and Samaria (v4). Philip preaches in "the city of Samaria" (v5); Peter and John come down from Jerusalem (v14) and preach in Samaritan villages on the way back (v25). Then an angel sends Philip south to the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza (v26), where an Ethiopian official is riding home (vv27–28). The chapter ends with Philip at Azotus and preaching up the coast to Caesarea (v40).

Structure:

- vv1–4 — **scattered:** Saul in hearty agreement (v1a); a great persecution; all scattered except the apostles (v1b); devout men bury Stephen (v2); Saul ravages the church (v3); the scattered go about preaching the word (v4).

- vv5–13 — **Philip in Samaria:** Philip proclaims Christ (v5); the crowds hear and see signs; unclean spirits, the paralyzed and lame healed (vv6–7); much rejoicing (v8); Simon's magic and fame — "the Great Power of God" (vv9–11); they believe and are baptized (v12); even Simon believes, is baptized and is constantly amazed (v13).
- vv14–25 — **the Spirit and Simon:** apostles hear Samaria has received the word (v14); prayer; the Spirit had not yet fallen (vv15–16); hands laid, the Spirit received (v17); Simon offers money (vv18–19); "May your silver perish with you" — no part or portion, heart not right, repent, gall of bitterness (vv20–23); "Pray to the Lord for me" (v24); return through Samaritan villages (v25).
- vv26–35 — **the chariot:** "Get up and go south" (v26); the Ethiopian eunuch, treasurer of Candace, reading Isaiah (vv27–28); "Go up and join this chariot" (v29); "Do you understand what you are reading?" — "how could I, unless someone guides me?" (vv30–31); Isaiah 53:7–8 (vv32–33); "of whom does the prophet say this?" (v34); Philip preaches Jesus (v35).
- vv36–40 — **baptism and joy:** "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" (v36); [v37, bracketed in the NASB: the confession]; both go down into the water; he is baptized (v38); the Spirit snatches Philip away; the eunuch goes on rejoicing (v39); Philip at Azotus, preaching to Caesarea (v40).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Philip" ×14 — vv5, 6, 12, 13, 26, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40 (v37 is bracketed).
- "Spirit / Holy Spirit" ×9 — vv15 (×2), 17 (×2), 18, 19 (×2), 29, 39 (counting pronoun "He" in v16 would make ten).
- "Jesus / Christ" ×7 — vv5, 12 (×2), 16, 35, 37 (×2); outside v37, ×5.
- "preaching / preached / proclaiming" ×6 — vv4, 5, 12, 25, 35, 40.
- "Lord" ×6 — vv16, 22, 24, 25, 26, 39; "God" ×6 — vv10, 12, 14, 20, 21, 37.
- "baptized" ×5 — vv12, 13, 16, 36, 38.
- "Samaria / Samaritans" ×5 — vv1, 5, 9, 14, 25; "Jerusalem" ×5 — vv1, 14, 25, 26, 27.
- "eunuch" ×5 — vv27, 34, 36, 38, 39.
- "Isaiah / the prophet" ×5 — vv28 (×2), 30 (×2), 34.
- "Simon" ×4 — vv9, 13, 18, 24; "believed / believe" ×4 — vv12, 13, 37 (×2).
- "water" ×4 — vv36 (×2), 38, 39; "receive(d) / receiving" ×4 — vv14, 15, 17, 19.
- "word" ×3 — vv4, 14, 25; "heart" ×3 — vv21, 22, 37; "pray / prayed" ×3 — vv15, 22, 24.
- "money / silver" ×3 — vv18, 20 (×2); "magic" ×2 — vv9, 11.
- "rejoicing" ×2 — vv8, 39, the two ends of Philip's ministry here.

Contrasts: Saul ravaging ⟷ devout men mourning (vv2–3). Scattered ⟷ preaching (v4). Simon's magic ⟷ Philip's signs (vv9–13). "Great Power of God" ⟷ the gift of God (vv10, 20). Money ⟷ a gift (v20). A heart not right ⟷ believe with all your heart (vv21, 37). A crowded city ⟷ a desert road (vv5, 26). A multitude ⟷ one man (vv6, 27). Simon asks others to pray for him ⟷ the eunuch asks for baptism (vv24, 36). Philip taken away ⟷ the eunuch goes on rejoicing (v39).

Shape of the chapter: two scenes of Philip's ministry — one public, one private — each ending in baptism, with the Simon episode in the middle as a warning. The word moves outward exactly on Jesus' map: Jerusalem (v1), Judea and Samaria (vv1–25), and on toward the remotest part of the earth (vv26–40).

Chapter theme (my words): God turns persecution into a missionary movement. The gospel crosses the old wall into Samaria and goes home to Africa in a chariot. It cannot be bought, only received by faith, and where it is received there is joy.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 8:35

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture △he preached Jesus to him."

FIGURE · SIMON AND THE ETHIOPIAN

TWO MEN, BOTH BAPTIZED · TWO VERY DIFFERENT HEARTS

	SIMON OF SAMARIA	THE ETHIOPIAN
BAPTIZED	"after being baptized" (v13)	"he baptized him" (v38)
DRAWN BY	"signs and great miracles" (v13)	"reading the prophet Isaiah" (v28)
HE ASKS FOR	"Give this authority to me" (v19)	"unless someone guides me?" (v31)
HE OFFERS	"he offered them money" (v18)	"invited Philip to … sit with him" (v31)
HE HEARS	"your heart is not right" (v21)	"he preached Jesus to him" (v35)
HE ENDS	"Pray to the Lord for me" (v24)	"went on his way rejoicing" (v39)

One wanted Christ's power; the other wanted Christ. Water alone could not tell them apart.

Read across each row: both men were baptized, but what they wanted, asked for and went away with show two different hearts.

Who was scattered? "They were all scattered … except the apostles" (v1). Guzik calls them "accidental missionaries"; Sproul: "Those who were scattered proclaimed the gospel of Christ everywhere they went." Henry reads it narrower: "not all the believers, but all the preachers, who were principally struck at." Acts 8:3 and 11:19 suggest a broad scattering; either way, the people who preached were not the apostles.

Why did God use persecution? Acts 1:8 had been given; the church had stayed in Jerusalem. Spurgeon: "Yet it was that persecution that made the disciples go abroad, everywhere preaching the Word!" Guzik sees Stephen's death as seed. God was not caught off guard by Saul; He used him before He saved him.

Did Simon really believe? The text says he "believed" and was baptized (v13), and then that his heart was "not right before God" (v21). Guzik leaves it open — nothing before v13 shows his faith was false, it would be "tested by his conduct," and "We don't know what became of Simon." Sproul is firm: "Peter knew right away that Simon's profession of faith was spurious." Henry: Philip baptized on a judgment of charity; "The disguises of hypocrites

many times are soon seen through." I lean with Sproul and Henry — Peter's words "no part or portion" and "the gall of bitterness and … the bondage of iniquity" describe a lost man — but the point for me is the warning: a man can be impressed by miracles, baptized and close to the ministry, and still want Christ's power without Christ.

Why did the Samaritans receive the Spirit later (vv14–17)? Elsewhere the Spirit comes with faith (Acts 2:38; 10:44; Eph 1:13). Guzik lists five views; one is that God held back the gift until the apostles came so that Samaria and Jerusalem would be one church, not two rival bodies — the old Jew–Samaritan split healed in Christ. Guzik himself prefers the view that they were born again and received a filling with gifts through the apostles. Sproul calls it the extension of Pentecost to non-Jews. I read it as a one-time, transitional moment as the gospel crossed each new line in Acts 1:8 (compare 2:4; 10:44–46; 19:6), not a pattern of a second blessing for every believer.

What was Simon's sin? He wanted to buy the authority to give the Spirit (v19). Guzik: "Simon thought that the Holy Spirit was merely a power that could be bought or sold." Sproul: "God is simply not for sale." The church named the sin after him — simony.

Why Isaiah 53? The eunuch was reading 53:7–8 in the Greek version (hence small differences from our Hebrew-based Isaiah). His question — "of whom does the prophet say this?" (v34) — is the question; Guzik notes the Jews debated Israel, Isaiah or Messiah. Philip "beginning from this Scripture … preached Jesus" (v35), as Jesus Himself had done on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:27). Sproul: "Not one word of the New Testament was yet in print."

What about verse 37? The NASB prints it in brackets because the oldest Greek manuscripts lack it; it is in the KJV from later manuscripts. Guzik and Henry comment on its words without raising the question; Sproul does not mention it. The confession it records is true — faith in Christ with the whole heart comes before baptism (Rom 10:9) — and verse 36 already implies it, since the man had just heard Jesus preached. I will not build anything on verse 37 that the rest of the chapter does not already teach.

Baptism — mode and meaning. Guzik reads "went down into the water" as immersion. Sproul: "There is not one word in this text about the mode of baptism." Both agree on the order: the gospel heard, faith, baptism without delay. Sproul (citing Cullmann) hears an early-church question in "What prevents me?" and notes that a simple profession was enough.

Snatched away (v39). *Harpazō* is the word of 1 Thess 4:17. Guzik compares Philip's removal to the catching up of the church. I see a small picture of the rapture here — sudden, by the Spirit, and the one left behind is not left without the Word (Spurgeon: "The Spirit of the Lord did not take away the Bible—that was left for the eunuch").

Word study (Greek):

- **scattered — *diaspeirō* (G1289):** to scatter like seed; vv1, 4; 11:19.
- **preaching the word — *euangelizō* (G2097):** to tell good news; vv4, 12, 25, 35, 40.
- **ravaging — *lymainomai* (G3075):** to lay waste; only v3 in the NT.
- **proclaiming — *kēryssō* (G2784):** to herald; v5.
- **joy — *chara* (G5479):** v8; rejoicing (*chairō*) v39.
- **magic — *mageuō* (G3096) / *mageia* (G3095):** vv9, 11; "Great Power" — *dynamis* (G1411), v10.
- **gift — *dōrea* (G1431):** v20; Acts 2:38; John 4:10.
- **part / portion — *meris* (G3310) / *klēros* (G2819):** v21, a share in the inheritance.
- **repent — *metanoeō* (G3340):** v22.
- **gall / bitterness / bondage — *cholē* (G5521), *pikria* (G4088), *syndesmos* (G4886):** v23.

- **eunuch — *eunouchos* (G2135); court official — *dynastēs* (G1413); treasure — *gaza* (G1047):** v27.
- **guide — *hodēgeō* (G3594):** v31; John 16:13.
- **baptize — *baptizō* (G907):** vv12, 13, 16, 36, 38.
- **snatched away — *harpazō* (G726):** v39; 1 Thess 4:17.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Scattered like seed** — *diaspeirō*; "Therefore" (v4).
2. **Ordinary men carried it** — not the apostles (vv1, 4).
3. **Philip preached Christ** — in a city and in a chariot (vv5, 35).
4. **Joy is the fruit** (vv8, 39).
5. **A believer who wasn't?** — Simon (vv13, 21).
6. **God is not for sale** (Sproul).
7. **One man matters** (Spurgeon).
8. **Isaiah 53 has one answer** — Jesus (vv34–35).
9. **The dry tree blossoms** — Isa 56:3–5.
10. **Verse 37, honestly** — bracketed, true, not built on.

Cross-references: Deut 23:1; 29:18; Ps 68:31; Isa 53:7–8; 56:3–5; Matt 7:21–23; 27:34; Luke 24:27; John 4:9, 35–38; 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2:38; 6:5; 10:44–46; 11:19; 19:6; 21:8–9; 22:4; Rom 10:9; Gal 1:13; Eph 1:13; 4:31; 1 Thess 4:17; 1 Pet 1:18–19.

03 Application

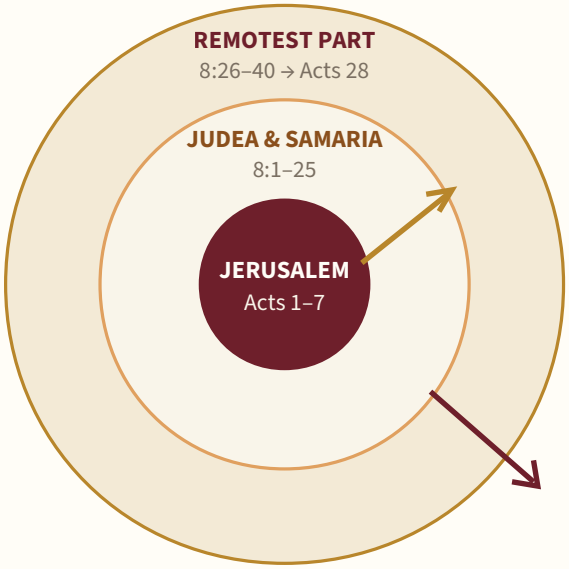
HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 8:39

"When they came up out of the water, △the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but ☆went on his way rejoicing."

FIGURE · ACTS 1:8 IN MOTION

ACTS 1:8 IN MOTION · ACTS 8 CROSSES TWO LINES IN ONE CHAPTER



8:1	the church scattered from Jerusalem
8:4	the scattered preach the word everywhere
8:5–8	Philip: Christ proclaimed to Samaritans
8:14–17	Samaritans receive the Spirit
8:25	the apostles preach in Samaritan villages
8:27	an Ethiopian official, heading home
8:39	he goes on his way rejoicing

Jesus named three circles in Acts 1:8; follow the arrows and the list to see Acts 8 carry the word across the second line and start on the third.

Example to follow — the scattered believers. They lost homes and jobs and ran for their lives, and they "went about preaching the word" (v4). Many of the men I walk with have been scattered — by prison, by addiction, by divorce, by a move they didn't choose. God doesn't waste scattering. Wherever I have landed is where I preach the word this week.

Command to obey — get up and go. "Get up and go south … Go up and join this chariot" (vv26, 29). Philip didn't argue that a desert road made no sense after a revival. He got up, went, and ran (vv27, 30). I want to be that quick when the Spirit points me to one man.

Sin to confess — wanting God's power without God. Simon wanted to be impressive. I have wanted the results of ministry — respect, influence, a name — more than I wanted Christ. I confess the Simon in me: the part of me that wants to use God. "God is simply not for sale" (Sproul), and I can't buy Him with service either.

Truth to hold — a man can be close and still not right. Simon was baptized, followed Philip, saw miracles, and his heart was "not right before God" (v21). That sobers me for myself and for the men I lead. I will not settle for impressed; I want to know Christ, and help other men know Him.

Promise to trust — no dry trees in God's house. The eunuch was the man the rules kept out. Isaiah said, "Nor let the eunuch say, 'Behold, I am a dry tree'" (Isa 56:3), and in Acts 8 he goes home rejoicing. No man is too far out — not the felon, not the addict, not the outsider. Christ brings him in.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The church only left Jerusalem when persecution scattered it (8:1, 4). What hard thing in my life might God be using to send me to people I would never have reached? (8:1–4; Acts 1:8) *Sometimes it is a blessing to a church to have a great trial (Spurgeon).*
2. Philip took Christ to Samaritans, the people his own background taught him to avoid. Who are the "Samaritans" in my world, and what keeps me from them? (8:5–8; John 4:9) *Because Jesus had worked in him there was no room for prejudice (Guzik).*
3. Simon believed, was baptized and followed Philip, but his heart was not right. How can a man tell the difference between being impressed by Jesus and belonging to Him? (8:13, 18–23; Matt 7:21) *God is simply not for sale (Sproul).*
4. Where am I tempted to treat God's power as something to get, use or earn — instead of a gift I receive? (8:18–20; 1 Pet 1:18–19) *You thought you could obtain the gift of God with money.*
5. The Ethiopian said, "How could I, unless someone guides me?" Who is guiding me in the Scriptures — and whom am I guiding? (8:30–35; Luke 24:27) *Read it until you understand it (Spurgeon).*
6. Philip was sent from a whole city to one man on a desert road. Who is the one person God may be sending me to this week? (8:26–29, 35) *Philip must now be of service to a solitary individual (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The Lord of the harvest turns a persecutor's rampage into a missionary movement, sets a Samaritan city free, refuses to be bought, and sends His Spirit down a desert road for one seeking man. He is the Lamb led to slaughter who did not open His mouth, the free gift of God, and the joy of everyone who believes.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, wherever I have been scattered, let me preach Your word there. Root out the Simon in me that wants Your power without You. Make me quick to get up and go when Your Spirit points to one man, and give me the words to start from his Scripture and preach You. And send me home from every meeting with You the way the eunuch went — rejoicing. Amen.

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