

PHILIP AT SAMARIA

Acts 8:5-8

Philip was not an apostle, but he was one of the seven men chosen to be deacons. However, he became a lay preacher and a flaming evangelist, and his influence was felt throughout all of Samaria.

I. The Man.

1. Philip was a good man.
All deacons should be good men, without shadows hanging over their heads.
2. Philip was a man of honest report.
He was well spoken of in the community.
3. Philip was filled with the Holy Spirit.
When any church has a deacon who is filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit, it is peculiarly blessed. The influence of such a man will be keenly felt in the community.
4. Philip was sensitive to the call of God.
Any man who is filled with the Holy Spirit will be sensitive to God's call. Philip was willing to be led into Samaria, and willing to be led away from Samaria.
5. Philip was anxious to discover and to do God's will.
This is the chief end and the glory of man--to discover and to do the will of God.
6. Philip was ready to go when and where needed.
He had completely surrendered his will to the Lord. Consequently, he was free to go anywhere and do anything his Lord assigned him.
7. Philip was a consistent student of the Bible.
When the Ethiopian eunuch stumbled over the word of the prophet, Philip began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. He could interpret the words of the prophet and make the meaning so simple and so compelling that his inquirer saw it, believed it, accepted it, and obeyed it.
8. Philip was a successful soul-winner.
Why shouldn't a deacon care for the souls of men and be able to tell them how to be saved?
9. Philip was eager to get results for God.
He was doubtless delighted with the response which attended his ministry in Samaria. He was equally happy over leading that Ethiopian eunuch to the Saviour, and seeing him go on his way rejoicing.

II. The Ministry.

1. Philip was a missionary of the church.
2. Philip was sound in doctrine and method.
He preached Christ. He was not a sensationalist with a lot of jokes, tricks and propositions. He magnified the Lord as the only Saviour. Many preachers, deacons and evangelists today might learn a valuable lesson from him.
3. Philip brought great joy to the community.

SIMON THE SORCERER

Acts 8:9-25

In this chapter we have two men placed in contrast. One is Philip, who represents possession; and the other is Simon Magus, who represents profession. The former is genuine, and the latter is a counterfeit.

1. His position. v. 9.

Simon was a sorcerer--a magician, wizard, or enchanter.

2. His popularity. v. 10-11

Simon Magus was the most popular man in town. The populace worshiped him as a god. Either through fear or favor, he had succeeded in winning everyone over to his side. He was evidently a mature man because for a "long time he had bewitched them with sorceries."

3. His profession. v. 13.

When he saw that the people turned to God through the preaching of Philip and were baptized, he also decided to be baptized and become a member of the church. He saw that he had lost his hold on the people since Philip had come to town, and he coveted the power of Philip to perform miracles.

The joy occasioned by Simon's profession was soon dissipated and turned to disappointment. From him we learn some important matters with reference to salvation:--

(1) Men are not saved by intellectual beliefs.

Simon believed, yet he was not saved. His was a mere intellectual belief.

"The demons also believe and tremble." It is entirely possible to believe that Jesus is the Son of God without trusting Him.

(2) Men are not saved by baptism.

Here was a man who had been baptized, yet he was not saved. His heart was not right, and he had no part in salvation.

(3) Men are not saved by church membership.

Here was a man who joined the church and became an active worker, yet he did not know the Lord.

(4) Men cannot buy the power of God with money.

Simon tried it, but he discovered that there are some things in the world that could not be bought at any price. In fact, many things cannot be bought, such as, honor, character, pardon, salvation, peace and heaven.

(5) Men can be saved only through their personal faith in Jesus Christ as a Saviour.

4. His proposal. v. 18-19.

When word got to the apostles in Jerusalem that Samaria had received the Word of the Lord, they sent Peter and John to inspect the work done by the young evangelist. "And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." Acts 8:18-19. This proposal of Simon's indicated the real heart of the man. He was a professor not a possessor; counterfeit not genuine. His covetousness had finally gotten the best of him. He imagined, like many others since that day, that position and power in the kingdom of God could be bought with money. He was not the first nor the last person to seek to commercialize religion.

5. His perversion. v. 20-21.

Peter informed Simon, and us, that the Holy Spirit is "the gift of God", and cannot be obtained by the payment of money. That information proved to be a great disappointment to Simon, for, had he receiving of it from those with whom he dealt. Now that it is a gift, there is no profit in it for him. "Repent therefore of

this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Acts 8:22-23. Simon's trouble was that his heart was not right with God. Such a heart is doomed to perish. The statement, "Thy money perish with thee," implied not only that the money would perish, but that everything he had and all he did would come to naught. Life is empty without God.

Any heart that is not right with God is ostracized from the work of God. "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this need." He was living in a different world, serving a different master and living for a different purpose. The heart that is not right with God is a bondsman of evil. It is "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." Such a man cannot break away from evil for he is held in bondage to sin. His will-power is gone, and his moral stamina has failed. The heart that is not right with God puts self in the center of everything. With Simon it was a matter of personal gain, of personal honor and advancement. God and His glory were not considered at all in his desires for "this power." The heart that is not right with God is wrong in all things--in thoughts, in motives, in words, and in deeds.

Such a heart is in urgent need of repentance. Peter demanded that Simon turn his back upon his wicked proposal and ask God for forgiveness.

Simon was a great hindrance to the church of which he was a member. When he joined the church he carried his old spirit with him. He had lived on deception and still loved. That was what he sought in Christianity. Simon was a hypocrite. He was lacking in the least principle of the spirit of Christianity. Such men have always been found in churches. Judas got into the first one, and his successors have been found all through the centuries. Simon was a worldly-minded man. He thought of nothing higher than amusement, spectacular display, personal gain and the honor men could pay him. Simon was a fanatic. He measured Christ by the strange and the mysterious. He wanted to be able to display unusual powers. Simon was a money lover. He measured everything by the financial standard. His first thought was, "Can I cash in on it?" If a church member does not think beyond the money involved, he is a weak member.

6. His petition. v. 24.

Like all professors, Simon was utterly blind to the real issue in the case. He never realized for a moment that he had offended a Holy God, and that he should above all things ask for forgiveness. His prayer was selfish and negative. He asked Peter to pray that he not be punished for his wrongdoing. He prayed for freedom from suffering and not for forgiveness of sin. An offended God demands that we suffer for our sins. Moreover, an unselfish God simply cannot answer a selfish prayer.

7. His plight.

Simon's request fell unheeded. If we have sinned, we, ourselves, must confess our sins and personally pray for forgiveness. If we sin, we must suffer in this world, and in the case of the unconverted in the world to come, as well.