

Everyday Equipping

Acts 8:1-25

The main part of this passage is about Philip, not one of the 12, but one of the 120 at Pentecost that was mightily filled with the Holy Spirit, and was selected by the disciples as one of 7 men to help with the social action of feeding the widows in Acts 6. He went and preached the gospel and did amazing signs and wonders amongst the Samaritans, a population that hadn't heard the gospel previously. Many lame were able to walk again.

(Small group discussion tip: Try not to get deflected on the whole issue of Simon the sorcerer, I chose not highlight him as I think it can distract us from the key thrust of the passage here.)

We do see Saul, later Paul, being a main persecutor of the church at this point. Luke wanted to highlight just how much of a 180 degree turn he made by encountering the risen Christ that is in the next chapter. It shows us just how we must never give up on anyone, especially when they seem totally opposed to the gospel!

The Samaritans had a fractious relationship with the Jews. Their roots were similar, but following the exile they returned to the promised land and wanted to build the new temple at Mt Gerazim, whereas the Jews wanted to build it again in Jerusalem. They only accepted the first 5 books of the Old Testament as scripture, and probably spoke a different language Hebrew rather than Aramaic. We see much of this controversy in Jesus' discussion with the woman at the well (John 4).

The final part was that the Samaritans readily received the word from Philip, believed and were immediately baptised in water. Later Peter and John were sent down by the apostles to check out what had happened in Samaria. They didn't re-baptise them, but did lay hands on them for them to be filled with the Spirit. It shows us that water baptism always followed people coming to faith; and that it was possible for people to know Christ and yet not be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Questions:

1. Talk about being baptised in water; Christ gave his disciples this task in Mat 28:19 .
2. We also see a clear time where Christians believed and had been baptised in water and yet not filled with the Holy Spirit; go around and talk about whether you think you have been or not yet. Who would like to get baptised in The Holy Spirit that hasn't been?
3. The passage shows us a wonderful demonstration of signs and wonders; we heard about Maureen praying for her mum to get healed. Do you have any testimonies yourself or people you have prayed with getting healed?
4. Reaching our Samaria is something that we should be thinking about as a church. An area that has slightly different customs, maybe another language, but common in many ways. What do you think these areas are, and has anyone a burden on their heart to explore church planting somewhere?