

After the murder of Stephen, things got very much worse for the church. Satan walked about, seeking whom he could devour. But the work of the devil is done by men, and Saul was the instrument chosen of the devil to wreak havoc on the church. He had kept the outer garments of those who had stoned Stephen and the blood of Stephen stained his mind and heart.

Godly men took the body of Stephen, buried him, and sorrowed greatly over his death. Sorrow are real and afflict the minds and souls of the godly, even though their faith is in God.

Saul went into every house, seeking Christians, carrying off men and women to prison that he might destroy the church, for he thought that he did God service, for he really believed that Christ was a false messiah, a false prophet, and Christians were tools of the devil.

God had more than one purpose in this persecution led by Saul and the Jews. Not only did this test the faith of the Christians and fulfill the words of Christ, but it also scattered the people and they went into the surrounding areas, preaching the gospel. The result of the persecution proved to be the very opposite of the results desired by Saul and the Jews.

There is a question that you and I must ask ourselves in terms of the dark clouds that are hanging over the world and our nation in the present time. Are you and I prepared to serve the Lord in the midst of tribulation and persecution such as this. How are we to live our lives and conduct ourselves if the protection that the church has enjoyed for many years is taken away and we are exposed to our enemies?

This brings us to verse five. There are three areas I would explore: I. vs. 5-13 Simon the Sorcerer, Samaria, and Philip. II. Vs. 24-27 Simon Peter and Samaria III. Vs. 18-25 Simon Peter and Simon the Sorcerer.

#### I. Simon the Sorcerer, Samaria, and Philip. Vs. 24-27

##### A. Philip had great success in preaching to the Samaritans.

1. Samaria is where Jesus met the woman at the well and spoke of the water of life and ministered to the men of the city which came out. His work must have prepared the way for Philip.
2. Samaritans were despised by the Jews as a cult, separated from Israel with their own temple and customs. They were the remnants of the Northern Kingdom from the days after Solomon; destroyed by the Assyrians and settled with a mongrel population of lower caste people from elsewhere, with a syncretic theology like a patchwork quilt, a little of this and a little of that. But they did look for Messiah, and Jesus had said that the Gospel would go into Samaria. And so it did. God showed them mercy just as He did the Jerusalem.

##### B. Great joy in the city. The bondage of witchcraft was broken and vanished like frost before the sun.

1. Philip preached Christ, vs. 5, which is explained further in vs. 12: the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, baptizing men and women. And certainly the children for not would have been unthinkable.

2. H.C. Q58: What comfort do you receive from the article "life everlasting"?  
A58: That, inasmuch as I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy,[1] I shall after this life possess complete blessedness, such as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man,[2] therein to praise God forever.[3]
3. The Gospel has not really taken root in the heart until there is the joy of the Lord over sins forgiven and assurance of adoption as a child of God.

C. Simon the Sorcerer.

1. Held the people of Samaria in bondage by his tricks and wonders.
2. Bewitched their minds. Amazed them with magic and tricks.
3. His influence and power vanished under the preaching of the Gospel.

II. Simon Peter and Simon the Sorcerer. Vs. 14-17

- A. The order and authority of the church. The Holy Spirit was not given as it was at Jerusalem until the apostles came. Simon Peter and John were sent, for it could not be that the church could spread to Samaria without the authority of the Apostles upon whose doctrines the church is built. All people are not equal in the church, but we are commanded to be under authority.
- B. By the laying on of hands the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost.
  1. This was no more the first work of the Holy Spirit in Samaria than Pentecost was the first work in Jerusalem. The power of Satan had been broken, faith had come, and the people were baptized.
    - a. Titus 5:5 baptism signifies the work of the Holy Ghost.
    - b. 1 Peter 1:2, baptism is called the washing of water by the word
    - c. Rom. 6:6 says that baptism signifies new life in Christ.
    - d. Gal. 3:27 identifies baptism with putting on Christ.
  2. Why this laying on of hands and giving of the Holy Ghost?
    - a. It showed that the church at Samaria was one with the church at Jerusalem.
    - b. Samaria received the same gifts that Jerusalem had received. It is the manifest of the gifts, not the Holy Spirit Himself, that occurred at both places. Tongues, miracles, etc.
    - c. These things did not continue.

III. Simon Peter and Simon the Sorcerer: vs. 18-25.

- A. The minds and hearts of many who are baptized are not change. Only Jesus can baptize with the Holy Spirit. For a time it might be very difficult to distinguish between the wheat and the tares.
- B. Simon the Sorcerer continued to think like a sorcerer: he thought he could manipulate the power of God.
- C. Simon the Sorcerer showed himself to be a shallow and temporary believer, who came short of eternal life. Simon Peter called him to repentance and true faith. To get his heart right with God.
- D. Simon the Sorcerer was suave and winsome: vs. 24, continuing the charade.

1. There are some who believe that Simon repented later and served Christ, but a much more solid tradition, perhaps, speaks of him as one who became a terrible enemy of Christ, spreading a pre-Gnostic Gnosticism, returning to his sorceries and witchcraft.
  2. He left his name to those who bought and sold church office; Simony, which plagued the Rome for centuries, and was condemned by Luther and the other Reformers.
- E. The apostles finished their work and returned to Jerusalem, preaching in the villages on their return village.

#### Application

1. It is not in vain to preach the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation. Sometimes only one or two might be won; at other times a whole people can be won very quickly. These things depend upon the will of God, who works according to His own will. But we are to pray for workers to preach the Gospel.
2. The gospel net catches all kinds of creatures in the sea, as Jesus said. Simon was caught in the net, but was not a good fish and was cast aside, perhaps. Not all of the seed produces the good fruit of faith; some work is temporary and the heart is not changed and renewed; or the mind transformed. Thus it was with Simon. He was greedy and manipulative.
3. Let us not be weary in well doing, for we shall reap if we faint not.

Amen and Amen. May God bless you.