

“THROUGH THE BIBLE”

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ACTS 7:1-8:8

Several years ago the Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel reported a burglary at the home of Nathan Radlich. The owner was out visiting friends. When he returned the television, electronics, even his valuables had all been ignored. All that was stolen was a cardboard box filled with white powder. The thieves thought they'd scored some cocaine. But it wasn't coke in the box, it was Nathan's sister, Gertrude. The box held her cremated remains. Here's a funny thought... Imagine the thieves trying to get high, snorting ole Gertrude. If ever there was proof drugs are a *dead end*, this is it!

Yet the thieves' mistake helps describe the Jews who arrested Stephen. They were trying to get high on ashes – on the remnants of what was dead. They were still putting their trust in the *Temple and traditions and trappings* of Judaism. These Jews relied on a religion that looked like the real thing, but in reality was merely ashes and death. Jesus fulfilled the Jewish Law. The rules and rituals of Judaism had become obsolete. Christianity was God's new way. The Law of God exposed our failures. But the Spirit of God conveyed forgiveness and provided power for victory. *Law condemned*, but *grace saved*. Yet the Jews were keepers of the Law and opponents of grace. The Jews snorted ole Gertrude, whereas Stephen was high on the life of God's Spirit. His life was full of joy, and power, and hope. The last verse of chapter 6 says he had a glow about him. Stephen radiated God's glory.

Stephen will tell the Jewish hierarchy that God is not confined to a Temple. Neither is He limited by the Law of Moses. Stephen's message is that God is the author of newness. He's so creative no two snowflakes are identical. And God has created an entirely new way for people to relate to Him – *through faith in Jesus of Nazareth*. Acts 7 is Stephen's defense.

At the end of Acts 6 the Jews made several false accusations against Stephen. They accuse him of blasphemy against the Temple and the Law. Stephen didn't disrespect the Temple or the Law. He never discredited their proper role in God's plan, but through Christ God was doing a new work. This is what his enemies didn't get... And this is the source of the High Priests question in 7:1, **“Then the high priest said, “Are these things so?”**

Remember, Stephen started out as a deacon, a *table waiter*. In Acts 6 God promoted him to *miracle worker*. Now in Acts 7 he's an *engaging theologian*.

At each stage of service Stephen was faithful - and God often rewards *faithful service* with *broader service*. Paul may've been thinking of Stephen when he said in 1 Timothy 3:13, **“For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith.”** mStephen is a deacon turned an evangelist. And he follows the pattern of Peter. He uses an inquisition as an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel. His sermon is a masterpiece. Stephen surveys Jewish history to show how God was always up to something new - yet each new initiative was met with Jewish resistance. Call his sermon [a panoramic view of Jewish stubbornness](#).

Stephen begins in verse 2, “And he said, “Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.’ God spoke to Abraham while he was still in a pagan country. The Mesopotamians worshipped the moon-goddess. Which reminds me, if they found insects on the moon what would they be called? That’s easy, “*lunatics*.” Stephen's point is that God went right into a land of pagans and picked out a man to father His people. He did a new thing! God always does fresh works.

“Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even *enough* to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.” Abraham died with only a promise. He was a pilgrim from the time God called him to the time God called him home. Abe was always on the move. And this is true of every life lived for God. *The one constant is change*. We're all on a spiritual pilgrimage. God wants us to avoid stagnancy. He keeps us in transition. He’s always wanting to do a new thing in our lives. To the contrary, the Jews of Stephen’s day were stuck in a 1500 year rut. Resistance to the changes God had in mind created a spiritual deadness. The believers in Jesus were alive! They were full of the joy and power of the Holy Spirit! The Christians were *fanatics*, while the Jews were just *static*.

Verse 6 “But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them 400 years. ‘And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.’ Stephen's point is that God had to uproot the patriarchs. The growth of their faith had stalled out in the Promise Land. God forced them to Egypt to get them leaning and trusting on Him again. A new work had to take place.

And with the new work came a new sign. “Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.” In the first century AD circumcision was the unquestioned mark of God’s covenant with Israel. All Hebrew males carried this reminder on their person. But when circumcision was first instituted on an adult Abraham... Ouch! Even what the Jews viewed as ancient tradition was at one time a new deal.

“And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt.” Stephen is recounting the means by which God moved Israel to Egypt. It started with an act of their perpetual stubbornness. They were jealous of Joseph. “But God was with him and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance.”

One of the most fascinating studies in the OT is to list all the different ways Joseph is a type of Christ. The similarities are amazing... *Both were rejected by their brothers... Both were thrown into a pit or grave and left for dead... Both were resurrected and ascended to the right hand of their respective Kings... God judged both rejections with a famine...* During days of Joseph there was famine in the land. After the Jews rejection of Jesus, the Bread of Life, famine engulfed Palestine again. Later, we’ll find Paul trying to gather famine relief for the Church in Jerusalem.

Verse 12, “But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to the Pharaoh.” The brothers didn’t recognize Joseph the first time they met him, it was his second appearance that opened their eyes. Likewise, the Jews failed to recognize Jesus had his first coming. It’s when He comes again that they’ll know Him, and repent of their sin, and embrace Him as their Messiah.

“Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to *him*, 75 people. So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers. And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, *the father of Shechem*.” The only land Abraham owned in Canaan was a burial plot. Remember Abraham was a wanderer. He died with nothing but a promise. “But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt till another king arose who did not know Joseph. This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.” The Egyptian dynasty that Joseph had influenced remained sympathetic toward the Hebrews, but it was ousted shortly after Joseph died. The succeeding dynasty were brutal. They feared Israel’s vast numbers. Their Pharaoh ordered a mass genocide of thousands of Hebrew infants.

So God did a new work, verse 20, “At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father’s house for three months. But when he was set out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.” Exodus 3 recounts how Moses’ faithful mom, Jochebed, floated her baby boy down the Nile River in a wicker basket. The miniature ark stuck in the reeds and was retrieved by the Pharaoh’s daughter. It was all orchestrated by God’s overarching providence.

Verse 22, “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians...” It’s ironic that the Pharaoh who killed the Hebrew babies financed Moses’ education - down to his room and board. He raised Moses in his own court.

“And (Moses) was mighty in words and deeds.” The Jewish historian Josephus provides us some extra-biblical insights into Moses’ upbringing. He wrote that while growing up Moses was such a beautiful child and had such natural endowments, people went out of their way to see him. Josephus notes that as a young man - Moses, a prince of Egypt - led a regiment of the Egyptian army against the Ethiopians and won a great victory.

Later when God calls Moses at the burning bush to be His spokesman, Moses balks. And do you remember his excuse? Moses complained, “O my LORD, I am not eloquent... I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.” Apparently he was selling himself short - here Stephen says Moses was “mighty in words,” *as well as deeds*. Moses was a powerful, natural speaker. It wasn’t *communication skills* that he lacked - but *confidence*. Growing up in Egypt, Moses was a popular, privileged, talented, intelligent, articulate, courageous young man - literally, on top of the world - *until...*

“Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.” It may’ve been a mid-life crisis. Moses had learned that he was Hebrew. He wanted to understand his roots and heritage. It’s been said, “It’s hard to know where you’re going if you don’t know who you are.” Moses had to find himself, so he retraced his roots. This is why it’s so important that as believers we understand who we are in Christ.

As Moses walked among the Hebrews... “And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian.” It was an instinctive reaction. Moses defended an innocent Hebrew against the cruelty of an Egyptian taskmaster. The Egyptian died. And Moses thought the Hebrews would view him as a hero. Verse 25, “For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.” Sadly, Moses was wrong.

“And the next day he appeared to *two* of them as they were fighting, and *tried* to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘*Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?*’” News had already gotten around.

“Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.” Moses must’ve sensed God’s call to deliver his people from slavery, but rather than wait on God’s timing and methods, he took matters into his own hands. Moses’ botched efforts ended in disaster. He had to flee Egypt. He started *a new life with a new wife* in Midian. It’s interesting both Joseph and Moses after *being rejected by their own brothers moved to a foreign land - took for themselves a Gentile bride - had a family – and then later returned a second time to their people, Israel*. And both plights beautifully parallel the life of Jesus... After Jesus was rejected by the Jews He too took a Gentile bride, the Church, and has many sons. Like Moses and Joseph, Jesus also will return a second time to His brothers, and then they’ll receive Him as their Messiah. Stephen is saying God’s ways change, but they also stay the same.

Verse 30 “And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai.” Moses life breaks down into three forty year periods – first, in the court of Pharaoh – next, on the backside of the desert – finally, leading the nation. It took God 80 years to prepare Moses for the mission He had in mind. It takes time to mold and mature a Moses. Why are you so impatient? Oftentimes, we’re too eager. We run out ahead of God. We need to learn our lessons and wait for His time. It was DL Moody who said, “Moses spent forty years in Pharaoh’s court thinking he was a somebody; forty years in the desert learning he was a nobody; and forty years as Israel’s leader showing what God can do with a somebody who knows he’s a nobody.” God had to humble a haughty Moses.

Verse 31, “When Moses saw *it*, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying, ‘*I am the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*’ And Moses trembled and dared not look.” Notice, the Angel of the Lord speaks to Moses from the burning bush, but the Angel of the Lord identifies Himself as God. That’s how Moses treats Him. The word translated “*angel*” simply means “*messenger.*” I believe more often than not, when the Angel of the Lord appears in the OT it’s none other than a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Stephen implies that it was actually Jesus who spoke to Moses from the burning bush!

“Then the LORD said to him, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.” Here’s the point... “This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush.” Again, God worked in a new and unexpected way. His deliverer was the very person the Hebrews rejected. And the mistake they made with Moses they were repeating with Jesus!

Verse 36 **“He brought them out...”** Who is **“He”**? Stephen is speaking of the Angel of the Lord. Look at verse 35, Moses was sent by the hand of the Angel in the bush. You’ve heard the old saying, **“A Moses in the hand is worthless without an Angel in the bush!”** Well, that’s Stephen’s version... Moses was empowered by the hand of the Angel of the Lord. It was the power of Jesus who worked through Moses to bring Israel out of Egypt, **“after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.”** Jesus was the source of Moses’ miracles. Jesus empowered the plagues, parted the Sea, and sent the manna. Ironically, the traditional Jews Stephen is addressing were rejecting the same Jesus who had been so instrumental in the development of their history.

Again Stephen points to Jesus in verse 37, **“This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.’** He quotes from Deuteronomy 18... The **“prophet like me”** Moses predicted was none other than Jesus. **“This is he (meaning Moses) who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected.”** The revelation of God given to Moses on Sinai came from Jesus. Yet the Jews rejected Him then, as they were now.

“And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ Remember the ten plagues God used to pry loose the grip of Pharaoh from the necks of His people were direct assaults on the idols of Egypt. God was proving His superiority! It’s a stunning example of stubbornness that the Hebrews turned so quickly to worship what God had so thoroughly defeated. All it took was a 40 day absence – *Moses on the mountaintop* - for the Hebrews to trust in idols. They turned to Moses’ brother, Aaron, and asked him to forge an idol.

“And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets...” This is an insight Stephen provides that we don’t read about in the Law of Moses. Not only did Israel bow to the golden calf - idolatry - they worshipped the stars – **“the host of heaven.”** They delved into the evil of astrology! They looked to the creation for guidance rather than the Creator.

‘Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, images which you made to worship; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’ Moloch was the god of the Moabites. It’s seems so barbaric, but Moabite parents would sacrifice their babies to Moloch to appease his anger and try to coax from him a successful harvest. We shudder at the depravity and brutality and callousness of the ancients. Yet modern society is just as evil. Parents today abort their baby on the altar of convenience, or career, or choice. Today, Moloch worship is still around it just goes by names like **“a woman’s right”** or **“family planning.”**

And notice, Stephen is now speeding up his survey of Hebrew history. Israel's idolatry lingered for nearly a thousand years until God finally turned His people over to the world's most notorious idolaters, the Babylonians. Stephen notes how they were carried away to Babylon. The conquest of Jerusalem occurred in 586 BC. Jews were deported back to the birthplace of idolatry, the land of Babel. There they lived in pagan exile for 70 years. It’s interesting this was the vaccination that cured Israel of idolatry. In Babel they developed such an abhorrence for idols they never again followed them. Upon their return to the land they had a new problem, *hypocrisy* not *idolatry*.

Verse 44 **“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the**

pattern that he had seen, which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David...” Remember Stephen was accused of disrespecting the Temple. The Tabernacle was its predecessor. To speak against either was tantamount to blasphemy against God. The Jews were proud of their Temple. They thought it was a sign of God’s favor. As long as the Temple stood, Israel was assured of God’s blessing. But Stephen is about to show them why this was a false assumption.

The Tabernacle stood until David... but then God did a new thing... verse 46, David inquired about a Temple. “who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built Him a house. However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?’ Stephen quotes Isaiah 66:1-2. He contends that the God of Israel was never confined to a Temple. He is far bigger than a Temple. God made the universe – the earth is just His footstool. God will continue His work in the world with or without a Temple.

Be careful you don’t try to confine God to a Temple – or put God in a box! Religious people like to limit God’s domain to the four walls of the church. That’s ridiculous! God is Lord over the workplace and ballpark and home life and political arena. God refuses all limitations. Never try to tell Him what He can and cannot do.

Too many Christians forget that God is bigger than our programs and traditions. He does as He pleases - where and when and how He pleases.

Stephen turns up the heat in verse 51. He says to his accusers, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.” Jews were circumcised. Gentiles were uncircumcised. But Stephen calls these Jews “uncircumcised in heart and ears.” They were insensitive and dull of hearing toward God. He calls them “stiff-necked” or unbending, inflexible. They were resistant to the Holy Spirit. God wants to do a new work in our lives... have you been resistant?

“Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?” The answer was none. Every time God *raised up* a man the nation tried to *put him down*. Once, they tried to stone Moses. They sought to murder Jeremiah and on several occasions threw him into prison. They killed the Prophet Zechariah in the Temple. And after sticking Isaiah in a tree trunk they sawed him in half. Yet after they were gone, they revered these wonderful men of God. They were a nation of hypocrites. And Stephen lets them have it with both barrels...

He says, “And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One...” This was a term for Messiah. They killed the prophets who spoke of Jesus. And “now (you) have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.” The Angel of Lord had led them. Angels gave them the Law. *They had angelic help...* The Jews knew the truth... but they were too stubborn to obey.

And how does the crowd respond to Stephen’s sermon? Verse 54, “When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with *their teeth*.” They snarled. They looked like pit bulls in clerical robes. “But (Stephen), being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” Suddenly, the physical peels back, and Stephen peers into the eternal realm. He views the throne

room of God and it's amazing what he sees... *"The Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"*

Mark 16:19 speaks of Jesus' ascension into heaven. "After the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God." Notice Jesus *"sat down."* Every time we read of His heavenly, high priestly ministry Jesus is *seated* at the right hand of the throne of God. Except here... The assumption is that Jesus is so excited about the faith and faithfulness of Stephen He rises to His feet to welcome him home. Stephen sees Jesus *"standing at the right hand of God."*

Verse 57, *"Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord (they rushed him); and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul."* Apparently, this Saul had been the ringleader. *"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep."* In Stephen's final hour, he quoted Jesus in his final hour. Stephen maintained a Christ-like attitude to the very end! What a witness for Jesus! It's been said, *"The blood of the martyrs becomes the seeds of the church."* And it's true. Stephen's death caused a young rabbi to consider Christ...

Chapter 8, *"Now Saul was consenting to his death."* This was the *"Saul"* who later changed his name to *Paul*. Isn't it interesting, Stephen's Jewish executioner became Christianity's apostle to the Gentiles. There's no doubt Paul was part of Stephen's legacy. Stephen's testimony haunted Rabbi Saul. He probably mulled it over. God used it to soften the rabbi's heart.

We're told Saul consented to Stephen's death. The word *"consenting"* could be translated *"voting."* It implies that Saul was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court, which condemned Stephen to death. We know that marriage was one of the requirements of being a member of the Sanhedrin. At the time Paul was probably married and had children.

Yet in 1 Corinthians 7:8 Paul wished everyone was single, as he was. What happened to his wife? Most scholars feel that Paul was abandoned. Even today, when a Jew converts to Christianity it's still common for them to be renounced by their families. Paul paid a steep price to follow Jesus.

Verse 1 adds, *"At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."* Thousands of believers were now worshipping together in Jerusalem... *The fellowship was sweet - the miracles mighty - the growth was explosive - the grace was attractive - the Spirit's power was tangible and thrilling.* There was *high energy* and *great harmony*. Jerusalem was a happening church! Yet these believers were so buzzed with what God was doing *inside the Church* they'd forgotten what He wanted to do *outside the Church*. They were neglecting Jesus' parting commands. In Acts 1:8 He said, *"You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* The disciples were shaking up Jerusalem, but what about the rest of Judea - and up the road in Samaria? Not to mention, to the ends of the earth? Enough with the *fellowship*. It's time to *ship out!*

The church was a *holy huddle*. It was time to *"break"* and run the play. In Acts 1:8 God said "Go..." - now in Acts 8:1 He shoves the infant church out of the nest and forces her to fly. God allows a little persecution to get some houses on the market and move out a few reluctant missionaries. In Acts 2 the Spirit cultivated fellowship within the Church. But now the Spirit breaks up the fellowship and focuses the Church on

evangelism. Fellowship is important, but we'll spend eternity with each other. We've only got a few short hours left to reach this fallen world with the Gospel.

Verse 2 **"And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison."** Saul had **"gnashed"** his teeth, but he'd also been **"cut to the heart."** Saul couldn't shake Stephen's witness, so he decided to strike out against it. Saul was a proud, stubborn Jew who couldn't believe God was doing a new work. How could a carpenter from Nazareth eclipse the prized traditions of Judaism? Why would the Spirit of God make His home the hearts of Galilean fishermen, instead of the glorious Temple in Jerusalem?

Saul was stiff-necked. His teacher Rabbi Gamaliel had said if this new movement was not of God it would go away. But it wasn't going away. It was multiplying and Saul couldn't stand the thought he could be wrong. So he decides to make it go away. He mounts a ferocious attack against the church. We're told Saul, **"made havoc of the church."** The Greek word translated **"havoc"** is a verb that describes **"a wild animal mangling its prey."** Apparently, Saul went berserk with hatred. He turned into a rabid dog. He spent every waking moment plotting the extermination of Christianity.

"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word." I'm sure when persecution *intensified* the believers *wondered why*... But God had a reason. He lit a fire under them to move them out. **"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them."** Miracles will occur, but what came first was Christ-centered preaching. This is always the first wave of a spiritual awakening – the preaching of God's Word. Mark 16 tells us where the Gospel is preached signs will follow.

Notice too, here's another faithful deacon taking on bigger responsibilities. Like Stephen, Philip also goes from table waiter to missionary and evangelist. He heads to Samaria. And this was a place where Jesus had paved the way. It was here that Jesus promised the woman at the well a drink of living water. Afterwards he stayed two days. We're told in John 4:39, **"Many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him."** Jesus was known in Samaria. But this was new territory for the Church. The Samaritan people were not considered Jewish. They were interracial: *part Assyrian, part Jew*. Judaism had been for Jews, but everyone was about to realize that Christianity is for all mankind. The Samaritans were the first cross-cultural mission field...

Verse 6, **"And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed."** The miracles seen in the ministry of Jesus – and in the Church at Jerusalem – were now happening in Samaria. God was doing a new work among a new people group! Notice too, Philip was not an apostle, yet he worked miracles. Don't think God's power is reserved for a few. *Who knows how God wants to use you?*

And verse 8 records the result, **"And there was great joy in that city."** There's always great joy where the *Word of God* and the *Spirit of God* combine to produce the *work of God*. It's been said, **"A church with the Spirit without the Word will blow up. A church with the Word without the Spirit will dry up. But a church with the Spirit working through the Word will grow up."** And that's what was happening in Samaria. Verse 9, **"But..."**

