

Acts 8

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Tape #8097
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Acts, chapter eight. Last week at the end of chapter seven, we were introduced to a young man by the name of Saul, who was a participant in the stoning of Stephen in that he consented to his death and he sort of watched the coats of the fellows who were stoning Stephen to death. They laid their coats at a young man's feet whose name was Saul. Again in the beginning of chapter eight, we again meet this man Saul. It is interesting as we go on into the Book of Acts that he will become one of the major characters of the early church.

But in chapter eight we find, *Now Saul was consenting to his death. 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.* It would seem that Paul was one of the ringleaders spearheading this persecution against the church. We read in verse three, ³*As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.* In the eleventh chapter, we're told, *Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose after Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.* An interesting thing about this. They that were persecuted were scattered all over. Everywhere they went they were preaching Christ, they were witnessing the resurrection of Jesus. So though the persecution was heavy against the church, yet God used this persecution to spread the church throughout the whole area. It was and is always nice and comfortable to be surrounded by a strong body of people where we feel and draw strength from each other. We feel the strength that comes from a strong fellowship. Sometimes the fellowship is so good, a relationship so close, that we feel that we never want to leave this place. And that was the case there in Jerusalem. It was exciting. The Spirit of God was moving. There were miracles being wrought. It was a real movement of God. A lot of people were anxious to become a part of that movement of God. They were content just to stay there and enjoy what God was doing. God allowed the persecution in order that they might be spread abroad through the whole area in order that the gospel might be spread as they had to flee the persecution in Jerusalem. So God's hand was in the persecution. Now they went to Antioch and they preached at the beginning only to the Jews, but then later some came from Cyprus. We know that Barnabas was from Cyprus. They preached to the Grecians or the Gentiles and many believed. Now as the work of God began among the Gentiles in Antioch, Barnabas then went to Tarsus where Saul more or less had gone into a sort of a state of seclusion, in a sense. We will get his conversion in chapter nine. And after his conversion he came to the church in Jerusalem but they really were too interested in him. He sort of got the brush off, the cold shoulder from the church in Jerusalem. So he went back to his home town of Tarsus. Now Barnabas who was active in this move of God in the Gentiles in Antioch, then went to Tarsus to look for Saul, because he realized that Saul had the ideal kind of background to deal with the Grecians or the Gentiles who were coming to Christ in Antioch. So finding Saul, he brought him to the church in Antioch and Saul, whose name had been changed to Paul, and Barnabas became really the spiritual leaders of this Gentile church in Antioch. You see Paul grew up in Tarsus. And in growing up in Tarsus, he became acquainted with the Grecian culture. However, being raised in a Jewish home and then coming to Jerusalem to go to school under the rabbi, Gamaliel, he became very versed in the Hebrew culture and in the Hebrew scriptures. Here you have a man well versed in the scriptures, yet knowing well, the Grecian culture. So he is able and ideally fit by the Lord to have this great ministry among the Gentiles, which we will read about in the Book of Acts as we continue. But the thing that sort of interests me, Saul was one of the chief persecutors that caused the people to flee as far as Antioch where the gospel was preached and then later that's where Paul came back in order to begin his ministry right there in Antioch. So God has an interesting way of just sort of working things around and it's fun to watch God as He works these things. So

through the persecution of Saul, the work was started in Antioch, which he later came back to become a key leader.

In Acts 22:20, Paul is sharing his testimony to the Jews there in Jerusalem. He had come back to Jerusalem, desiring to be there for the feast. He had collected from the Gentile churches, support for the church in Jerusalem that was going through hard times financially. While he was there James said, now Paul, you are a controversial character. Even the Jews within the church had difficulty with Paul's liberty in Christ and his openness to share with the Gentiles. So James said, now look Paul, we don't you stirring up trouble. People are suspicious about you and all so show them that you are a good Jewish boy. We have a couple of young fellows that want to observe the feast and they have to go through these purification rites as Paul had to go through too. Why don't you sponsor them? Because in going through the purification rites, you really couldn't work. You just had to devote yourself fully to this purification bit so that you could complete it. Why don't you cover their expenses so that when people will say, what's he doing here, we can say, oh well a good Jewish boy he is actually covering the expenses of the other young fellows that wanted to observe the feasts and all. So Paul wanting to, his sort of motto was, as he told us in Romans, live peaceably with all men as much as depends on you. When I am with the Jews, I can be like a Jew. When I'm with the Gentiles or Romans I can be like the Romans. I'm all things to all men that I might gain the more. He had that non confrontive kind of a thing. You know, just flow with it. It doesn't matter. Sure, I'll do that. But while he was there on the temple grounds, some of the Jews that had come across his path in Asia, where he had been preaching to the Gentiles, said this is the guy that's preaching among the Gentiles. And he is a Jew! What's he doing here in the temple? So they said he's brought Gentiles into the temple, which was not true. But they started beating him up. The Roman guard that was there at the Antonio Fortress, saw the tumult down in the temple mount. They came down and they rescued Paul out of the hands of these irate Jews. So as they came back to the Antonio Fortress, Paul was under protective custody of the Roman soldiers, as they got upon the porch there above the Jews that were on the mount down below, Paul said to the captain, can I speak to them a minute? He said sure, go ahead. So Paul said, hey, fellows, you are my brothers. I know where you're at. I was just like you. And he began to try to relate to them because a lot of them had been students under Gamaliel with him. My classmates. I know how you feel. I felt that way once myself. And he went on to share with them, when the blood of the martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by and consenting to his death and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him. So Paul is trying to identify with them and let them identify with him so that he could share with them his wonderful conversion to Jesus Christ.

In the twenty second chapter, (Acts 22:3-4) as he began to talk to them, he said, I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. And he said (Acts 26:9) I thought that I should do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which I did in Jerusalem and many of the saints I shut up in prison having received the authority from the chief priests when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. I voted against them. And I punished them in every synagogue (this is in his testimony to King Agrippa), and I compelled them to blaspheme. And being exceedingly angry against them, I persecuted them unto strange cities.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said (1 Corinthians 15:9), For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be call an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. Later on it bothered Paul, that he had actually forced people to blaspheme the name of Jesus. He actually imprisoned people and voted for their death. To the Galatians he wrote (Galatians 1:13), For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. In his letter to the Philippians as he is sort of giving his background (Philippians 3:6), he said, concerning zeal, persecuting the church. And in 1 Timothy (1 Timothy 1:13), although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an

insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. The background of the great apostle Paul, whom God used in such a mighty way and of course, to whom we are so indebted as Gentile believers as we have these tremendous epistles of Paul, upon which our church doctrine is heavily based. The writings and the teachings of Paul give us a tremendous foundation for our theology today. So in chapter eight we again get a little glimpse of him, of his persecution of the church. In chapter nine we'll get into his conversion on the road to Damascus.

We read here in verse two, as far as Stephen is concerned, *2And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.* It was a real shock to the church, that Stephen, chosen as one of the seven, to a position of trustworthiness within the church was stoned to death.

4Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. 5Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. Now here again, he is not an apostle. He was what might be classified as a deacon in the church. His was originally, not a spiritual ministry as much as it was just taking care of distributing the church's goods, seeing that the people were being taken care of. It's interesting how many fellows are in the ministry today around the country who were once the janitors here at Calvary Chapel. They were faithful in their ministry as janitors and God opened up the doors for them and today they are ministering for Jesus Christ around the country, having powerful and strong ministry. This past week, Pastor Chuck gathered with many of the leading pastors of the Calvary Chapels around the country. It was interesting to see these fellows and to realize that once they were just the kids around here, picking up papers and doing the menial tasks. Now God is using them powerfully in the ministry.

So here's Philip, again not an apostle, but yet faithful where God has placed him and now God is using him in a very powerful way. God, through him is working miracles. And the people are being attracted and drawn because of the miracles. He tells us what was happening, for *7For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8And there was great joy in that city.* You know that wherever God is working, one of the byproducts of the work of God is joy. What a joy it is to see God at work! It's just a thrill! And it's so wonderful to just see the hand of God at work. So often through the New Testament, the result of the work of God's Spirit in a person's life is joy! It is interesting as Paul speaks (Galatians 5:22) of the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, the first characteristic of this love, he said, is joy. There is just such joy! And so there was great joy in that city of Samaria.

9But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, (He was sort of mystic. He was able to do things that cause wonderment among people. They all of them sort of held him in esteem and some recognizing that there was some kind of spiritual powers about this man,) *10to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." (He has God's power) 11And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. 12But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.* (They were leaving their adulation and all, of this Simon and were being attracted to this ministry of Philip. They were baptized both men and women.) *13Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.* Now he was probably using a lot of slight of hand, illusion and all. When he saw Philip he probably tried to figure out, how did he do that one, you know? It is interesting how that those fellows who are called magicians, of course we all know that there is a trick to it. But they use a slight of

hand and all. They see a magician that does an interesting trick. They try to figure it out and they actually sell the secret to each other, how the trick is done. It is a marketable item. If you have a great trick and all, it's a marketable item among those whose are practicing the art of magic. So he was probably trying to figure out. Now just what is he doing?

¹⁴*Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem* Remember they stayed in Jerusalem. They were powerful enough that they didn't have to bend to the persecution. They remained in Jerusalem. You remember that the religious leaders were afraid to arrest Jesus openly because so many people were drawn to him and believed in him that they had to conspire to Judas to catch him when no one was around and to get the whole thing over before people realized what was happening. Now with the apostles, there was such a power of God working among them. So many peoples' lives had been touched and so many friends had been healed, that the religious leaders were sort of helpless to do much about them. So they were more or less were free to remain in Jerusalem so just the little nobodies like us had to scatter all over the place. So the apostles in Jerusalem *heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,* ¹⁵*who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.* ¹⁶*For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Now this is interesting to me. Here is Philip. God is using him with miracles, with signs and wonders, delivering people from demonic powers. The lame are walking. A marvelous work of the Spirit through Philip and yet the people had not yet received the Holy Spirit. And the interesting thing to me is that Philip, evidently, did not have that gift of laying his hands on people that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Peter and John did. But here is Philip with other gifts, but not that particular gift. Paul the apostle in talking about the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, points out the fact that the Holy Spirit divides the gifts to each man, severally, as He will, but not all have the gift of healing, not all have the gift of an evangelist, not all have the gift of speaking in tongues, not all have the gift of interpretation of tongues, so that here is Philip, gifted, powerfully gifted of the Spirit but yet not in this particular realm. So it is possible for you to have gifts of the Spirit but not all the gifts of the Spirit. Thus we each share what God has done in our lives. We each contribute what God has given unto us but we are all the body of Christ and whatever gift you have is important for the whole body. God has given to me certain gifts. I recognize those gifts that God has given to me and I am very appreciative of the gifts that God has given. There are gifts that I wish I had that I do not have. And I have coveted earnestly some of these other gifts but God has seen fit not to give them to me. But God has given to others within the fellowship some of these other gifts. They are all important and together we make up the whole body. But none of us individually make up the body. It takes all of us to make up the whole body of Christ. And a lot of times people feel, well my gift is so unimportant and nobody knows what God is doing in my life. They have a tendency because their gift is not a prominent type of gift where it receives public kind of attention. They think that it's not important. There are many people here who have the gift of intercessory prayer. I think that that is probably one of the most important gifts at Calvary Chapel and it's what keeps us going more than anything else. Those with the gift of intercessory prayer. Oh, what an asset, what a blessing they are! And we all benefit, but you don't know who they are. But God has chosen to place the greater honor on some of these whose gifts are not prominent, recognized, but those who are faithful in the exercise of their gifts, which are not really prominent or outstanding as far as the church is concerned, but God has chosen to place on them the greater beauty of their gifts. So we each one of us exercise the gifts that God has given.

My gift is a gift of teaching, so I am sort of a mouth in the body and the mouth always gets attention. Yet when we come before the Lord we always think that those who are in a more prominent position, boy when we stand before the Lord to receive the reward for the things done in the body, man, he's going to be right up there at the top, oh boy, you know! No, no. Those that are right up there at the top, you are going to be surprised. You're going to say, who are they? Where did they come from? I never saw them before. And God has chosen to bestow on them the more abundant glory. And way back somewhere in the peanut

gallery you might find me, if you look hard enough. It's amazing, we're going to have a lot of surprises when we get to heaven. Jesus said (Matthew 6:6), When you pray go into the closet and shut the door. Pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. That day will come! When God will reward you for the faithfulness in the exercise of that gift that He has given you to benefit the whole church.

So Peter and John came. They had the gift of the laying on of hands that people might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. Now, notice they were believers. They had been baptized, which would mean that the Holy Spirit was in them, but He had not fallen, *epi*, upon them. And this Greek preposition, *epi*, is used to describe a relationship to the Holy Spirit, where He comes over you. Or overflows from you. You see, it is one thing to have the Holy Spirit in you, doing His work within. That work of conforming you into the image of Jesus Christ. That's one thing, the Spirit dwelling in you. It's quite another thing to have the Spirit flowing forth from you. The dynamic that flows forth from your life. This is what they were receiving. This releasing of the Holy Spirit where He is not just within, but where He is flowing forth from. What Jesus described (John 7:37) when He said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." Or there will gush torrents of living water and John tells us, this He was speaking of the Spirit, which was not yet given (the overflow), because Jesus was not yet glorified. And so as Peter and John would lay their hands on the people, they would receive this releasing, this overflowing of the Holy Spirit from their lives.

So ¹⁷*Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.* ¹⁸*And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,* ¹⁹*saying, "Give me this power also, (You see, he was a magician and he sees now this interesting thing. I would like to buy that trick.) that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."* This is known as "Simony", from his name Simon. It became a curse in the church. That is the buying of position, to have power within the church. There was a period in the Catholic church from about 984 to about the year 1012, where the office of the pope was sold to the highest bidders. They didn't last long in those days. The popes' times in office were very short. They were purchased. There was open bribery and all. They were selling the church offices. It was part of the dark ages, is why they were called the dark ages. For instance Pope John XIX, who was the pope from 1024 to 1033, bought the papacy. He passed through all the necessary clerical decrees in one day. Pope Benedict IX, was made the pope when he was just twelve years old through a money bargain with the powerful families that ruled Rome, he of course, was one of the most wicked of all the popes. Some call him the worst of the popes. Here was that thought that sort of seeking to purchase position and power.

²⁰*But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!"* There are many people today who think that God's favor can be purchased with money. That God's gifts could be purchased with money. I cringe when on some of the telethons, they give a very strong suggestion because someone donated a certain amount of money, that a relative that they were praying for so many years had gotten saved, after they had made their donation. And the intimation is that you can maybe buy God's gifts. You can buy healing for a friend or you know, you can purchase salvation for a loved one. It gives that kind of suggestion, which is blasphemy, absolute blasphemy! And the very thing that Peter rebuked Simon and was so heavy on him for the suggestion that God's gifts can be purchased. It's a heavy duty thing. There are people who try to purchase salvation. They think that by a great contribution to the church that, you know, they will stand in good stead with God. Some of the greatest contributors to the church in New York and New Jersey and all, are the Mafia. And they are trying to, you know, I gave to the church. And unfortunately sometimes the church sort of curries that. Not so!

The gifts of God are not to be bartered! They are not to be sold! They are imparted by the grace of God as the Spirit sovereignly dispenses them.

So Peter said, ²¹*You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.* Now here Peter is exercising another gift. The gift of discernment of Spirit. Here Simon was attracted to the ministries that Philip had. He was baptized and he was sort of accompanying Philip, but all the while he was inside looking again for that recognition that he once had among the people as they were looking up to him as some great spiritual man. And now with the genuine power of God being manifested through Philip, that attention and glory that he once had was given being transferred to Jesus Christ. So he is wanting again to have that kind of power over the people, thinking that maybe he can purchase it from Peter and John. But Peter discerns his heart. Your heart is not right in the sight of God.

So Peter said, ²²*Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.* The motive. Why, do I want these things? What is the motive of my heart? And that is something that we don't always know ourselves. For the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, the Scripture says, who can know it? But God says I search the heart. And in searching the heart of this fellow, Simon, it was full of gall and bitterness and bound by iniquity. ²³*For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."* ²⁴*Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me."* ²⁵*So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.* Going back to Jerusalem, they stopped in many of the villages, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

²⁶*Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.* ²⁷*So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, (So he was the treasurer of the nation of Ethiopia) and had come to Jerusalem to worship,* ²⁸*was returning.* There was a yearning for God, which is universal and in his search and quest for God, he came to Jerusalem. And there he got the Scriptures and he was heading back towards Ethiopia, still searching. I do believe that God does honor the heart that is searching after Him. And I believe that God will reveal Himself to that honest heart that is truly seeking Him.

There are many interesting stories of tribal groups, people, in remote areas of the world, who when the missionaries came to share with them the truth of Jesus Christ, the people have said, we've always believed in Him. We just didn't know His name! God had revealed. And I believe that God is faithful to reveal Himself to every hungry heart. God saw this man as he journeyed from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to find God. God saw this man in his disappointment in Jerusalem because the religious system had become corrupted. It had become commercialized. And he was going back to Ethiopia, not having found God. But God willing that this man should know Him, spoke to Philip up in Samaria in the midst of this marvelous move of God and commands him to go down to this road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza. It goes through desert areas. *And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.* ²⁹*Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."* There, when he arrived, he saw the chariot. God said join yourself to the chariot. ³⁰*So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"* ³¹*And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.* ³²*The place in the Scripture which he read was this:*

*"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.*

*33 In His humiliation His justice was taken away,
And who will declare His generation?
For His life is taken from the earth."*

34 So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" (Who is the prophet talking about? Himself or someone else? The particular passage of Isaiah that he was reading was in Isaiah 53. That whole fifty third chapter, of course, is speaking of Jesus Christ. It's speaking of His death. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. With His stripes we are healed. In His humiliation, His justice was taken away. He was reading this passage of Isaiah 53. You might say oh it is fortunate that he was reading this passage. No you can read anywhere in the Old Testament and find Jesus.)

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. You can do that with any verse in the Old Testament. You can start at that verse and preach Jesus because the Old Testament is all about Jesus Christ. You do search the Scriptures, Jesus said, for in them you think you have life. But actually they testify of Me. But you won't come to Me, Jesus said, that you might have life. Paul speaks (2 Corinthians 3:6) about how the letter of the law kills, but the Spirit gives life. Just a study of the Scriptures, intellectually, will not benefit you. You need the Holy Spirit to open up the Scriptures to your heart to give you true understanding of the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 2:14-15) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. I would take one of our junior high school children who has been studying the Bible and love the Lord fervently, filled with the Spirit, and I would trust their understanding of the Scripture, much more than I would, the PhD's who are teaching religion at USC. Because the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit neither can he know them. They are spiritually discerned. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will teach you all things. And we need the help and the guidance of the Holy Spirit because Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes, He will not testify of Himself but He will testify of me. And as you read the Word with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, He shows you Jesus in the Scriptures all the way through. *35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.*

36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" *37 Then 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 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, (notice that, it was not sprinkling the guy) and he baptized him.* *39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.* Now remember in Samaria they were filled with joy. Now this man is going his way rejoicing. That is just the response, the reaction, that we have. That of joy in our hearts when the Lord has done a work in our lives.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus. (Now Azotus is just north of Ashdod and south from Joppa) *And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.* So he stopped in Joppa and in all of the little cities on his way up to Caesarea. He finally settled in Caesarea. Later on when Paul is coming to Jerusalem, he stops and he stays with Philip, there in Caesarea. It became sort of where he settled down and lived. We don't read anymore of the ministry of Philip in Caesarea. We do know that he had seven daughters who had the gift of prophecy so he was raising a spiritual family there. But nothing else is told of his ministry except we know that he went to Caesarea. Now later on in the next chapter, Peter is going to be called to Joppa to pray for a lady who had died, whose name was Dorcas. There was the church there in Joppa that called Peter. How is it that a church existed? Probably if you look at a map from Azotus to

Caesarea, he had to pass through Joppa. And he was preaching in every one of the villages all the way up, no doubt, establishing works for the Lord that went on. And so it will be interesting when we get to heaven and we get the full story of Philip and all that the Lord did through this man as he was used of God in the revival in Samaria in such a powerful way. But the interesting thing is that he didn't stay in Samaria. God moved him on. God doesn't always leave a person in a place. God will have you there for a time to accomplish a particular ministry and when it's completed then God will move you on, as He did with Philip, but then he finally came to Caesarea where he did settle down. He raised his family and continued active in the Christian circle, but to what extent we really don't know.

So we move on now into chapter nine, where we see Paul and we read of his conversion, a very remarkable and wonderful thing. And then Peter's visit to Joppa and then we'll take chapter ten, Peter taking the gospel to Caesarea. And that's an interesting thing too, Peter taking gospel to Caesarea to the house of Cornelius the centurion. And you wonder whether Philip had not yet arrived in Caesarea because he had to send down to Joppa to get Peter to come on up. A lot of interesting things. I love the Book of Acts. It's a fascinating history of the early church and of the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church. How we need today the work of the Holy Spirit in the church. It was a sad day when men decided that the Holy Spirit was limited to the early apostolic period as far as miracles and healings and empowering. It was just to give the early church impetus, a start, sort of a jump start. Once we got organized and all we didn't need the Holy Spirit any longer because now we have seminaries and other institutions by which we can train men. We no longer need to depend on the Holy Spirit. What a tragic and sad thing. And it's reflected in the condition of the church. It's exciting again to see what God can do through dedicated lives without formal education. Just with the zeal and the love for Jesus Christ. What the Lord can do. And God can use you! Don't limit God. He wants to use you. Just how He wants to use you is something that you need to determine. You need to wait upon God and seek God until God shows you just how He desires to use your life as a witness for Jesus Christ. And it's always a joy to see God work!

Father, we thank You today for the work of Your Holy Spirit in the early church. And Lord, we pray and seek You for the work of the Holy Spirit in Your church today in a greater measure that we've ever seen before. Lord we ask that we might be open to the Holy Spirit. To be empowered by the Spirit to serve You in a more effective way. Lord, even as the Holy Spirit sovereignly dispensed to those in the early church the various gifts, so Lord, dispense to us those gifts of Your Holy Spirit whereby we might have a stronger witness to the world of the resurrection of Jesus. Fill us Lord, until it overflows like a river of living water. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.