



Cases of Conversion: The Samaritans

The early church did not let severe persecution stand in their way. Even after the death of Stephen (recorded in Acts 7), the church remained faithful to Christ and continued to preach the word (Acts 8:1-4). One such evangelist was Philip.

Philip took the gospel to the ancient city of Samaria. This city was filled with history. It was often the home city of the northern kingdom during the days of the divided kingdom. It was also within the area of Samaria, a land and people despised by pure-blooded Jews at the time (John 4:9). Yet, Philip preached the gospel "to all nations" as Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). The message of Christ was not for certain parties, but for all (Romans 1:16).

So, the first step in the conversion of the people of Samaria was preaching. After all, Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Thus, we read in Acts 8:5, "...Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them."

Of course, preaching involves communication. Its message is sounded forth by Christians (1 Thessalonians 1:8). Yet, its hearers may respond in belief or unbelief. In the city of Samaria, their reaction is recorded in Acts 8:6, "And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."

Notice the people of Samaria did not stop at belief. Acts 8:9-12 offers a contrast. Previously, they believed Simon the sorcerer (falsely assuming he was a great power of God), but now they believed Philip and His preaching.

After this belief and repentance was anything else to be done? Verse 12 continues saying, "...both men and women were baptized." Verse 13 even notes the baptism of Simon himself! Hear, believe, repent, confess your faith and be baptized so you might be saved just as our ancient brothers and sisters were from the city of Samaria!

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