

## 20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning Week 33 (August 11-17, 2013)

We will continue to study miracles done by the Spirit-filled apostles as recorded in the Book of Acts.

### **Sunday** -- August 11 (Acts 5:1-11)

The 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts ends with Barnabas (Son of Encouragement) selling a field and bringing the proceeds to the apostles (4:32-37). Apparently, Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, are jealous of this act and desire to get **personal recognition** for doing the same. Unfortunately, they try to deceive the church into thinking that they are giving **everything**, yet they keep part of the money for personal use (v. 1-2). No one asked them to sell the property nor did anyone require them to give the entire proceeds. Seeking personal glory, they lie to the Holy Spirit (v. 3-4). Don't miss the truth that the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity is also God! The Lord strikes the couple dead for trying to use their gift for personal fame (v. 5-11). I include this among God's miracles because He still works to protect the integrity of His church against anyone who tries to use his/her giving to control the direction of the ministry or for self-glorification.

### **Monday** -- August 12 (Acts 5:12-16)

Today's text shows the power of God working through unschooled, ordinary men (see Acts 4:12). The apostles' lives had been transformed when the Holy Spirit entered them, just as Jesus had promised (see Acts 1:4-5 & 2:1-13). God's anointing on Peter is so powerful that sick folks are healed when his shadow falls on them (v. 15). That same power is available to anyone today who trusts Him completely. Peter fell flat on his face when he denied Jesus three times before the servant girl (see Matthew 26:69-75), but he allowed the Lord to reinstate him (see John 21:15-22) and empower him with the Spirit. What about you? Are you willing to allow Him to cleanse the failures of your past so that you can serve Him today? Are you willing to let go and let God have His way? Spiritual healing is available to all who ask!

### **Tuesday** -- August 13 (Acts 8:4-8)

The miracles in today's study are done, not by an apostle, but rather by Philip, one of the seven deacons chosen to assist the apostles (see Acts 6:1-7). The church has been scattered due to persecutions, but God uses these trials to spread the gospel (v. 4). Philip leaves Jerusalem (8:1) and goes to Samaria to preach the good news (v. 5). The pure blooded Jews consider Samaritans to be half-breeds and hold them in contempt, but that is not modeled by Jesus. The Samaritans are the heroes in stories told by our Lord (see Luke 10:25-37). Many people are miraculously healed of various infirmities (v. 6-7). This is going to open the door to a **spiritual revival** among the citizens of Samaria. Are you allowing the Lord to use you? Are you willing to go where He sends you, even if it is to folks you do not currently respect? God has something to say to you today. Listen closely as He speaks!

### **Wednesday** -- August 14 (Acts 8:9-13)

Before Philip arrives in Samaria, Simon (the sorcerer) has amazed the citizens by his magic tricks, bringing him much fame (v. 9-12). Satan always tries to counterfeit the miracles of God by his own performances, just as we saw in Monday's devotions. The people, however, believe Philip as he preaches about Jesus and His kingdom and they follow through with a Christian baptism (v. 12). Amazingly, Simon also accepts Jesus (perhaps for selfish reasons), because, after deceiving the people with **counterfeit miracles** for some time, he is amazed when he observes **true miracles**. Poor Simon has a lot to learn about living for Jesus as we will see tomorrow, but our Lord is willing to receive **anyone** just as they are. He never leaves them the way He finds them; He begins to clean up their lives so that they can **serve Him!**

### **Thursday** -- August 15 (Acts 8:14-25)

I believe that God uses the Apostles, Peter and John, to lay hands on the new believers so that the church in Jerusalem will be united with the new converts in Samaria (v. 14-17). Others teach that only **the apostles** could affirm full salvation. Even today, the Spirit does not always manifest His full power immediately following baptism. Simon wants this ability too, so he offers money to purchase a gift that is not for sale (v. 18-19). It takes no imagination to translate Peter's reply into today's language (v. 20). The powerful apostle declares Simon's conversion to be counterfeit and calls on him to repent (v. 21-23). Eternity will tell whether this sorcerer and magician truly repented (v. 24). Many, like Simon, try to use Jesus for their personal gain. God declares in Isaiah 42:8, "I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols." Be sure that you do the **right thing** for the **right reason!**

### **Friday** -- August 16 (Acts 8:26-40)

Read this entire story today and prepare to spend two days studying it. God calls Philip from a great revival in Samaria to go into the **desert** to witness to **one man** (v. 26-27). Jesus loves each individual so much that He is willing to interrupt a powerful work in order to save a single person who is seeking Truth. This eunuch from Ethiopia is in charge of the treasury for Queen Candace. He is walking in all the spiritual light he has, so, with all the knowledge he currently possesses, he has journeyed to Jerusalem to worship God (v. 27). (**All** who obey what they already know will be given more Truth—1 John 1:7) God has led the eunuch to be reading the Old Testament's most powerful picture of Jesus (Isaiah 53) as Philip arrives (v. 28). I love the non-threatening question the Spirit leads God's evangelist to ask (v. 29-30). This question motivates the eunuch to invite Philip into the chariot where he leads the man to Jesus. We will complete this beautiful story in tomorrow's devotions.

### **Saturday** -- August 17 (Acts 8:26-40)

The eunuch, like so many seekers today, does not understand that the powerful passage from Isaiah 53 points directly to the coming Messiah (v. 32-34). Philip begins right where the man is and leads him to the Lord (v. 35). If only we could learn to **listen** to what the seeker wants to know, our job of witnessing would be easier and more fruitful. God places an **oasis** in the middle of the desert so that the eunuch can be baptized upon his acceptance of Jesus (v. 36-38). (Verse 37 was added later for clarity and only appears in the footnote of the NIV.) Upon completion of the baptism, the Spirit takes Philip away and returns him to his family in Caesarea (see Acts 21:8). The eunuch must place his faith in Philip's Savior, not in the deacon, himself (v. 39-40).