

Christians without Borders

Key Verse: “When the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.”

—Acts 8:14

Selected Scripture:
Acts 8:4-25

PHILIP, ALONG WITH STE-

phen and five others, were chosen as deacons. As there were many Philips mentioned in the Scriptures, we need to identify this Philip of Acts, chapter six, as an evangelist. Besides the fulfilling of the duties of serving tables and watching over the widows, these deacons had broad powers in witnessing and performing miracles. (chap. 8:6,7) These miracles were to

cease, and in the main did, after the death of the apostles. (I Cor. 13:8) After the death of Stephen, Philip went to Samaria where he preached Christ to those of that area. We read that he cast out unclean spirits, cured those stricken with palsies, and healed those who were lame.

We find the deacons' duties outlined in I Timothy 3:8-13. As opportunities arose, they would also preach the Gospel and be helpers to the elders. Timothy outlines that an elder should be “apt to teach” (vs. 2), while a deacon's responsibilities lie in learning and being a good example. “They that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing.”—vs. 13, *American Standard Version*

In Acts 8, we find a man called Simon practicing sorcery and bewitching the people, saying that he was someone great. The people had given this man heed, saying his power was from God. After Philip preached to those in Samaria they believed concerning the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ. Many were baptized both men and women. (Acts 8:12) Simon also believed and was baptized; however, we find that Simon's heart was not right.

After the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John who prayed that the people might receive the Holy Spirit. (vs. 15) Up to this time none had received the Spirit. Simon saw what was happening, and coveted this power that had been give to the apostles, and offered them money. Peter said to Simon, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."—vs. 20

Today, the Holy Spirit is not given by the laying on of hands but through a full consecration and a laying down of life itself as Christ laid down his life.—Rom. 12:1,2; 8:9-11,14-16; Matt. 16:24,25

Peter pointed out to Simon that he must repent and pray to God that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven. (Acts 8:22) Peter could see that Simon's heart was wrong and that he only wanted the power of the apostles to make himself someone to be looked up to. Mark 7:21 reads, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts." Simon only wanted exaltation and power to sway the people. Satan is very busy trying to deceive the hearts of God's people. Paul tells us regarding Satan, "We are not ignorant of his devices."—II Cor. 2:11

We find that Simon didn't pray to God to be forgiven but asked the apostles to do it for him. This again showed a wrong heart condition. After this the Word of God was preached in many villages of the Samaritans.—Acts 8:25 ■