

Subject	Lessons from Acts Series	4408
		Acts 8
Title	7 Lessons from Acts 8	
Proposition	To study Acts 8.	
Objective	To consider seven lessons which Acts 8 helps me to consider and appreciate and apply in my own life.	

7 Lessons from Acts 8

Introduction:

1. Acts 8 is filled with important information.
2. We need to read and study it often.
3. **OUTLINE:**
 - 1) The church is persecuted and scattered (1-4).
 - 2) Philip preaches in Samaria (5-8).
 - 3) Philip and the gospel versus Simon and Magic (9-13).
 - 4) Peter and John in Samaria (14-24).
 - 5) Peter and John continue spreading the gospel on their way back to Jerusalem (25).
 - 6) Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (26-39).
 - 7) The later work of Philip (40).
4. There are a multitude of lessons to be learned from this great chapter.
 - 1) It is worthy of our careful study over and over again.
 - 2) This morning, let's simply notice together SEVEN of those LESSONS FROM ACTS 8.

DISCUSSION: Acts 8 Helps me in that it—

I. Describes the Commitment to the message early Christians had (8.4).

Acts 8:4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

1. When life became unbearable in the city of Jerusalem because of the persecution from the Jews, Christians moved to other places.
 - 1) Obviously, it would have been possible for Christians to run from Jerusalem and run away from the doctrine of Christ at the same time.
 - 2) It would likely have made their lives much easier in some ways.
 - 3) However, the great persecution in Jerusalem, could be used by God to accomplish the spreading of the beautiful gospel, IF THE CHRISTIANS WOULD ONLY ALLOW THEMSELVES to be used by God.
 - 4) And the wonderful thing announced in this verse is that THEY DID allow God to use them to spread the saving message!!!
2. Having moved elsewhere, their faith in Christ was TAKEN WITH THEM.
3. They were convicted by the gospel message.
 - 1) They had examined the evidence and knew it to be true.
 - 2) They knew it to be a message of GOOD NEWS.

- 3) They had no trouble at all in seeing the value and importance of the message of the gospel.
 - 4) They knew the seriousness of their new neighbors and friends living and dying without the saving message.
 - 5) They determined to present their good news to all who would hear it wherever they went.
 - 6) They fully understood that the message of salvation was a message every Christian could tell others with effectiveness.
4. **PREACHING THE WORD...**
- 1) The word **PREACHING** is from *euangelizo*.
 - 2) 33.215 εὐαγγελίζω: **to communicate good news concerning something** (in the NT a particular reference to the gospel message about Jesus)—‘to tell the good news, to announce the gospel.’¹.
5. This description Luke gives of how the early church reacted to persecution informs us of how well they understood that the gospel **IS the power of God unto salvation!!!** (Rom 1.16).

Acts 8 Helps me in that it—

II. Demonstrates that miracles of the 1st Century were CONFIRMATORY in nature (8.6-7).

Acts 8:6-8 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, **hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.** (7) For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

1. I learn from 1 John 4.1 that in the time of the 1st Century there were **MANY FALSE PROPHETS** out there.
2. How is it that ordinary people can hear a message from someone who claims to be speaking for God Almighty and be assured that what this person is telling them truly **IS** from God?
 - 1- How does one separate the **FALSE PROPHETS** from the **TRUE**?
 - 2- They want the **TRUE** message that comes from God.
 - 3- A message that is not from God will be less than helpful to them—in fact, it will cause them to be eternally lost.
3. Of course, God provided a way!
 - 1) **2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**
 - 2) If God is accurately described in 2 Peter 3.9, **AND HE IS**, then He will provide a way for the confusion caused by false prophets to be removed.

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 411.

- 3) **The FIRST way He did this was to grant to His true messengers POWER that false prophets are not given.**
 - 1- We see that in this very text.
 - 2- The words of God's faithful evangelist, Philip, were CONFIRMED by his POWER to do miracles.
 - 3- It needs to be kept in our minds what the PURPOSE of the miraculous powers God provided in the 1st Century.
- 4) **The SECOND way God has provided a way to distinguish between truth and error is to provide and protect a WRITTEN REVELATION from Himself to mankind—THE BIBLE.**
 - 1- 1 Corinthians 13.8-10 helps us to see that when the completed revelation came, then the GIFTS that were IN PART vanished away.
 - 2- TODAY, we are blessed with that completed, written, revelation from God.
 - 3- If some teacher perverts and twists God's message I have a way to know that.
 - 4- I simply open up my Bible and I study it, comparing what this teacher has said with what the INSPIRED writers have written.
 - 5- If they match up, then I will accept the teaching, if not—I SIMPLY MUST reject it.

Acts 8 Helps me in that it—

III. I see GREAT JOY coming to people who hear the gospel proclaimed (8.8).

Acts 8:8 *And there was great joy in that city.*

1. Philip brought the GOSPEL to Samaria—Philip brought ALSO, great JOY, to Samaria.
2. The reaction of Samaria to the gospel message is THE ONLY POSSIBLE reaction of people who use their powers of reason correctly!!!
3. Jesus was the GREAT teacher.
 - 1) Many demonstrations of the greatness of Jesus as a teacher could be stated.
 - 2) One of the greatest things about Jesus as TEACHER is—How he SIMPLIFIED matters.
4. Concerning the destiny of man, He makes it so easy to make the proper choice...
 - 1) Matthew 25:46 **And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.**
 - 2) It is either EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT on the one hand, or else: LIFE ETERNAL on the other.
5. In Matthew 7.24-27 He tells us clearly who is WISE and who is FOOLISH.
 - 1) The wise person is the one who hears His sayings and does them (v. 24).
 - 2) The foolish person hears Jesus' sayings, but does not do them (v. 26).
6. Wise people come to recognize their lostness that comes as a result of NOT HEARING AND DOING the sayings of Jesus.
7. These same people, when told of God's love for them and the provision He has made for them are going to choose to obey the commands attached to the gospel.
8. When they do this, the inevitable result of that obedience is: JOY, GREAT JOY, the GREATEST POSSIBLE JOY!

9. **JOY** came to Samaria with Philip and his message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Acts 8 Helps me in that it—

IV. Demonstrates that ONLY Apostles could pass on miraculous gifts to others (8.14-18).

Acts 8:14-18 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: (15) Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (16) **For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)** (17) **Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.** (18) And when Simon saw that **through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given,** he offered them money,

1. There is a **GREAT MISUNDERSTANDING** about miraculous abilities in our day.
2. Lots of people claim the ability to perform miracles today.
3. Here is a passage that we need to keep in our minds for occasions when we teach on the miraculous.
4. Sometimes, it seems to me, the Bible seems to **ANTICIPATE** error.
 - 1) In other words, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Bible writers wrote things which would **REFUTE** some error that develops **some time in the future**.
 - 2) Well, we certainly have many religious people in our day who believe that they can perform miracles just like they did in NT times.
 - 3) How would we prove such was not possible?
 - 4) I think Luke has provided an answer in these verses.
5. If it is the case that the possession of those miraculous abilities **REQUIRED** the laying on of the hands of an apostle in order to be received—**WHICH THIS PASSAGE CLEARLY SHOWS**, then since there are **NO APOSTLES** living today, no one could possibly have such abilities!!!
6. Notice carefully how Luke **EMPHASIZES** this point. *He makes 3 statements and then illustrates the point.*
 - 1) **FOR AS YET HE WAS FALLEN UPON NONE OF THEM... (v. 16).** *The power from the Holy Spirit had NOT been seen in Samaria at that time.*
 - 2) **THEN LAID THEY THEIR HANDS ON THEM, AND THEY RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT... (v. 17).**
 - 1- The pronoun **THEM**, of course, referring to the apostles: Peter and John.
 - 2- People observed this event of these apostles laying hands on some for the purpose of giving these miraculous abilities.
 - 3) **SIMON SAW THAT THROUGH LAYING ON OF THE APOSTLES' HANDS THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS GIVEN (v. 18).**
 - 4) Simon **SAW** this and wanted the ability so much that he offered to buy it.
 - 5) That is quite a lot of emphasis upon what took place here.
7. Luke is making it perfectly clear that this was the method God used to spread among the faithful disciples miraculous abilities.

8. No apostles being present in our day puts us back in the same position as the Christians of Samaria were BEFORE Peter and John came with the power.
9. No one today has ever seen an apostle, much less received miraculous gifts from one.

Acts 8 Helps me in that it—

V. Teaches a person CAN fall from grace (8.18-21).

Acts 8:18-21 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, (19) Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. (20) But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. (21) Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

1. The reason we would point out this fact is that the prominent system of religious thought called CALVINISM teaches to the contrary.
2. In the most recent NWFSBS lectureship book (available for free online at NWFSBS.ORG) contains a detailed and excellent description of this false doctrine and a refutation of it from Ronnie Whitemore.
3. I would take the time only to read Ronnie's conclusion:
 - 1) All people have FREE MORAL AGENCY and may choose to obey God or reject God.
 - 2) All Christians have free moral agency to choose whether to remain faithful to God or to turn back to the world.
 - 3) There are too many warnings, too many arguments, too many scriptures supporting man's freedom of choice.
 - 1- In essence, that is what makes man DIFFERENT from any of God's other creations.
 - 2- Goes does not desire to force men and women or choose for men and women whether to serve him or not.
 - 3- God wants followers to have chosen of their own volition to serve Him unto death.
 - 4) The Bible teaches about the true definition of the PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS...
 - 1- It involves a faith that increases over time.
 - 2- It involves a courage that expands with each trial.
 - 3- It involves a patience that endures the temptations of life.
 - 4- It involves a love that grows daily for the Lord.
3. In this text from Acts 8, we have an example of a person who fell away from faithfulness to Christ.
 - 1) We see Simon's heart being described by the Apostle Peter as: **NOT RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.**
 - 2) Peter told him to REPENT in verse 22.
 - 3) Peter told him he was in the **GALL OF BITTERNESS** (v. 23).
 - 4) Peter told him he was in the **BOND OF INIQUITY** (v. 23).

- 5) If that does not describe a Christian who is in a LOST condition, I do not know how you could describe such.
- 6) Here is a Christian who has to repent or else he will be eternally lost!
- 7) The ONLY way Calvinists can respond to these facts is sheepishly CLAIM that he wasn't a Christian in the first place, which shows the folly of their position!

Acts 8 Helps me in that it—

VI. Lets me KNOW that God has provided a WAY OF RETURN for erring Christians (8.22).

Acts 8:22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

1. How very thankful you and I should be that we do not lose all hope, after we become a Christian, and then commit sin.
2. God tells us through this text in Acts 8 that there is a way for Christians who have turned away from Christ to return.
3. I have been present in many assemblies of the saints when the wonderful power of God's word convicted the hearts of precious souls to the extent that they responded in the same way Simon did here.
 - 1) What was Simon told to do?
 - 2) Repent and pray.
 - 3) How wonderful it is that the Lord is willing to forgive Christians who repent and pray.
 - 4) We must thank Him daily for His mercy and love for us!

Acts 8 Helps me in that it—

VII. Provides me an example of God's GREAT CONCERN FOR THE INDIVIDUAL and his salvation (8.26-39).

1. We don't even know his name, but God did.
 - 1) God was concerned for the soul of this one individual.
 - 2) Something quite special about this individual is that he was reading the Bible.
 - 3) The Holy Spirit directed Philip to go to him—and Philip RAN to him.
2. Verse 35 gives us a beautiful example to follow— Acts 8:35 **Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.**
 - 1) What an amazing result came from the effort Philip made to preach unto this man: JESUS!
 - 2) It is quite obvious that a part of preaching JESUS is to preach about baptism.
 - 1- How do I know that?
 - 2- I know it because of the response of the eunuch when that chariot came to a place where there was WATER.
 - 3- Acts 8:36 **And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?**

- 3) The amazing result of Philip's preaching on this occasion is that the eunuch WENT ON HIS WAY REJOICING (v. 39).**
- 1- Once again, the preaching of the gospel resulted in JOY.**
 - 2- How very much the world needs to have the kind of JOY we read about in Acts 8.**
 - 3- What can you and I do to cause more and more people to have that JOY is a project we must be quite serious about accomplishing!**

Conclusion:

- 1. Do you need to respond this morning like one of those who responded in Acts 8?**
- 2. Do you need to be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.**
- 3. Do you need to repent and pray because you have become unfaithful to your Lord?**
- 4. We want you to respond if you need to.**