

Acts 7:54-60

“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, 56 and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58 and caste *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

[Audio version: <http://resources.ccphilly.org/SPM602>]

Introduction

“We have come to the end of Stephen’s sermon, he is addressing the Sanhedrin, he has been drug in front of them, first, volunteering to be part of a ministry that would care for the Hellenistic and Hebrew widows, doing that without reservation, willing to take the least place, the place of a servant. And it tells us that God granted great wisdom to him, he began to refute those that were in the synagogue of Cilicia and so forth. And then God started to do miracles, signs and wonders through this man, so much so that then he was drug in front of the religious leaders in Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin. And at the end of this long sermon he brings them around to the fact they had always rejected God’s deliverers, God’s saviours as it were, those who were sent to speak God’s Word to them. And that they were, ***verse 51, ‘stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart, as their fathers were, who always resist the Holy Ghost.’*** He says **“Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and**

murderers: who have received the law by the dispensation of angels, and have not kept it.” (verse 52-54) “And when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.” (verse 54) literally, “their hearts were sawn asunder.” Now remember, Stephen is in front of them with his face like the face of an angel, the presence of God surrounding him, his face glowing. They’re awed by his presence, they’re cut to the heart by the things that he had to say, we’re completely familiar with the things he said, it says they gnashed their teeth upon him, they ground their teeth, they were angry, **“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” (verse 55-56)** full of the Holy Ghost, he looks up stedfastly into heaven, now that’s through the ceiling, he’s inside of a building. He lifts up his eyes, he’s in front of the semicircle of the religious leaders where they’re seated, the Sanhedrin, he lifts up his eyes and sees right into glory, and he sees Jesus standing on the right hand of God, very interesting, 16 times in the New Testament where we were told that Jesus is at God’s right hand, 13 of those times he’s seated, he has completed his work. We’re told the high priest in the Old Testament never sat down, there was no seat anywhere in the Tabernacle or the Temple, because he had to continually offer sacrifices. Because the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, his work was never completed. But it says Jesus, Hebrews 1, having completed his work, sat down at the right hand of the Father, his work was completed, accepted of the Father. Very interesting here, Stephen looks up, and he sees the heavens open before his eyes, filled with the Holy Spirit, and he sees the Son of man, he said **“I see the Son of man” verse 56, and “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”** very interesting, “the glory of God” the “k’vod” Ichabod, the glory departed, the weight, the majesty, the beauty, the fullness of God, he looks up. Now this is the first appearance with have of Jesus in glory since his ascension, and it’s brought before us through the eyes of Stephen. Luke, no doubt, who wrote the Book of Acts, hears all this information from Saul of Tarsus, whose in this hearing, and whose life will be marked by what he’s heard. Paul, we’ll read through his sermons, steals everything by he’s heard. Paul, when you read through his sermons, steals everything from Stephen, Stephen had an incredible impression on Saul of Tarsus. So, **verse**

55, “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,” and then he says it out loud, **“Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” (verse 56)** **“Then”** the Sanhedrin, **“Then they cried out with a loud voice,”** they all start to scream, *‘Ahh, we’re not listening, we’re not listening,’* they put their fingers in their ears, they couldn’t take it. You know, his face is glowing like an angel, he’s sliced their hearts to pieces in his presentation, now he’s saying, he’s looking up through the ceiling, his face glowing, saying, **‘I see the Son of man standing at the right hand of God, I see the glory of God [the k’vod of God],’** **“Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,”** so, formalities evidently set aside here, in the most regal set of religious rulers in the world at that time, they all become a lynch mob, they cast everything aside, **“and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.” (verses 57-58)** the Holy Spirit makes sure it wants to introduce us to this individual, **“at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul”** now the Holy Spirit introducing us to Saul of Tarsus. Interesting scene, you think of, you read Foxes Book of Martyrs, you hear the testimony of many who in their moment of passing see God, see his glory, receive his grace, no doubt this man inspired many through the history of the Church, who laid down their lives for the cause of Christ, and caused them “in that hour, and in that moment” to have great expectation in regards to the Lord. The first of many martyrs, Jesus standing to receive this first one, who would lay down his life. **‘And there was there standing by, they laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.’** **“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (verse 59)** now again, Rome had taken the right away from the Jews to execute the death sentence. They stubbornly maintained a right, but if they said anything blasphemous happens inside of the Temple precincts, we still have the right to exercise what should take place there, even in regards to death, this evidently wasn’t in the Temple itself, it was where the Sanhedrin gathered, but they, becoming a lynch mob, drag him out, Saint Stephen’s Gate is one of the gates there today, ah, the Sheep Gate, Saint Stephen’s Gate is in that area where people had been stoned. The process was, they would bring them together to a point, they were thrown off a wall, and there was a 12

to 15 foot drop, hopefully, they would hope that that drop would cause enough injury that the person would immediately begin to repent. The people who made the direct accusation had to throw the first two stones, and then everyone else started to stone him. So, Saul of Tarsus is standing there, no doubt a member of the Sanhedrin, giving his approval of what is taking place, they throw Stephen down there off the edge of the wall, and Stephen it says, **“calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” (verses 59b-60)** Now we have an interesting picture here. Jesus, if you remember on the cross, said **‘into thy hands I commit my spirit,’** here he said **‘Lord Jesus’** who he’s seeing, and we don’t know if he’s still seeing him at this point, he says **“receive my spirit.”** “he kneeled down” is literally “he placed his knees,” the idea is, he propped himself up, he was in the process of being stoned, it isn’t just he kneeled down, he set his knees so that he could prop himself up, so that he could cry out with a loud voice **“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”** now the last stones made the fatal blow, and he died, not spiritually, his physical frame died here, of the believer it’s always ‘falling asleep.’ “coroneo” is the word here, “coimaterion” is a sleeping place, we get “cemetery” from it. And a cemetery to a believer is just that, it’s a sleeping place, because believers are getting up again, one day, ah, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, the spirit and the soul with the Lord, the body waiting for the resurrection, so the cemetery a sleeping place. [Comment: the greater body of Christ has various beliefs about these soul-sleep interpretations, it’s far from black and white, a lot of gray areas. To read some of these, see <https://unityinchrist.com/plaintruth/battle.htm>] But you have to understand now, the impression made on Saul of Tarsus. The Sanhedrin had screamed, they had put their fingers in their ears, and Saul is watching this man, face glowing like an angel, crying out as the stones are hitting him, **‘Lord, don’t lay this to their charge,’** this is being burned into Saul’s memory and his heart, it will drive him mad, because when the Lord appears to him on the Road to Damascus he says **‘Saul, it’s hard for you to kick against the goads, isn’t it.’** He will never stop the battle that was within until the day he got saved. He’s really going to fight with this, because this is reality, the words of the man had burned into his heart, because we know he takes so many of the things Stephen had

said, the whole vision physically, the impression made, never left him. And we're told later in the Book of Acts, that he grew up at the feet of Gamaliel, what we're going to find as we follow his life, his real mentor was Stephen, and not Gamaliel, the real, the one who made an impression on his life in a short amount of time, and it never changed through the power of the Holy Spirit, and had much more of an impact on him than the teachers he sat under no doubt for years. So here this man places his knees so that he can cry out and ask God not to lay this sin to their charge, Saul standing there, and then it says, when he had said that, then Stephen fell asleep.

Acts 8:1-25

“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison. 4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 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. 8 And there was great joy in that city. 9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles

and signs which were done. 14 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, 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. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity. 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. 25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans."

Introduction

“Again, as we work through these chapters, there are some very specific things for us to see. In chapter 2, we listened to Peter preach and 3,000 souls are saved. As we see Peter and John coming into the Beautiful Gate and the crippled man is healed, 5,000 then are saved. We hear multitudes are being added, but again, you and I, I doubt most of us are going to be in the place to lead 3,000 to Christ, or 5,000 to Christ, we’re not going to be a Greg Laurie or a Billy Graham [Pastor Joe is being modest, his church topped out at an estimated 30,000, until he trained pastors and broke it up into multiple congregations across Philly, is my guess. God did this through him over a period of time, of course.] But we’re going to find Saul, a single convert, we’re going to find the Ethiopian eunuch, a single convert, we’re going to find Cornelius, a single convert, and it’s Shem, Ham and Japheth gathered back, again, under God’s

plan. But as we watch this process, in a very interesting way God is showing us, we actually have more details about the conversion of these individuals than we do about the masses that get saved, and we get to see God's supernatural involvement in the process, which no doubt, at the time wasn't so recognized by the people involved, and it's held out before us, that God has a plan for us and that there are people that he puts across our path, that he cares as much for the individual, because Saul is going to change the course of western civilization. Stephen may have only had one convert, but again that was **a whopper**. We're going to find Philip leaving Samaria to go into the desert, that's not what he did, he left a city to change a continent, because he led that Ethiopian eunuch who was the secretary of the treasury of Ethiopia, and that man impacted the whole continent of Africa. We're going to see Cornelius come to faith, and who knows what influence he had as a Roman Centurion and so forth. We're going to see an interesting series now of individual lives and individual conversions, individual evangelization, and no doubt those are given to us in the detail they are so that you and I can take it for our own lives.

*God Uses Saul's Persecution To Scatter God's Holy Seed,
Diaspora, To Samaria & Beyond*

It says here, now there was no chapter break when it was written, verse **1 of chapter 8**, **"And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem;"** and notice this **"and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."** Now they're all scattered. Does that mean thousands? Because we're looking at a church now where there are over 10,000 regular attenders coming, meeting in Solomon's Portico. The apostles stayed there. The apostles were the ones that Jesus said in chapter 1, **'Wait in Jerusalem until you are endued with power,'** that was Pentecost, **'so you can be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth,'** now the persecution arises, God's going to use that to scatter, it says, his believers, the word "diaspora, scattered," and that's how the Lord saw the believers. They weren't just scattered and then hiding out, it doesn't mean they were hiding out in Samaria, in all the places they went they preached the Gospel of

Jesus Christ, and they touched the Mediterranean world. So they're referred to as the Diaspora, ah, "dia" to scatter, "spora" seed, as seed, the seed of life, each one of them had the living Christ within themselves, they're scattered throughout the Roman world. And all of the places they went they preached their faith. Saul here is consenting to the death of Stephen. Again, I would say, if you have someone in your family who just is furious, don't be discouraged by that. Saul was a mad-man here in this process, he got worse after listening to Stephen. You know, you might have a relative or friend who says *'Well, that's nice that you believe that, it's good for you, that's nice, maybe we'll come Christmas Eve, it's a nice place, they have drums, that's kind of cool, we'll go there,'* you have that kind of response. And then you have someone, a friend, they say *'You're tell me that again? I don't want to hear about this Jesus, don't come around here!'* they're going to grow fangs in a minute, it's Wolfman, the hair's gonna come, I know what's going to happen at this point. Don't be discouraged by that, because sometimes that's the person whose closest to stepping over the line and coming into the kingdom. Saul here is kicking against the goads, and it is driving him out of his mind. He goes insane, he's going to make havock of the church. He's fighting something he can't put his hand on, and it's the conviction that's in his heart. And don't be discouraged if you have a relative or a friend, and you've shared Christ with him and they become furious, they seem so offended, don't loose heart. That person might be closer, and we see that with Saul here. The church is scattered at this point in time, and Saul is giving his consent, and through him, a great persecution arises in Jerusalem. Again, Sunday morning I said there's an old proverb, you throw a stone into a pack of dogs, and the one that yelps the loudest is the one that got hit. And evidently Saul's the one that got hit, he's yelping, he was not happy about Stephen's sermon, the whole experience, so he's scattering them. The apostles, it says, stay in Jerusalem. They're the ones the Lord told to go to Judea and Samaria, they're not budging. So we're going to follow then Philip [the deacon, not Philip the apostle], he becomes the evangelist and the missionary to Samaria, he's a Hellenist [Acts 6:5], he's a Greek Jew, less, some of the less prejudiced certainly than those who were raised in Judea. But they're scattered, it says, all over Judea and Samaria, **"except the apostles,"** they stay in Jerusalem.

Saul's Persecution Of The Church In His Own Words

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.” (verse 2) but notice this, **“As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.” (verse 3)** “havock,” it’s a word that describes a wild bore tearing into something. We’re told in *chapter 11*, **“now, they which were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose (about Stephen), travelled as far as Phoenice, Cyprus, Antioch, preaching the word to none but to the Jews only, and some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians preaching the Lord Jesus, and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.”** So, the thing is backfiring in the face of Saul and the back of Satan, because where they’re being driven now, they’re preaching everywhere, and it says the hand of the Lord is with them, this is God’s plan, this is not the plan of a mission board, you know, persecution for things to happen. [the term “blowback” comes to mind, Saul’s actions caused a huge unexpected “blowback.”] It becomes a great missionary endeavor by God’s sovereignty as they are spread. Saul is making havock of the church, Stephen’s voice and the picture of his face is constantly there, his voice is ringing in his ears, he’s being haunted no doubt by Stephen. We’re told this of Saul of Tarsus, we’ll read several verses here. He says later when he’s sharing, in his conversion, he says **‘I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women,’** then he says, **‘I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee, and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed I also was standing by and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of those that slew him.’** Again, we’re told in *chapter 26*, **‘Which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them,’** he voted, evidently a member of the Sanhedrin, **‘I punished them often in every synagogue,’** notice, **‘and I compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.’** Again we’re told in *Galatians*, here he says, **‘For ye have heard of my conversation, my lifestyle, in time past, in the Jewish religion of that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and I wasted it.’** [comment:

“church of God” is the biblical name for the early church] And again we’re told in *1st Timothy* he says, ***‘I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for he accounted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, an injurious. But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, and this is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief. Albeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, foremost Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering,’*** and please listen, ***‘for a pattern with them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.’*** Paul says ***‘I’m a trophy,’*** this is what he says ***‘I persecuted the church, I made them blaspheme the name of Jesus, I was there when they were being put to death, I was consenting, I made them miserable, I made havock of the church, I cursed God’s people, I was blasphemous,’*** and then he says, ***‘and yet I obtained mercy,’*** and he said, ***‘that happened so the Lord could hold my life up as an example to those who would believe hereafter.’*** Look, I don’t know what you’ve done, I don’t know your whole story here this evening, but believe me if you’re sitting here tonight in any way, shape or form thinking *‘I’m beyond his love, I said things I shouldn’t have said, I committed blasphemy of the Holy Spirit,’* no, you didn’t, if you’re worried about it you didn’t. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the unpardonable sin is not accepting Jesus as Saviour. If you have accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour and you’ve messed up afterwards, you might get a whupping but he doesn’t change your name and throw you out of the house. I raised four kids, if they did something wrong I didn’t come home, say *‘Pack your suitcase, change your last name,’* I disciplined them because I loved them. And you have to understand, whatever you’ve done, his forgiveness is sufficient. And Saul is saying, Paul is saying ***‘Look at my life, this is a faithful saying that is worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief, because I was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and I made people blaspheme the name of Jesus, and I put Christians to death and I persecuted the church,’*** and he becomes the apostle of God’s grace. You would think that would be John, John only uses the word grace seven times in his Gospel, his three epistles and the Book of Revelation, you only find the word grace seven times in all of his writings. Paul, you find the word grace

an hundred and twenty times. Of all the writers in the New Testament, he's the one who understood the necessity of grace. ["grace" in the context of what Paul is saying is "forgiveness for incredibly horrible sins against others and God."] And he uses his premier statement in **Titus** when he says **'The grace of God hath appeared, bringing us to salvation, it's grace that brings us into the kingdom,'** then he says **'It's grace that teaches us to deny ungodly lusts in this present world,'** and then he says **'it's grace that teaches us to look forward to the coming of our great God and Saviour, even Jesus Christ.'** He says **'It's grace that saves us, it's grace that keeps us along the way, and it could only be grace that could cause sinners like us to look forward to the coming of the great God and Saviour, instead of trembling in fear, we're expecting to hear 'Well done good and faithful servant.'**

Now We Meet Philip

So, this man now, making havock of the church, we're introduced to him, and the Book of Acts is going to switch now primarily from Peter's ministry to Saul of Tarsus, to Paul the apostle. And Stephen and Philip [the deacon] are part of that transition. Here, we read these verses that say **"As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word."** (verses 3-4) Now we're really going to meet Philip, he was waiting on tables before, but it says, **"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."** (verse 5) Now, Samaria is north of Jerusalem, but to the Jew, every direction away from Jerusalem is down. When you go to Jerusalem, whatever direction you're coming from you're going "up to Jerusalem." If you're coming from the north, and your going to Jerusalem, you're going up to Jerusalem. In the mind of every Jew you only go up to Jerusalem, when you leave Jerusalem you go down. And geographically, in many ways, it is located that way. He went down to Samaria, which is actually north of there. It's interesting, he goes to Samaria, where the Sanhedrin has no authority, so there is in one sense, he's safe there. And it says he goes there and he preaches Christ, not Judaism, it had never changed the Samaritans, not religion, he preaches Christ,

he goes there. Now, there had been a preliminary work, the woman at the well, the immoral girl that probably many of us might have shunned and not spoken to, Jesus took the time to open her up and to quench her great thirst, and to love her. And she went into Samaria and told the men of Samaria ***'I've met a man that's told me everything that's ever happened in my life,'*** she said to Jesus ***'We know Messiah's going to come,'*** and he said back to her specifically ***'I am he that speak to thee,'*** and he who revealed himself in that way, ***'that's who I am.'*** And she brought the men of the city, they knew her [that's for sure], they were probably a little nervous coming back with her. And it says they all gave heed, they believed. So there had been a preliminary work. Now Philip comes there, and he's preaching Christ, and it says the whole city begins to give heed, they start to listen, and it's with great joy. Now look, the apostles are not fast to go to Samaria, they have to get over their prejudices. Samaria, the tribes of Ephraim and part of Manasseh used to be there, the northern kingdom, had adopted an idolatry, they had Jezebel in particular, in the areas of Samaria, and God judged them and they were carried away by the Assyrians, and when they were carried away by the Assyrians, the Assyrians had a habit of displacing people, if they carried a group of people away [in this case, the 10 northern tribes, particularly Ephraim & Manasseh], they would take other people that were not natives and put them in that area so the land would not go fallow, so they could maintain some tribute, some income, and they filled the area of Samaria with foreigners [pagan foreigners from the region of the Caspian Sea]. And what happened then was those foreigners then came to the Assyrian government saying *'Lions are attacking us, the crops are not doing good, we need to figure out how to worship the gods in this area so that they'd be pleased with us so we can get a break here,'* so the Assyrians in great irony send back to Samaria the Jews and Jewish priests [actually the Israelite priests, not Jewish from the tribe of Judah, but priests from Ephraim and Manasseh] who weren't telling them what they should be doing when they were there in the first place, and they come back to Samaria and start to tell them, the mongrel group of people, the mixt group of people there, the right way to worship Jehovah. So you have Samaritans, there's about 200 of them left alive today, and I've been there, and they'll still sacrifice goats and animals, they believe in the Pentateuch, they've changed parts of it to point to them. They believe Mount Gerizim is the place where Abraham and Isaac, they believe it was Eden that was there at Gerizim, they believe Gerizim is the holy mountain.

Remember the woman said to Jesus *'Our fathers worship at Mount Gerizim instead of Jerusalem,'* and Jesus said ***'The time's coming when those who worship will worship in spirit and truth.'*** So there is a division. And every Jew in this day in Jerusalem considered Samaritans a half-breed, they weren't really Gentiles, but they certainly weren't really Jews in their minds, and they would travel around the area of Samaria. You remember Peter and John wanted to call fire down from heaven and burn them up. And they got the nickname (which Jesus gave them) *'The sons of thunder.'* They're traveling through the area, they tried to make a reservation in a Motel-6, and they wouldn't give them a room, and they said to the Lord, *'Hey look, this can't go on in your ministry, it may be a bit harsh, but call down fire, incinerate Samaria, it'll just set an example, in the future things will be easier when we've got to rent a room.'* And the Lord said ***'You guys are crazy, you don't know what spirit you're of, I didn't come to burn people up, I've come to save them from being burned up.'*** So, it was that hostility towards Samaria, a constant prejudice towards the Samaritans. Philip goes down to Samaria, this is new territory, this had never happened, and he begins to preach Christ there, ***"And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."*** (verse 6) The woman who talked with Christ had evidently laid the foundation. ***"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. And there was great joy in that city."*** (verses 7-8) and anywhere where the gospel is preached and lives are being changed there is great joy. So, should this have been one of the apostles? They stayed in Jerusalem, this man Philip is the man that God uses, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria to bring this great revival to the point where miracles and signs and wonders were taking place.

Whenever There's Spiritual Progress You Can Count On "A Problem Arising."

Now verse 9 begins with "But" and there's a problem. Whenever there's spiritual progress, count on a problem arising, there's always going to be warfare. So we have this wonderful scene, we have them receiving the Word with great joy, they're all giving heed, ***"But there***

was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.” (verses 9-11) So there was some demonstration of power, whatever that may have been. Look, Satan gives power, and that’s real today. But it’s for a price, it’s for your eternity, you’ll pay with your eternity, and it isn’t anything new. It tells us in Timothy that Jaynes and Jambres withstood Moses, those were the magicians, you remember Moses came, and Moses threw down his rod and it turned into a serpent, and it says the magicians in Egypt threw down their rods and they also turned into serpents, there was power. Of course Moses’ rod ate, swallowed up the other ones. When Moses turned the Nile into blood, it says they also turned water into blood, they followed along, repeating the miracles until the dust of the earth was turned to lice, and then they looked at Pharaoh, the magicians, and said ***‘This is the finger of God, this is going where none of us can go or ever could go.’*** But there’s power on the dark side, where Darth Vader is out there, there’s power. But it comes with a price, your eternity, there’s never anything compared to the genuine power of God. But this man Simon had used some type of sorcery in the area, and it says all in Samaria, which was a decent sized city, had given heed to him. **“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (verse 12)** [Comment: baptism, with the laying on of hands, was the early church’s form of accepting Jesus Christ into your life. See <https://unityinchrist.com/baptism/What%20is%20Baptism.htm>] Now they believe because he’s preaching, not because he’s doing signs and wonders. What changes their hearts is the Word of God, and it is the same in every generation. You know, if signs and wonders changed us, the children of Israel, after seeing all the miracles in Egypt and seeing the Red Sea parted, and following the pillar of fire and the cloud, seeing tons of manna falling out of the sky everyday, they would have been transformed. Instead of that, they stood out in the wilderness saying *‘We’re tired of this manna, when we were back in Egypt we had garlic, fond memories, leeks and flesh pots.’* If miraculous things changed our hearts, our hearts need to be changed from the inside-out, and that takes place through the incorruptible Seed, the Word of God that’s sown there.

We see this picture, Philip's doing tremendous miracles, but it says they received the Word, the people gave heed to things that he spake, hearing and seeing, and it says **"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."** (verse 12) and now look, verse 13 says this, and I'm going to let you have your own opinion, if you exegete the passage I'll tell you what it says, **"Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."** (verse 13) So there is a huge disagreement amongst Bible scholars as to whether Simon is genuinely converted or not. There is a tradition, and that's all that it is, some say he become the founding person in the Gnostic heresy. Some say he ends up in Rome and there ends up in a confrontation with Peter, doing certain miracles, and at one point he actually levitates, and Peter does something and then he crashed to the ground, Peter took away his flying carpet, whatever it was. Some say he died at that point, some say that then he determined he was going to reproduce the resurrection, and they had him buried alive, and that was the end of that, that he never came out. There's all these traditions about Simon Magus [the tradition we heard in the Sabbath-keeping Church of God I came from was that Simon Magus started the Catholic Church in Rome] that he was not really a believer. Well our problem is this, it says this, **"Then Simon himself believed also"** that's the same exact verb and tense of the word in verse 12 where it says where the people in Samaria *"believed,"* same exact word. **"Then Simon believed"** and then it adds **"also"** pointing back to the others that had believed, that's the same word in ***John 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth'*** that's our word here. It says **"Then Simon himself believed also:"** and look, **"and when he was baptized,"** so Philip, who was there, the Bible scholars will argue about this, who weren't there, Philip was there, Philip was full of the Holy Ghost, and Philip evidently was fully confident that he had become a believer, because he baptized him. That's, if you make an honest exegesis of the passages, that's what you end up with. So, there will be people with different opinions, it would never be something that would divide us, or break our fellowship, but my own distorted opinion is the man's a believer. **"Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done."** (verse 13) Now,

because here's a guy who practiced sorcery, he knows some of the things (in that practice) were slight of hand, and he's following closely, he's watching, and he realizes everything he's seeing is genuine, and he's filled with wonder.

Then The Apostles Show Up In Samaria To Check Things Out

“Now when the apostles which were in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:” (verse 14) now this is the last mention of John in the Book of Acts, he'll pass off the scene here. We hear his name, in that he wrote, 1st, 2nd and 3rd John and the Book of Revelation, we hear of him there on Patmos. But following the man in Church History, this is basically where he passes off the scene, and it's going to Samaria, wonderfully. It's going to the city that got him his nickname, *son of thunder*, he's going to the city that he wanted to burn up and destroy. And what it must be like for him to come there, and look into the eyes of brothers and sisters in Christ who had believed. You must have those prayers in your life, *'Lord, thank you for not answering that one,'* you know, just the impression, this is where he passes from our view, going to Samaria. Remarkably, this son of thunder in his old age becomes *'the apostle of love.'* [Comment: Jesus, just before he died, gave John the assignment to look after his mother Mary. Whatever he did had to be with caution, for him to fulfill Jesus' assignment to him for looking after his mom. As 70AD approached, John moved Mary and himself (and probably many in the Jerusalem church followed him) to Ephesus, the thriving congregation of the church of God Paul had set up in the mid 60s AD. Secular history, which the Turks maintain, detail how John and Mary lived in the city of Ephesus. Tour guides will point out the cellar hole of the house where it is believed they lived. Wars move populations, and in this case the oncoming war between the Judeans and Rome moved a whole population of believers out of Jerusalem, and many of them moved north to Ephesus, evidently.] It was important for there to be apostolic sanction of what was taking place in Samaria, this was the first time there would be a harvest outside of Judaism, the apostles had to be there to confirm that the faith of the Samaritans was genuine. [But what many Gentile Christians fail to realize, even though the Messianic Jews

have come to realize this, is historically the early Church was basically Jewish racially and in practice of “days of worship” for the first 300 years of its existence. For biblical-historic proof of this, see <https://unityinchrist.com/history2/index3.htm>] So it says **“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” (verses 14-17)** Now we have another place where the Church [greater Body of Christ] argues. Were these folks genuine believers. If they were genuine believers, then we have the Spirit coming upon them after they had believed. Obviously it tells us here that they believed. When they believed, at that instant, they, by the Spirit, are baptized into the mystical Body of Christ, one baptism, one Spirit. When you’re converted, when I’m converted, we become part of the mystical Body of Jesus Christ. And that is done by the Holy Spirit. There is another baptism where Jesus is baptizing, and he baptizes with the Spirit, and that is a baptism that seems relative to power, and that is not the Spirit coming into the believer, but the Spirit coming always **upon** the believer, and empowering for ministry. Look, we saw that in the life of Samson, we saw it in the life of those who made the Tabernacle, we saw it in the lives of many in the Old Testament, the Spirit had come upon them. John Crysosum in the beginning of the 3rd century, in his commentary on this passage, says that he differed, his view was that this was different from their baptism and their conversion, quote, he said *“They had received the spirit of forgiveness, but not the Spirit of signs.”* That was his way of viewing this. [I think everyone is splitting doctrinal hairs over this passage.] The point is, the apostles come, they see that they have received Christ, because it doesn’t say then that the apostles lead them to Christ. The apostles see what’s going on, but when they get there they lay hands on them, and they pray for them to receive the Holy Ghost, **“(for as yet he was upon none of them: only they had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” (verses 16-17)** Now it’s done with the laying on of hands here, and in chapter 19 and other places it just happens as they’re listening, there’s no formula certainly as we go through the Book of Acts. [Comment: The apostolic Church was sort of following a formula,

being that baptism and at times, baptism coupled to the laying on of hands, was the way new believers received Christ and the Holy Spirit into their lives. For a study on this, see <https://unityinchrist.com/baptism/What%20is%20Baptism.htm>. Many Sabbath-keeping Churches of God adhere to this same 'formula' for receiving Christ into their lives. As observed by a few of us that have come into the greater Body of Christ by way of these churches, quite often the Holy Spirit preceded the actual baptism ceremony. So, God will not be put into an arbitrary doctrinal box by anyone when it comes to conversion and giving of his Holy Spirit.]

Simon Makes A Big Mistake, Due In Part To His Magician's Background

But look, it says **“And when Simon saw through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given,”** so there must be some manifestation, because it ain't about tongues here, it says the Spirit came upon them. But whatever happened was something that was visible to Simon. **“he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.” (verses 18-19) ‘How much does this cost?’** Now look, that was common amongst magicians and sorcerers. You watch some of the movies that have been out lately, the magicians, they don't want to share each other's trade secrets, there was something common amongst sorcerers and magicians where they would pay to learn one another's tricks. But he says **‘Sell me this,’** we have the term that comes into the Church “Simony,” and that's where you sell or auction off positions in the Church [Catholic Church, by historic observation]. I believe it was in the 10th century one of the popes purchased the position of pope, he was the highest bidder, the Church had bid it off at that point in time, to the highest bidder, to a person in the Church [Catholic Church]. Imagine that. Can you imagine someone bidding on a position...But the idea of Simony in the Church, is the auctioning off or selling off of a position in the Church [again, Catholic Church]. He offered them money, **“saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.” (verse 19)** Now he's in Samaria, he doesn't know chapter 5 where Ananias and Sapphira drop dead, he'd have been way more careful. He just hadn't read that chapter. **“But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with**

thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” (verse 20) now the gift of discerning of spirits, word of knowledge, we’re not sure, we’re not sure, we’re gonna hear what Peter says, **“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”** (verse 21) in the apostolic function, of what he’s seeing take place, **“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.”** (verse 22) what he’s asking him to repent of is this envy, this desire, *‘Give me power,’* is what he said, and he’s asking him to repent of that. He’s not saying *‘You need to get saved,’* I think this man is a believer, and is a misbeliever here, not a disbeliever, and Peter says to him **“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”** (verses 22-23) what a shame, bitterness, partly no doubt through envy, what a shame, there’s great joy in Samaria, and this very influential person that’s in the gall of bitterness. ***‘I perceive you’re in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.’*** Now look, there is nothing new in the church or amongst God’s people. The problem is this guy’s pride was stung, he had been a very, he had great notoriety here in Samaria, that’s being taken away from him, and he’s losing his position. We always are in a situation where we’re dealing with people who think they have some entitlement or some territory in the church, and they’re mad because they’re not getting recognition. I’ll always have someone come up to me and say *‘Put my name in the bulletin, I want to start a men’s breakfast,’* like they have some entitlement or some territory in the church, and they’re mad because they’re not getting recognition. Like God’s people are a commodity and just hack off and give them something...But there is always that, where somebody through envy, someone gets in that position where they think something is theirs or they’re losing a position, and it creates a very open door for the enemy to work. Peter says here ***‘I perceive that you’re in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.’*** **“Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.”** (verse 24) I guess. And if he’d have known chapter 5, he’d have been way more serious. **“And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.”** (verse 25) now isn’t it interesting, “they,” you have

Peter and John here preaching in Samaria, re-affirming the things that they had heard from Philip. What an interesting circumstance they are placed in, now stepping beyond the order of Judaism, and then they come back to Jerusalem and say **'Undoubtedly, the Samaritans are our brothers and sisters, they have received Christ.'** There's already hostility in Jerusalem, now for the Christians to be saying **'Now the Samaritans have joined the club,'** you know the Jews in Jerusalem are going to be more hostile than ever. And it says **"when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem,"** and notice this, **"and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans."** (verse 25) So they are on their way back to Jerusalem, and it says they begin to preach the gospel in many of the cities of Samaria on the way back to Jerusalem. These cities had never been changed by Judaism, for hundreds of years they'd been next to Jerusalem and had not been changed by Judaism. But now the power of God is there, the gospel is preached, and they're changed.

Philip Gets Another Assignment

Listen, next week we're going to pick up, and it tells us **"And the angel"** there's no definite article there, **"And an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip,"** we're not told specifically how that happens, we're not told that Philip then goes back to Samaria, did he stay there and the apostles preached on the way back to Jerusalem? Or did Philip go back to Jerusalem with them? That information is not given to us. But we're told that an angel appears to him, what an interesting experience that must have been. We have no detail what the angel looked like, what form he came in, but undoubtedly Philip knew that it was an angel, **"an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."** (verse 25) Again, look, this begins a new movement, just think what's happening here. Philip is in the middle of the greatest revival the area of Samaria has ever seen. Philip is in the middle of centuries of idolatry and error being brought into the light and being made right. So much is God's blessing on his work that miracles and signs and wonders are taking place through his hands, the whole area is filled with joy, giving heed to the things he preaches. The apostles come and confirm that very thing. In fact, they lay their hands on

the Samaritans so that they might receive the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and enable them for ministry. And in the middle of all of that, this angel comes. Now, if you look down in verse 29, it says there **“Then the Spirit said unto Philip,”** We’re going to hear in chapter 13, the Spirit says **‘Separate unto me Saul and Barnabas for the ministry I have called them to.’** It seems this New Testament church was very keen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Sad to say, that I am not as sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit as I would like to be. You know, I know his Word, and that’s the primary way he speaks to me. I’m thankful this is the Book that the Holy Spirit offered, so it isn’t that I’m without information. But it’s interesting to watch the impressions, put on the hearts of those in the Book of Acts, and they know that the Lord is speaking to them. You know, lots of times people will say to me, *‘Well the Lord told me,’* then the conversation’s over, they played the Trump Card, what do you do then? Maybe it did, maybe it didn’t, I don’t know... *‘did he talk out loud, did he come into your bedroom, how do you know he told you?’* because it says **‘Now we know in part, then we’ll know fully, because we’ll be fully known.’** Sometimes you get around people and that’s all they say, *‘and God told me to do this, then the Lord told me to do this,...’* and I’m thinking, *‘This lady’s got a direct line, I don’t know anybody that hears the word that good, this is remarkable.’* I had a guy years ago, every time he came into my office, and he was doing something I knew he shouldn’t have been doing, it wasn’t sin, but he was stepping into a situation he shouldn’t have stepped in, he was doing something with a church he shouldn’t have been doing, and every time I talked to him he said *‘Well, the Lord told me, the Lord told me.’* I finally said to him, *“You know, you’re going to wear your congregation out doing that, because you have to be able to say to them ‘The reason we do this, because in Acts chapter 6 it said this, and the reason we’re going to do this, because in Colossians it says the apostles instructed the church to do this, and the reason we’re going to do this is because in 1st Timothy it says this. If all you’re ever going to say to people is ‘The Lord told me, the Lord told me,’ you’re playing the Trump Card, they can’t come back at you and say anything, but you’re going to wear people out.’* And he wouldn’t listen to me and wouldn’t listen to me, and finally he came into my office one day, and I said *‘Well you’re not going to be in Calvary Chapel,’* and he said *‘Why not?’* and I said *‘The Lord told me.’* [loud laughter] And he did, but I only had it once, he was infected with it, he had the nerve to ask me if I was sure, but I could give him Biblical

reasons. But I look at this, and I think, if the Holy Spirit had just prompted Philip's heart, to go down into the desert, he'd have argued like I would. *'That can't be you, that's the devil, he's tempting me to leave this ministry he's called me to. I'm in the middle of a revival, I'm not just in the middle of it, I am the middle of it. They're listening to me and the miracles, the Lord's using me, and this is the kind of thing that we long for, there's revival, there's signs and wonders, the whole city is being touched, and this is not the Holy Spirit, this is the devil putting this in my heart, go on out into the desert, no step B, no step C, no further information, just go south young man.'* So, the Lord knowing that, has to send an angel for the first step of this program to get it moving. You know, you tend to yield a little more in that kind of situation, you have company, you turn around and there's an angel sitting there in the bedroom with you, who says *'Get up tomorrow and go south,'* *'Oh ok.'* it's a little different. You know, Satan himself comes disguised as an angel of light. But you know, when it's the real thing, well most of us do. Zechariah, when Gabriel came to him and said ***'Your wife is going to conceive and bear a child in her old age,'*** he said ***'How do I know?'*** like he's had bad experience with angels in the past, I'm always amazed with that. That would be enough for me to know. And Gabriel says ***'How you're going to know now is you're not going to be able to talk until the child's born, why don't we try that.'*** But here the angel comes, and he says to Philip ***"Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert."*** just go south, go that-away. And look what he says ***"go by the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza,"*** not from Samaria, there's a road that went from Samaria to Gaza, he said ***'I want you on the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza,'*** because he knew the encounter that would take place. God knew the Ethiopian that had traveled two months to come to Jerusalem, God knew where his chariot would be, God knew what chapter he would be reading, God knew that his experience in Jerusalem would be empty, but the Word of God would be speaking out loud to him. God knew where Philip would encounter him, God knew where every one of these things would take place. And listen, God knew, yes, Philip's leaving a city, but it's to change a continent. But sometimes, there are those times in all our lives, where God gives us direction and, look, I think it's the exception and not the rule, but there are times God may ask us to do something, it's not sin, but it may seem illogical. There are times when God's instructions are mysterious to everyone but him, because he knows all the things that are attached

to it. When you get down to verse 29 it says ***'Then the Spirit spake to him'*** you want to circle that word **"Then"**, because "then" could never have been there if he didn't say earlier **"So he arose and went."** There's the first yielding, the first yielding gives rise to the "then's" in our lives. If we do what he asks us to do, and if he sends an angel, just don't ask a lot of questions, don't say to the angel *'How do I know?'* we'll see you walking around here and you won't be able to tell us what happened. He yields to the instruction, and it says ***'Then the Holy Spirit will speak to him.'*** So read ahead, a just fascinating record of what happens with this man who is the secretary of the treasury of Ethiopia, this man, unimaginable in his influence and his wealth, that Philip will encounter out in the middle of nowhere in the middle of the desert. So read ahead, we'll look at that next week, we come to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the Road to Damascus, just some great things. Look, Philip yielded. You know he must have thought, at this point in his life, *'Look, I was content to wait on tables, I was happy just serving the widows, making sure there was no disparity in the preference shown to one group or the other, I was glad to meet the needs of the less fortunate, I was content to do that. And then driven out of Jerusalem by persecution, find myself in Samaria, God put it on my heart, I end up just yielding, and end up in the middle of a revival. Then God saying 'Go lay your hands on that guy and pray for him,' and then miracles begin to take place through my life, just because I yielded.'* This is a guy at this point in time, thinks *'I got nothing to lose by yielding.'* I mean, I've ended up in some of the most remarkable circumstances imaginable in serving the Lord, just because I was willing to yield. And I think he would say that to us this evening. He was willing to do the first thing, be an usher, be a security person, work in Sunday school, wait on tables, take care of the widows. And step by step, there was a ***then, Philip did this, then Philip ended up here, then there's the dots that begin to be connected and we see God's wisdom, the way that he sows a life together.*** My encouragement to you and to myself, as I look through this, is I don't want to miss the things in an average day, that might seem mundane, I don't want to miss the things where God might say to me *'Go talk to that person,'* or *'Go help that person,'* or *'Go help this person pick this up,'* or one thing or another, *'give this person 50 bucks,'* whatever it might be, I don't want to miss those things. Because I don't want to miss what's connected to the other side of it, as I see this, and what's connected to the other end of that, and you know this pilgrimage we're on, and how wondrous it is when we

have this sense of adventure attached to it. You know the most profound theology that there is, is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that's a reality. You can tell me about everything else you believe, and we should know what we believe, and have a personal systematic theology, but the most profound part of that is that you know Jesus Christ enough that you don't have a religion you have a relationship, and he can direct you from day to day and point to point, and there's a sense of adventure, it's the wonder of the whole thing, because then we're going to step into his presence and see the One, face to face. We should be spending time getting to know, right now. That's what Philip would say to us. Let's stand, let's pray, let's sing a last song together. And then as we get to the journeys of Paul, I'm gathering some maps, stacks of Bible atlases, I'm trying to get the best ones, so you can see the miles that are traveled, again, just thinking the other week, I had never known, reading the life of George Mueller, and what he had accomplished through prayer, with the orphanages, but then he decided at 70, as a younger man he had wanted to go on the missionary field, and no mission board would approve him. So at 70 he decided *'I don't need a mission board, I can do this on my own...'*[transcript of an expository sermon on Acts 7:54-60 and Acts 8:1-25, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

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There's a lot of gray areas within the greater body of Christ about death and soul-sleep. To read about some of these varying interpretations, see <https://unityinchrist.com/plaintruth/battle.htm>

