

The Amazing Gospel of Christ

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (**Romans 1:16**). How could we be ashamed of Christ’s Gospel considering from Whom it has come and what it does? Interestingly, the book of **Acts** contains a series of conversions that impresses this fact upon us. In **Acts 8:5-11:18**, Luke transitioned from mainly discussing the work of Peter and the Jerusalem church, to discussing Paul and the Antioch church. He moved from focusing on Jewish Christians to Gentiles in the church. But such a transition could not be glossed over lightly. Instead of just moving directly into the stories of Paul, Antioch and the Gentiles, he included an almost parenthetical section. Notice how the section is preceded by mentioning the persecution in Jerusalem (**Acts 8:4**) and is also followed by going back to that persecution (**Acts 11:19**). This parenthesis expounds a series of conversions climaxing in the breaking down of the racial wall, bringing Gentiles into the fold. They also mirror our key verse—**Romans 1:16**.

Discussion:

- I. The Samaritan Sorcerer—the power of God to salvation (**Acts 8:5-25**).
 - A. When the Christians in Jerusalem were scattered, Philip traveled into Samaria. Simon, the Samaritan Sorcerer, had astonished the Samaritans with personal trickery, convincing them he was the real power of God (**Acts 8:9-10**). How could the Gospel of Christ compete? No doubt, Philip performed true miracles (**Acts 8:6-8**). No doubt, the true miracles outshone Simon’s trickery. However, when the text describes what brought the Samaritans to salvation in **Acts 8:12**, it said, “When they believed ... the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.” The Gospel was the power to salvation.
 - B. Amazingly though, the Gospel not only turned the Samaritans away from the spurious sorcerer. It turned Simon away from his sorcery (**Acts 8:13**). However, Simon carried in some of his baggage. He had lived on tricks of the sorcery trade. He had learned to buy those tricks from others and was certain the tricks of the apostles could be purchased in the same way. While having submitted to the Gospel, Simon still wanted personal notoriety (**Acts 8:18-19**). How could Simon overcome that? The Gospel again turned Simon onto the straight and narrow. Peter, without apology, explained the way of the Gospel to Simon. If he continued in this sinful attitude he would perish along with his money. But through repentance, he could pray that Christ forgive him and if he purged himself of the poison of bitterness and iniquity he would be saved. Simon immediately repented and asked that Peter also pray on his behalf. No wonder Paul said the Gospel was powerful. If it can save a sorcerer, it can save us.
- II. The Ethiopian Eunuch—to everyone who believes (**Acts 8:26-40**).
 - A. After preaching in Samaria, Philip was told by the Lord to travel to the road between Jerusalem and Gaza. There he met a treasurer for the queen of Ethiopia who was also a eunuch. This eunuch was devoted to Judaism. He had made the pilgrimage from his home in Ethiopia to be able to worship in the holy city in which God had put His name (**Acts 8:27**).
 - B. When Philip met him, he was reading a scroll from the book of Isaiah (**Acts 8:30**). But he did not understand the prophecy of the suffering servant of God (**Acts 8:31-35**). Philip preached the Gospel to the eunuch. Once again its power was displayed. For when Philip concluded his teaching the eunuch wanted to obey. He asked, “What hinders me from being baptized?” We may not realize it today, but this was a loaded question from the eunuch’s perspective. According to **Deuteronomy 23:1**, eunuchs were not allowed in the assembly of the Jews. He was viewed as a second-class citizen. This eunuch had traveled to Jerusalem to worship God only to find out he was hindered from doing many of the things his fellow Jews were doing. Would he also be hindered from obeying this Gospel of salvation prophesied in the Jewish text?
 - C. Absolutely not. The Gospel is not only for certain races, genders or socio-economic classes. It is not only for those who are physically whole. It is for all. What was the only hindrance? The Eunuch had to believe Jesus was the Christ the Son of God (**Acts 8:37**). If we do not believe, we cannot be saved. However, if we do believe, then the Gospel is God’s power to save us, no matter who we are—whether we are black or white, Hispanic or Asian, male or female, rich or

poor, crippled or whole. As Paul said in **Romans 1:16**, the Gospel is God's power to save everyone who believes. God shows no partiality (**Acts 10:34**). The Eunuch went on his way rejoicing (**Acts 8:39**) because he had become a saved son of God with the same access into God's presence as every other Christian (**Hebrews 10:19-22**). If he could, so can we.

III. The Priest's Persecutor—to the Jew first (**Acts 9:1-30**).

- A. Saul, who wreaked havoc among the saints (**Acts 8:3**), continued his attack on Christ's church. He received special letters from the high priest authorizing him to hunt down scattered Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem (**Acts 9:1-2**). However, he came face to face with Christ. What a change this wrought in Saul. Realizing that Jesus really was the Messiah and he had been actively working against Him, Saul traveled into Damascus and spent three blind days of fasting and prayer (**Acts 9:8-9**). Can you imagine Saul's prayers? Can you imagine how he apologized for working against his God? Can you imagine how over and over again he begged to be forgiven? But could the gospel really save this persecutor?
- B. Absolutely. The gospel is God's power to save everyone who believes, to the Jew first (**Romans 1:16**). God's gospel was powerful enough to even save Saul the Priest's persecutor. As we examine this salvation in Saul, we recognize that the Gospel does not just save us in some spiritual sense, but leave us as the same people we were before we became Christians. Saul was changed by this saving Gospel. He no longer hunted down Christians to take them back to Jerusalem. Rather, he sought them out to be joined to them (**Acts 9:26**). No doubt, the Jerusalem Christians were afraid of him. But his changed life was so obvious that when Barnabas explained it to the apostles, they opened the arms of fellowship to him (**Acts 9:27-28**). If the Gospel could save Saul, the Priest's Persecutor, it can save us.

IV. The Caesarean Centurion—and also to the Greek (**Acts 10:1-11:18**).

- A. The real test of the Gospel's power to save had not yet been demonstrated. After all, these first three, as impressive as their salvation was, were all still connected to Judaism. But what about Gentiles, can they be saved? This question is important, because really we are not asking about someone else. We are really asking, "Can the Gospel save us?" These stories progress so we may realize that if the Gospel can save a Samaritan Sorcerer, an Ethiopian Eunuch and the Priest's Persecutor, it can certainly save Caesarean Centurion, a Gentile.
- B. God removed that barrier in **Acts 10-11**. But it took a great deal of work. He had to convince Peter not to view the Gentiles as unclean, which He did through visions of animals both clean and unclean (**Acts 10:10-16**). Even after that repeated message, it was not until the Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles that those with Peter realized they could not forbid water baptism to Gentiles (**Acts 10:44-48**). However, when Peter and the Jewish brethren with him returned to Jerusalem, others contended with them. But as he explained what occurred, even they were convinced, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life" (**Acts 11:18**). As Paul said in **Romans 1:16**, the Gospel is not just for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. Paul also explained the Gospel's universal nature in **Ephesians 2:14-19**.

Conclusion:

What is this Gospel message that is so powerful it can save everyone who believes whether a Samaritan Sorcerer, an Ethiopian Eunuch, the Priest's Persecutor or even a Caesarean Centurion? **Acts 8:32-33** explains that the suffering servant of God was sacrificed for all of us. We must not be ashamed to proclaim or obey this Gospel, but rather we must embrace it and live it.

Notice very clearly the path to God's power for salvation as we look at what each of these did. According to **Acts 8:13, 37; 10:43**, these people believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Further they confessed their faith in him as demonstrated by the eunuch in **Acts 8:37 (Romans 10:9-10)**. But their road was not just one of mental assent and verbal statement, their road was one of a changed life and submissive obedience. According to **Acts 11:18**, salvation came through repentance. Finally, according to **Acts 8:12-13, 38; 9:18; 10:47-48**, these all entered into the Gospel plan by submitting to water baptism. No matter who you are, the Gospel is God's power to save you. You will not find that power anywhere else. Why not submit to God's power to save today?