

## APPLICATION

- (1) What barriers have you allowed to be erected in your life that could hinder the Gospel?
- (2) Are there barriers that you have allowed to hinder you from accepting the Gospel?

**THE GOSPEL IS UNSTOPPABLE...except in one place... YOUR HEART'S DOOR.**

### Personal Gospel Story - PRIDE

## RESPONSE

If you are not yet a follower of Christ... **What is hindering you from trusting Christ? Would you respond in faith to the Gospel message by 'confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead'... and trust Christ alone today as your personal Lord and Savior?**

### Personal Baptism - PRIDE

If you are a follower of Christ and have not followed in obedience to Jesus' example in believer's baptism... that is a barrier to your spiritual growth and Him using you for the sake of the Gospel. **Would you have the courage to ask God to break down that barrier today and follow in faith?**

### Personal Witness - FEAR

If you are a follower of Christ and you realized that the Enemy has been barricading your life with barriers to being used of God either in your current sphere of influence for the sake of the Gospel, **Would you ask God to break down that barrier today and follow in faith?**

### Personal Calling - PLANS

And maybe God has shown you today that you have allowed the Enemy to build barriers in your life as to how or where you could or would allow your life to be used by God for the sake of the Gospel, **Would you follow in faith by placing your 'YES' on the altar today?**

**We have heard God's Word this morning... and I believe He has spoken to many of you. Now it is time for each of us to respond. There will be encouragers here to pray with you or help you if you would like. This altar is a friendly place... or you can respond where you are.**

**The most important thing is that you respond to God... in faith... by saying, "Yes" today!**

## Unstoppable Gospel

First Baptist Church Peachtree City

October 22, 2017

Acts 8:1-40

## INTRODUCTION

It is an honor to open God's Word with you. We have been studying the Book of Acts, and I would invite you to join me in turning in your copy of the Scriptures to Chapter 8 where the church was confronted with what seemed to be insurmountable barriers to the Gospel. In our culture, **we can often perceive – or even build – barriers to the Gospel.**

**Are there barriers that you may perceive or have built to the Gospel in your life?**

After Christ's death, burial and resurrection, He gave His disciples a picture of how the Gospel would spread to the entire planet [Acts 1:8]. Soon after He ascended to Heaven, on the Day of Pentecost, the Apostles – **empowered by the Holy Spirit** – began preaching the Gospel in Jerusalem. The barrier of **language** was overcome and the church was born.

Within a few weeks, they grew to over 5,000 and they had to overcome **organizational** barriers [Acts 6]. The rapid spread of the Gospel made Jewish leaders so upset they stoned a deacon, **Stephen** [Acts 8]. A Hellenist (Greek-speaking Jew), he directly challenged the religious establishment. His death, **as the first Christian martyr**, sparked mass persecution, in an attempt to stop this **Unstoppable Gospel. Let's read God's Word together.**

## TEXT

**1** Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. **2** Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. **3** But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. **4** Therefore, those who had been scattered went about **preaching** the word.

**5** Philip went down to the city of Samaria **30 miles north** and began proclaiming Christ to them. **6** The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. **7** For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. **8** So there was much rejoicing in that city. **9** Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great. **10** And they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God." **11** And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts. **12** But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, **normal** men and women alike. **13** Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

**14** Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, **15** who came down and prayed for them that they might

receive the Holy Spirit: **16** For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **17** Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

**18** Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, **19** saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." **[Simony]** **20** But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! **21** "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. **22** "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. **23** "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." **24** But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me." **[James 2:19]**

**25** So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. **26** But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road). **[last water stop]**

**27** So he got up and went, and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. **[Northern Sudan]**, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, **28** and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. **29** Then the Spirit said to Philip, "**Go up and join this chariot.**" **30** Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" **31** And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. **33** "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH." **[Septuagint: Isa. 53:7-8]** **34** The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?"

**35** Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. **36** As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" **37** [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] **[common NT practice]** **38** And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

**39** When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing. **40** But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

*Let's look at eight (8) barriers to the Gospel in the text. Is one of them hindering you?*

## UNDERSTANDING

A. The barrier of **persecution**. (v. 1-3)

1. Some believe this was God moving believers out of inactivity... but not necessarily. **[Fear]**
2. This persecution was real... most likely directed at Hellenists... but Paul was ruthless.
3. Satan is not silent – roaring - trying to steal, kill and destroy - and he uses people.

**Persecution... and fear of it... can be paralyzing without the power of God's Spirit.**

B. The barrier of **relocation**. (v. 4)

1. 'diaspora' – scattering of seed was not random, but of the Sovereign hand of God.
3. [Romans 8:28] is not limited to our comfort, nor to our geography. **[Lesa – California]**

**The Gospel is not limited to a place, but we can limit the Gospel message in a place.**

C. The barrier of **history**. (v. 5-13)

1. Samaritans were hated because of their inter-racial marriages with ruthless Assyrians.
2. Samaritans were despised for claiming to be Jews, but only accepting the Pentateuch.
3. Samaritans were rejected because they built their own temple for worship. **[John 4]**

**Historical barriers are real, but the Gospel makes us all new... not just reformed.**

D. The barrier of **inclusion**. (v. 14-17)

1. Peter and John were sent to authenticate the genuine nature of the conversions.
2. The Book of Acts is a transitional book... not a prescriptive book. Not a doctrinal rock.

**We will most likely be surprised at the make-up of Heaven... and ethnicity of Christ.**

E. The barrier of **counterfeits**. (v. 18-24)

1. Simon was most likely not genuinely converted... professing without possessing.
2. Peter's directive did not lead to his repentance, but only a plea to avoid judgment.

**Counterfeits will be revealed in time... we cannot not allow them to hinder the Gospel.**

F. The barrier of **assignments**. (v. 25-26) **[Is a ministry assignment a barrier for you?]**

1. Peter and John's assignment from the church was completed, but not from Christ.
2. Matthew 28:16-20 charges us to make disciples 'as we are going'... and they did.
3. Philip was surely busy in his Samaritan assignment, but it was no excuse to say 'no'.

**Our linear perspective should not be a barrier to God's eternal redemptive plan.**

G. The barrier of **prejudice**. (v. 26-39) **[preconceived opinion contrary to God's view]**

1. Jewish leaders judged the Ethiopian unworthy of God and themselves... un-savable.
2. Jews limited acceptance of him was as a God-fearer, though having wealth and status
3. Philip, not fully accepted, used by God to reach one man and a continent. **[Saul]**

**The Gospel only has one people... and we are all family in Christ.**

H. The barrier of **geography**. (v. 39-40) **[Have you built geographic barriers?]**

1. The Ethiopian returned to his home south of Egypt, where the Gospel still spreads.
2. His homeland was known to the Greeks and Romans as, 'the ends of the earth.'
3. Philip did not return to Samaria, settling in Caesarea, still Gospel faithful! **[Acts 21:8]**

**God could reach the furthest geography however He chooses, but He chose us.**

**[If you are a follower of Christ... you are God's 'PLAN A']**