

Bible Study: Acts

(Part 4-Chapters 8-9)

by Gary T. Panell

Chapter 8

So far in our study of Acts we have covered the first part: I. The Gospel Spreads in Jerusalem, Chapter 1-7. Now we are going to cover in this section: II. The Gospel Spreads in all Judea and Samaria, Chapters 8-12.

(1-4) "Chapter 8:1-4 records the first general persecution against the whole church. Saul appears here as the most active agent in this persecution. Borne along by his characteristic zeal and energy, he became the champion of Judaism against what he believed to be the heresy of Christianity." (*Through the Bible Book by Book* by Myer Pearlman)

Saul (as he was called before he received the Lord) thought he was doing God a favor by persecuting the Christians. Jesus prophesied that these things would happen, and they came to pass exactly as He had said they would. "They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them." (John 16:2-4a)

Here Saul thought that he was a good moral person, in tune with God's will. Paul (looking back to before he was saved) says of himself: ".circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." (Philippians 3:5-6) He was religious, but like most of the religious leaders of Saul's time, they were not going to heaven.

Oh, yes, they thought that they were right in the sight of God, but they weren't, they were on their way to hell. Only Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were believers out of the seventy leaders of Israel on the Sanhedrin at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. "After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds." (John 19:38-39)

"Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before." (Luke 23:50-53) No doubt, even these two, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, decided to leave the Sanhedrin after the crucifixion of Christ. That meant that not even one believer was on the Sanhedrin when Saul was severing it. Saul may have actually been on the Sanhedrin when Stephen was killed, because it says in verse one that "Saul was consenting to his death, or this may mean only that he

was in agreement with them. He certainly was with them and taught by them. We know this because he was present at the time of Stephen's stoning, and he received letters from the High priest to do his persecution (Acts 9:1).

It should be a wake-up call to all those who think that they are religious, and who may even be leaders in the church, to realize that it is possible to think that one is in right standing with God, when in reality they are not. Jesus told us, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23)

Even though Paul was moral, and full of zeal and sincerity, he was sincerely wrong. Paul says he did what he did in ignorance. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 1:12-14)

Even though Paul said that God had forgiven him, it must have been hard for him to forgive himself. "For I am least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Corinthians 15: 9-10)

This should also give encouragement for those who once opposed the gospel before they were saved, to know that God not only forgives, but that by His sovereign grace, He uses what was wrong in us before we were saved, to help us reach others. I think about a book I read years ago of a Russian persecutor. He was with the KGB in the heyday of Communism. He loved to break up church prayer meetings and throw the Christians in jail. He also loved to torture people with his own hands. One day he took a young Christian lady and beat her to death with his bare hands. But it was through her testimony that haunted him from that day forward, which brought him to Christ.

Paul's persecution of Christians did not hinder the advance of the gospel either, but helped it, as it always does. Satan thinks he will hinder the work of the gospel by hurting Christians, but I have news for him, it always backfires! "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Look what happened as a result of the persecution here. "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word." (Acts 8:4) "Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." (Acts 11:19-21)

"The church at Jerusalem had grown inordinately large. In addition to the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41), there were many others who had joined. After Peter's second sermon, it was noted that the believers numbered five thousand men, evidently not even counting the women

and children (Acts 4:4). Later the disciples were called a 'multitude' (Acts 4:32), and still later it was said that 'the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly' (Acts 6:7).

"They were all staying in Jerusalem, enjoying one another's fellowship and the preaching of the apostles. The Lord, however, had commissioned them to go throughout all Judea, Samaria and eventually 'to the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts 1:8) Since they had not even started to do this, perhaps it was the Lord who allowed this persecution to arise.

"Soon they were scattering into the rest of Judea and into Samaria, and as they scattered, they 'went everywhere preaching the word' (Acts 8:4). Perhaps modern churches that desire to become large and powerful should be advised by this example (note also, the later church at Laodicea, which had become big and rich in material things, but lukewarm in doctrine and devotion to Christ-Revelation 3:14-20).

"When the Lord blesses a church with many converts and disciples, it may well be more efficient, as well as Christ honoring, for many of its members to scatter abroad to form new churches in other areas where they are more needed. Philip's glad reception in Samaria is a case in point. (Acts 8:5-8) (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

(5-25) "The Samaritans were descendants from a mixture of the remnant of Israel with foreigners who were settled in Samaria by the conquering Assyrians when the upper classes were taken into exile (II Kings 17). The Samaritans had erected a rival temple upon Mount Gerizim (see John 4:20). Because the Jews regarded the Samaritans as both racial and religious half-breeds, violent racial prejudices had to be overcome before the church could become a truly universal people.

"The city of Samaria. It is not clear whether Samaria is meant to designate a city or the country. Usually, the word in the NT designates the territory rather than the city. The city of Samaria had been rebuilt by Herod the Great as a Greek city and called Sebaste, in honor of the Roman emperor. Philip's message in Samaria was the Messiah (AV omits the definite article) that is, that Jesus was the Christ." (*The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*)

"Philip. One of the Seven in the Jerusalem church (6:5), who now becomes an evangelist, proclaiming the Christ (Messiah); see also 21:8. Philip is an example of one of those who were scattered in a city in Samaria. Some manuscripts have 'the city of Samaria,' a reference to the old capital Samaria, renamed Sebaste or Neapolis (modern Nablus)." (*The NIV Study Bible*)

The message we preach is "Christ" and Him crucified, but now raised from the dead. I remember a statement Billy Graham made about when he first started preaching. One night, he says, his message just seemed to fall flat. He asked someone what happened, and they asked, "Did you say anything about the "cross" of Christ?" Billy realized that He had not even mentioned the cross in his whole message, so he determined from that night forward to always include the preaching of the "cross," and we see the results!

Paul says of the preaching of Christ, and His cross: "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and weakness of God is stronger than man." (1

Corinthians 1:22-25) "For I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16)

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake." (2 Corinthians 4:6) I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: "Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

Because you are reading this study, you are not of those who have "itching ears," or one who is "turned aside to fables," but you see the importance of the preaching of the Word of God! We need you in this day and age, as never before, because you are one of the very few that are preaching "Christ." This is one reason we like going to the church where we go, because the Word of God is being preached. Our pastor preaches right through the Word of God, as a pastor should! As a result, many missionaries are being sent out from our church, to preach the Word, as the Holy Spirit instructed us to do! "For 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 (Gentiles)." (Romans 1:16)

"Philip was another non-apostle like Stephen (6:8), but that was no hindrance to his miracle ministry. Miracles themselves do not bring salvation, but they often attract people to the message. The miracles of the Bible are 'signs,' in that each one has an important spiritual message to convey, as well as serving to confirm the veracity of the word of the gospel: 'And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.' (Mark 16:20)" (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

"Picture this scene: A young Muslim mother traveling on a bus holds her crying baby in her arms, unable to comfort him, and she herself is weeping uncontrollably. What do you do?

"Sunita, a [Gospel For Asia](#) missionary's wife, saw such a scene from a nearby seat when she felt the tug of the Holy Spirit on her heart to go and pray for them. Not knowing what to expect, she gently approached the Muslim woman and asked if she could pray for her and her child.

"In response, the young mother poured out her heart to Sunita. She said that for the past few days, her three-month-old baby had not been drinking anything. Alarmed, the young mother had taken her child for treatment, but nothing worked. Finally, the doctors told her to take her baby home-there was no hope left. That's why she was on the bus and in such anguish.

"Sunita lovingly told the Muslim lady about the power of Jesus, and the woman gladly accepted Sunita's offer to pray for her sick baby. Everyone on the bus saw what happened next: The child stopped crying and started to nurse. The young mother was overjoyed.

"Today, this young Muslim woman tells anyone who will listen how Jesus healed her child, and she urges others in need to go to a church for prayer. Many of them have come searching for Sunita, who is happy to explain to them how Jesus loves and cares about them." (*Gospel For Asia Newsletter*, January 2007)

We see Philip mentioned in the book of Acts where there is more detail about his family. "On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied." (Acts 21:8)

Jesus planting ministry in Samaria, recorded in John chapter 4, is now bringing forth more fruit. There is a contrast with the Philip's preaching to that of Simon the Sorcerer's work. Philip's ministry brought "great joy" to the city while sorcery brings bondage. (Look at our study on Spiritualism and our [Ephesians study Chapter Six.](#))

"8:13 [Simon] believed also. [and when he was baptized he continued with Philip] Simon's "belief" was evidently only a belief in the reality of the signs and wonders performed by Philip (note Christ's rebuke of this kind of belief in John 4:48 "Then Jesus said to him, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.'"; also compare John 2:23-25 "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.")

"These wonders were greater than those Simon was able to perform with his sorceries (Greek mageia, from which we get our word "magic"), and he was envious. In the early Christian literature, he was called Simon Magus, and was said to be a prominent enemy of the true faith." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

"Simon evidently saw some outward phenomenon that convinced him that the Samaritan converts had received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands. Although Luke does not identify the external manifestation, many commentators agree that it may likely have been speaking in tongues. Your money perish. iniquity: Simon's quest to buy the ability to impart the power of the Spirit was his obvious sin, including a more subtle evil is his desire to use the power of God for his own gain. The word 'simony,' which is the buying and selling of church offices and influence, originates here.

Some ask, Was Simon really saved? 'Simon himself also believed' and 'was baptized' (v. 13), but Peter's scathing rebuke (v. 21) leaves us uncertain about where Simon really stood with God. Furthermore, the early writings of church history continue to depict Simon as a father of heresies." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

Jesus said that as the message of salvation goes out, certain soils of the heart will determine whether people will be saved and bring forth fruit or not. "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who

received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (Matthew 13:3-23)

I do not believe that Simon the Sorcerer was saved, people can make a profession of faith, and even be baptized, but this does not mean that a person is saved. Peter told him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." (Acts 8:20-23)

It seems that Simon was not really sorry for his sin, but was afraid of what might happen to him. "A sorcerer is one who deceives, manipulates, and delights to control others and does so by demonic enablement. Peter identified the basis for Simon's sorcery as bitterness-the deepening effect of unforgiveness (v. 22). Here is a warning regarding the danger of tolerated or embraced unforgiveness, which may, like poison, permeate and bind the soul, ultimately corrupting everything around it. In Simon's case, his bitterness shaped his passion to control others (v 19)-which prompted his quest to purchase the ability to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Though having believed and been baptized (v. 13), the residue of his past bondage surfaces as he unworthily seeks power to manipulate others for self-exalting purposes. Peter discerns the root of his bondage (v. 23) and summons Simon to repentance and deliverance. Though Simon did not repent, this episode still points to one of the foremost keys to deliverance from entrenched bondage in a believer's soul-the act of forgiveness.

Forgiving others from our heart flushes out the "poison" with the power of the Cross. In contrast, unforgiveness can, as with Simon; lead down paths we would never have imagined we would travel. (See Matt. 6:14, 15; Col. 3:13; Heb. 12:15-17). (Luke 11:24-26/2 Cor. 10:4-6) C. H." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

This same bitterness cannot only be in our heart toward man only, but it can be directed toward God as well. Here is a case where a "Christian" became bitter toward God. "The following is a terrible warning for the church today as to what happens when one compromises on the Word of God. In the 1950s, a famous evangelist named Charles Templeton received wide media attention across America. Great crowds flocked to hear him. Large numbers of people came forward when he challenged them to trust Christ.

But in 1994 he published a book called Farewell to God in which he totally rejected the Christian faith. He died a few years ago as a man embittered against the Christian faith. What happened to Templeton is a warning for us all today. He went to Princeton University and was taught to believe in the evolutionary teaching of "millions of years." He recognized that if this were true, then God used death,

bloodshed, suffering and disease for millions of years as part of His creative process-and then called this very good.

All through his book, Templeton wrote that there can't be a God of love because of all the death and suffering in the world. The teaching of 'millions of years' destroyed Templeton. Don't compromise, as he did, and destroy your faith." (*Answers In Genesis'* Email newsletter February 10, 2007) Many, many young people have gone off to college and fallen into this same trap of unbelief and bitterness toward God. Also, I know of individuals who feel God has done them wrong and they harbor bitterness toward Him. This sin needs to be confessed and forsaken if victory is to come into a person's life.

(14-25) "The apostles at Jerusalem maintained a supervisory relationship over the entire Church, and they therefore sent Peter and John to Samaria to investigate this new development. (John and his brother James had once asked Jesus whether they should not call down fire from heaven upon a certain Samaritan village; see Luke 9: 51 - 54).

"It became evident to Peter and John that the gift of the Holy Spirit received at Pentecost had not been extended to the Samaritan converts. They had received the baptism of water but not the baptism of the Spirit. It was obvious to the two apostles that the faith of the people was genuine. They therefore laid their hands upon the converts, and the Holy Spirit came upon them.

"The significance of this event lies in the fact that these people were Samaritans. Here is the first step in which the Church burst its Jewish bonds and moved toward a truly world-wide fellowship. The imposition of hands was not necessary for the Samaritans; but it was necessary for the apostles, that they might be fully convinced that God was indeed breaking the barriers of racial prejudice and including these half-breed people within the fellowship of the Church. This was not a new Pentecost but an extension of the one Pentecost to the Samaritan people." (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*)

"8:14 A Spirit-Filled Revival Peter and John's concern for the Samaritan revival directly relates to their desire that those born of the Holy Spirit also receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The text and their ministry clearly differentiate water baptism (vv. 12, 16) from receiving the Holy Spirit's fullness (v. 17). The apostles laid hands on the converts, and they received the Holy Spirit with miracle signs. This attracted the interest of Simon the sorcerer (vv. 18, 19), who desired the same power demonstrated by the apostles as they laid hands on the converts.

"For the apostles, the Holy Spirit fullness was no small matter; their focus and approach were dedicated toward guaranteeing the transmission of the power of Pentecost among new believers. They obviously felt the need for every believer to become equipped with power, as sure as each of them had received new life in Christ and obeyed Him in water baptism. Such leadership is still needed in the church today." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

Some teach that what really happened here was that the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost to the Jews, and then here, in Acts eight, He came to the 'half-breed' Jews, and later in chapters ten and eleven He came to the Gentiles. Once all of this took place in the early Church, they teach that, now, the Holy Spirit comes only at salvation. They say that there is, now, no need for the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit.

These same people say that the Samaritans could not have spoken in tongues, because it was not like the Day of Pentecost where there were different language groups present. However, as we will see later

in the book, in chapters 10-11; 19, and also in 1 Corinthians 14, tongues is not always given to communicate to people of another language group. Sometimes it is given as a sign gift or as a prayer language. So I believe that even though it is not spelled out here, the indication is that some spoke in tongues and others may have prophesied or both. Simon saw something! However, below is an example of what many fine, born again, Christians believe:

"In this case, it was vital for the new Samaritan believers to be integrated spiritually with the Jerusalem church, since the Jews and Samaritans had been enemies for centuries and this barrier urgently needed to be removed. Consequently, two leaders of the apostles, Peter and John, came to Samaria to confirm the acceptance of the Samaritans on the human level, and the Holy Spirit came to confirm this on the divine level, evidently by supernatural phenomena, as He had done at Pentecost.

"There is no indication, however, that the Samaritan believers spoke in other tongues. After all, there were only Samaritan believers present on this occasion, rather than men from many nations, as at Pentecost, so such tongues would have been unintelligible. Whatever the manifestation may have been, it was obvious that Holy Spirit had fallen on the Samaritans, just as He had on the Jews at Pentecost."
(The Defender's Study Bible)

This is the teaching that I received, and what I believed for many years as a Christian growing up. Some teachers did go on to talk about the filling of the Holy Spirit, in Ephesians 5:18, but this reference was considered to be just a controlling by the Holy Spirit of the believer's life. With these arguments, which I have only mentioned, they taught away the baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit being needed for us today. This is tragic, because it really is a way Satan has kept Christians from experiencing the real power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

It is possible to study the word of God and know it well, but misunderstand or deny certain important teachings of the God's word. I believe this teaching of the Holy Spirit's power and "Filling" (Baptism and Filling are two terms meaning the same thing, look at Jesus' statement in Acts 1:5 where He said you shall be "baptized," then after it happened in Acts 2:4 where it says that they were "filled" with the Holy Spirit.) is needed again today in the Church if we are to fulfill the command Christ gave us to go into the entire world with the gospel. That is why we have stressed our key verse for this book, Acts 1:8. (We have a more complete study on this subject, including the teachings of R. A. Torrey and that of Chuck Smith ([Calvary Chapel](#)), in our Ephesians Commentary, chapter 5:18.)

I would just like to say here, as I have mentioned before, this is something that has truly changed my life as a Christian. Yes, my background is Baptist, and Interdenominational, but I have taken a stand for what I believe on this subject of the Holy Spirit's Filling. I know what happened to me when I was filled with the Holy Spirit. Am I perfect? Absolutely not! I still sin and have to confess my sins like other Christians. Am I better than other Christians who have not had this experience of the "Filling"? No! I am a sinner saved by grace, but I do know that since the filling of the Holy Spirit, God has given me an even greater capacity to serve Him, and I have been given a prayer language that helps me in my times of need and fellowship with the Lord.

Not every Christian who has been filled with the Holy Spirit claims to speak in tongues, so we cannot be dogmatic and say that everyone who is truly filled with the Holy Spirit speaks in tongues. Even this passage does not say that they spoke in tongues when they received the Holy Spirit; some argue that they may have prophesied only, or that only some spoke in tongues and others had other sign gifts. Let me emphasize it once again, we do know Simon saw something happen to the people when they were

filled with the Holy Spirit. There was some sort of evidence that a change had taken place in their lives, and that they were truly filled with the Holy Spirit! The apostles accepted it as proof that the Samaritans had experienced the same baptize of the Holy Spirit that they had.

Let me make it perfectly clear here, that once a person is truly saved or born again they do have the Holy Spirit living in their lives, this Scripture proves it: "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Romans 8:9)

When you were saved you were also baptized into the body of Christ, the Church universal. "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:12-13) "Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

So you are saved and you can know that you are on your way to heaven. You say, "What else do I need? You need to receive the Holy Spirit's power like the Samaritans did! You say, "How do I receive the Holy Spirit's power?" Listen to what Jesus said, "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:9-13)

We need to remember also that this book is a "blueprint" for the Church. Contrary to what many Christians teach, this book of Acts is still good for us today. It is not given to us just as some history of the early Church (it is that too), but it is a living letter from the Holy Spirit for us today. It is intended to teach us what the Church should look like, and how it should function! So we need to put its teachings into practice to see the same power the early Church experienced. Those churches that are doing this are seeing similar results to what happened in the book of the "Acts of the Holy Spirit!"

For many years I would have nothing to do with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, because I was taught as many are today, that it is like dabbling in demonism. When I was first filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues there were those Christians that would have nothing to do with me, even as it is today. Today there are many divisions in the Church over this very same issue, but this is because some Christians do not want to believe that God does the same things today that He did in those days. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

If these same people (that don't believe the Baptism and Filling of the Holy Spirit are for today) would read the writings of some of their favorite Bible teachers and founders, they would realize that they believed in the Baptism and Filling of the Holy Spirit. D.L. Moody and R.A. Torrey even said the "Filling" and the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" were one and the same. Moody and Torrey believed all the gifts were still for today, but often Christians want to pretend like they didn't teach this. It is true, not only

because of what great men of God like Torrey and Moody said about this subject of the Filling and Baptism of the Holy Spirit, but because it is taught in the Word of God!

Here are some quotes from the writings of R. A. Torrey, a long time associate of D.L. Moody:

"FIRST PROPOSITION: A number of suggestive phrases-'Baptized with the Holy Spirit,' 'filled with the Holy Ghost [Spirit],' 'The Holy Ghost fell on them,' 'The gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out,' 'Receive the Holy Ghost,' 'The Holy Ghost came on them,' 'Gifts of the Holy Ghost,' 'I send the promise of my Father upon you,' 'Endued with power from on high,' are used in the New Testament to describe one and the same experience.

"SECOND PROPOSITION: The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a definite experience of which one may and ought to know whether he has received it or not.

"THIRD PROPOSITION: The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is an operation of the Holy Spirit distinct from and subsequent and additional to His regenerating work. Every true believer has the Holy Spirit. But not every believer has the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

"In such a normal state of the church the Baptism with the Holy Spirit would be received immediately upon repentance and baptism into the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38. But the doctrine of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit has been so allowed to drop out of sight, and the church has had so little expectancy along this line for its young children, that a large portion of the church is in the position of the churches in Samaria and Ephesus, where someone has to come and call the attention of the mass of believers to their privilege in the Risen Christ and claim it for them.

"FOURTH PROPOSITION: The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is an experience connected with and primarily for the purpose of service."

These quotes were taken out of the book: *WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES*, the author is R.A. Torrey. The copyright is 1898-1933 By Fleming H. Revell Company, New York: 158 Fifth Avenue London: 99 Anerley Road, pages 270-275. I point this out because many Christians are not aware that D.L Moody and R. A. Torrey worked together, and both believed in the "Filling" or "Baptism of the Holy Spirit." No wonder they were used so mightily of the Lord in their day! We need this same filling today; it is not just something that happened to the early believers!

You might ask, "How can I have this filling of the Holy Spirit?" And that is a great question, so let's look at that again before we leave this section. I believe this is one of the reasons the Church is so anemic today, and many Christians do not have the filling, and therefore are without the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. If you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit you must receive the filling by faith. First, you must know for sure that you are saved, and then you need to confess all known sin to the Lord.

If you attend a church that believes in the filling or baptism of the Holy Spirit, ask for the pastor or elders to lay hands on you and pray for you. The laying on of hands is not always necessary, but sometimes it helps to pray with others, even as in salvation. If you do not know any Christian that believes this teaching, and you don't know anyone who can lay hands on you to pray with you, then pray that God will fill you. (In Acts 10 and 11 we will see that no one had to lay hands on the Gentiles to be filled.)

Believe that He will fill you, since He commanded us to be filled (Ephesians 5:18). If you begin to praise Him in your own language or another language do not be surprised, just keep right on doing it!

You will find that you have come into His rest (Hebrews chapter 4), because it is no longer you who is trying to do the work, but the Holy Spirit! He will now empower you to be a bold witness for Him as the early apostles were! "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem [your home town or city], and in all Judea and Samaria [your state], and to the end of the earth [wherever God leads you]." (Acts 1:8)

Here is a little of my testimony (and that of my wife) as to how we came into the filling of the Holy Spirit: Feeling the call of God on our lives we went with Child Evangelism Fellowship as directors to Klamath and Lake Counties in Oregon. After a year of deputation (raising prayer and financial support), we traveled overseas to the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago. There we were able, with God's blessing to see the work increase (the work was started before we came). While there I also learned about Pentecostals. Since I had never gone to a Pentecostal Church up to this time, I wanted to know if this filling of the Holy Spirit and speaking in "tongues" was real or not. I would find out!

We left Trinidad and Tobago after the work had been organized with the recognition of the Lord and the government. The Lord called us at that time to Mt. Vernon, Oregon, where I became the pastor of the Community Church. It was there that I was to hear more about the work of the Holy Spirit and what He is doing in our day.

Several times I visited the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, Aglow, and the Assembly of God Church in John Day, Oregon. It was there with Pastor Milo Frankie, and other Christian men, that I prayed and received the filling (baptism) of the Holy Spirit, and spoke in tongues. Later that night, my wife Marlene, who had been under conviction about the Holy Spirit's work, also received the "filling" and spoke in tongues. Since this time I have been filled over and over again, as I have yielded myself to the Lord.

Even though the initial filling of the Holy Spirit took place this way in my life, it may be very different in your life. Wait on the Lord in prayer and ask Him to fill you and He will. Don't expect that all will be roses after you receive the filling of the Holy Spirit. You may find, as we did, lots of opposition to God's filling of your life, but remember God is with you no matter what happens!

Here is how the filling of the Holy Spirit took place in another husband and wife: (This true testimony is taken from the book *Anointed for Burial-Cambodia's Like a Mighty Wind* by Todd and DeAnn Burke "Kong's family")

"Kong's family had seemed really happy since moving from the building into the house with us. Now they had more space than just a single room, and they seemed to enjoy their work. They took care of the yard, cleaned the house, and helped with the orphans. But Kong had come from a very conservative evangelical background. When it came to healings, deliverances, and people being baptized with the Holy Spirit, he was skeptical.

"These experiences are not for us today,' he had been taught. 'They were only for the early church to get things started, but today we don't need them. We have the Bible-that's enough. If these things happen now, it's probably of the devil.' Kong couldn't deny the miracles that had taken place, so he

searched for an explanation. He had even been warned by other Christians that we used Spiritism. My talks with him had not altered his indifference.

"On rare occasions Kong would come around the building, but he seemed to resent Thay, Sam-Oeurn, and the other workers who strongly emphasized the power of God. We tried to encourage him by giving him translation work to do, hoping he would feel a part of the ministry. But his attitude remained cold. We asked his wife, San, if she would begin holding a women's meeting once a week. She reluctantly agreed, feeling unqualified.

"As I lay in bed that morning I was questioning to myself, Were we right to have asked her to do this? Maybe we're trying too hard to make them feel accepted. Should we just let them go? But what would they do? 'Oh, Lord,' I prayed, 'give us wisdom and guide us. I'm weary of the hassle.'

"My thoughts were interrupted by the chirping of birds nested in the coconut tree outside our window. Glancing at my watch, it read a quarter past five. I eased quietly out of bed so I wouldn't wake DeAnn and sat in a cushioned bamboo chair to begin my morning Bible reading. I had read only a few verses, when suddenly I was startled by a loud racket downstairs.

"'What's that?' DeAnn jumped, awakened by the noise.' It sounds like someone yelling, but who could it be at this hour of the morning?' I questioned. Seconds later, there was a loud rap on our door. I scrambled out of my chair to see who it was.

"'Oh, brother!' Kong panted breathlessly, pointing downstairs. 'It's my wife! Come quickly!' I took a moment to grab a towel and wrap it around my loins, sarong style. My mind raced, trying to guess what could be wrong, as I slid into my thongs and flip-flopped hurriedly after Kong. I supposed his wife was near death or something, judging by his haste and anxiety. I could hear DeAnn's footsteps on the stairway behind us.

"'What's going on?' she demanded. 'I don't know-guess we'll find out in a few minutes.' When we reached the doorway to their quarters, Kong stepped aside and motioned for me to enter. DeAnn peered over my shoulder to see San kneeling at a chair beside their bed. Her tiny frame trembled as her voice resounded in an unknown tongue. San had always been so shy and quiet, it was hard to believe that strong voice was hers. "With her hands raised and face beaming, it reminded me of what Sam-Oeurn looked like when he was baptized with the Holy Spirit.

"'Wow!' DeAnn whispered. 'Praise God!' I looked over my shoulder at her and we laughed together. 'Hallelujah!' Kong stared at his wife in amazement. My mind shifted gears when I saw his face and realized he was probably doubtful about her experience.

"'Oh, Brother Todd,' he began, when he saw I was looking at him, 'I must tell you something.' We stepped quietly into the hallway. His brown face wrinkled thoughtfully and he batted his eyes, fighting back tears that sought release.

"'I have to confess and repent,' he said. Then he nervously gripped my arm. 'I have thought and said evil things about you and the others. I did not believe these experiences were from God. But now I know they must be. Since you asked my wife to begin holding meetings for the women, she has been reading her Bible and praying for God to help her.

"This morning she was up early peeling fruit when suddenly she dropped what she was doing and hurried to our room with a burdened look on her face. I asked her what was wrong, but she said nothing; she just knelt and prayed. All of a sudden she began to shake and speak in that strange language. I know she didn't believe in this experience either but now look at her! God has given her His Spirit so she can do His work.'

"He wiped tears from his eyes as he made his confession. I realized God was doing more than baptizing San with the Holy Spirit; He was answering our prayers by resolving a matter that had developed into a major concern. He was changing Kong's heart. 'Please pray for me,' he added, 'so that I, too, will receive this gift. I want to be used by God.'

"I was deeply touched by the appeal of this humbled man who was more than twice my age. I explained to him that he should cleanse his heart completely and ask forgiveness from Thay, Sam-Oeurn and the other believers whom he had offended. 'If you will do this,' I suggested, 'then I believe God will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and use you in a mighty way.'

"It didn't take long for him to establish his change of heart with the rest of the elders. In the prayer meeting that same morning Kong shared with everyone about San's experience, and how it had convinced him of God's power.

"'I want you all to forgive me,' he begged earnestly. 'I want to do God's will and receive everything He has for me.' After hearing his testimony, several others confessed a lack of power in their lives and expressed a hunger for more of God's Spirit. Kong had not only restored fellowship, but was already being used to challenge the other leaders.

"Convinced of his need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, Kong prayed diligently and searched the Scriptures about the subject. One afternoon he stopped me as I was leaving my office. 'Brother Todd,' he said with a peaceful smile on his face, 'do you have a moment? I would like to talk with you.' 'Sure,' I responded. 'Come on in.' He sat down in a chair with my desk between us. 'Todd, ever since San received the gift of the Holy Spirit, she hasn't been the same. She's happy and bold, and often prays in that strange language. Can you explain to me about this? I'm confused. It's like I don't even know her!'

"'I'm not surprised,' I said, reassuring him, 'especially in her case. She really received a full dose.' I opened my Bible and scooted my chair around to where he was sitting. 'You remember how the disciples acted before they were baptized with the Holy Spirit? When Jesus was around, they were full of faith and power; when they were separated from Him, however, they were abysmal failures. Do you know why it was like this?'

"'No,' he answered, shrugging his shoulders. 'They failed when Jesus was not around,' I explained, 'because they depended upon His physical presence to give them power. Peter told Jesus, 'I'll never leave you nor forsake you.' But when they took his Lord away, he was fearful and powerless. He cursed his Savior and even denied Him three times. After the day of Pentecost, however, he was no longer a coward. He stood, full of the Holy Spirit, and ministered with power and boldness before the multitudes. He was a changed man.'

"I could tell by the glimmer in Kong's eyes that my words were sinking in. Picking up my Bible, I flipped the pages to the Gospel of John and continued. 'You see, Kong, Jesus warned His disciples that one day

He was going to leave them and they could not go with Him. When they heard these words, sorrow filled their hearts. 'It is to your advantage that I go away,' He explained, 'for if I do not go away, the Helper (the Holy Spirit) shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.' But when He was crucified they all got discouraged and gave up. They left their Master in His tomb and returned to their old fishing jobs.'

"Kong nodded thoughtfully, absorbing everything I said. 'Thank God, it didn't end there!' I exclaimed, turning to Acts, chapter 1. 'Jesus arose and appeared to as many as five hundred over a period of forty days. Just before he ascended to the Father, He gave them His last command: 'Stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father'-the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It wasn't that they weren't saved; they were saved, but they were weak and fearful; they needed boldness. 'You shall receive power,' He told them, 'when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses.' This is not a command to go witness, as many believe,' I explained. 'It is a promise that you will receive power. In Acts 19, the Apostle Paul met some disciples who were trying to witness about Jesus. His first question to them was, 'Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?'

"I closed my Bible and looked at Kong. 'I believe the Lord is asking you and every believer the same question. After Pentecost, when the disciples were endued with power, they turned the world upside down. The same thing can happen in Cambodia!' Kong's serious expression broke into an excited smile. 'That would be wonderful! He bubbled with enthusiasm. 'How can I have this experience?'

"I quickly opened my Bible again to Luke 11:9-13. Pointing to the passage, I asked Kong to read it. His eyes were fastened to the page for several moments. 'But I've done that; I've asked the Lord. I've prayed, fasted, repented of my sins; what else can I do?'

"'It's a gift,' I answered. 'You can't earn it. You simply receive it. There's no special way either. The Book of Acts records many people being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Some had hands laid upon them (8:14-24; 19:1-6). Others received while praying (2:1-4) or listening to the preaching of the gospel (10:44-48).' He looked puzzled. I quickly jotted down a list of Scriptures for him to read.

"'Here, Kong. Study these passages tonight. Don't worry,' I assured him patting his shoulder, 'the Bible says, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' When you're ready, God will fill you to overflowing.'

"Folding the paper, he placed the list of Scriptures between the worn pages of his Bible. 'Thank you, brother,' he said, now encouraged. 'I must go now.' With that, he smiled and we walked together to the door. As I watched him descend the staggered stairway, I wondered whether I should have prayed for him to receive right then. But I had felt checked; it just didn't seem to be the right time. As it turned out, I was glad we waited.

"The next morning DeAnn and I were up before the sun. Silencing the alarm, we rolled out of bed, donned our gym clothes, and scurried down the stairs to jog a mile before breakfast. San was already up boiling water to mix with the babies' powdered milk formula. When she saw us, she lit up with excitement. I rummaged through our cupboard, only half listening to the Cambodian words that spilled from her lips. Then I heard her clearly say her husband's name and something about the Holy Spirit.

"'What was that you said?' I interrupted her. 'Please speak slowly!' 'Kong,' she laughed, pointing toward their room, her eyes lit with excitement. 'Last night he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He woke up speaking in tongues.'

"Then I heard a voice coming from their room. Glancing down the hallway, I saw a light appear. Kong emerged from the dark corridor with a kerosene lamp in hand. His broad grin exposed a mouthful of shining teeth. 'Praise the Lord, Brother Todd! Did San tell you what happened?' 'Yes, but just briefly. Tell us more about it.'

"'Last night she and I went over those Scriptures you gave me,' he began, still smiling. 'They helped me to understand well. Afterwards, we prayed that I might be filled with the Holy Spirit. We prayed for a long time, but nothing happened. I thought maybe I wasn't ready or something. Finally, I grew discouraged and went to bed. I slept, but San continued to pray. The next thing I knew I was awakened by a torrent of words in a language I didn't know.'

"I looked at San's beaming face as she listened to her husband. He continued, 'Then I found, to my amazement, it was me who was speaking! I felt I was saying things to God I couldn't find words to express before. A warm feeling rushed through me. Several moments passed before I realized what had actually happened; the Lord Jesus had baptized me with His Spirit.'

Kong was radiant with new life as he told of his fresh experience. But I think DeAnn and I were more excited than he was, as we hugged Kong and San and then hugged each other. God had now given us a nucleus of leaders that were empowered by His Holy Spirit. We were amazed at how He had dealt with each one of them with His sovereignty. Actually, we preferred it this way. We didn't want them becoming too attached or dependent upon us. We never knew when we might have to leave their country.

"Now that Kong and his wife were equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit, they wasted no time putting their divine energies into operation. But their new experiences were contested by a small group of Christians who had been strongly influenced by the same missionaries who were giving me opposition.

"Kong was even called to a meeting where they challenged his views and advised him not to associate with our workers. But no amount of human argument could persuade him against God's power. He gave a powerful witness of his own experience of receiving the Holy Spirit. They couldn't believe it was the same man they had known before. He appealed to them with authority and boldness, leaving them dumbfounded. 'What I knew before in theory,' he declared, 'I know now as reality.'" (*Anointed For Burial*) I would just like to say, amen, to that!

The question is raised then does everyone speak in tongues when they are baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit? If a person is honest they will have to admit that not every Scripture that talks about the filling mentions speaking in tongues, just as in Acts 8:17 and in Ephesians 5:18. No doubt, there have been many filled with the Holy Spirit throughout history that never spoke in tongues even though it was available to them. Does this mean that they were any less filled with the Holy Spirit, I think not. I believe as we hear the testimonies of great men and women of faith, we see the results of the filling in the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit demonstrated in their lives, even if they never spoke in tongues.

Billy Graham does not claim to speak in tongues, but he does claim the filling of the Holy Spirit is for us today. How could he be so used of the Lord unless he was filled with the Holy Spirit? On the other hand, so many are taught against speaking in tongues, that many people will not even entertain the thought that God would do such a thing for them. My mother-in-law was just such a person; she was filled with the Holy Spirit and used mightily of the Lord. She even spoke in tongues to begin with, but stopped doing this because she was taught that it was wrong. So some Christians may not speak in tongues because they think it is wrong.

So there may be many other reasons why a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit may not speak in tongues. However, Christians need to realize this gift is available to all believers today, and they should not be afraid of it. I am not speaking of that gift that is used in the church that must be interpreted.

Only some have the gift of speaking in tongues that needs to be interpreted. I have never had this gift as of today, but I do pray in tongues at times to the Lord. The reason we know that this gift of tongues and interpretation is not for everyone is because Scripture says so: "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:29-30) The obvious answer is, "No." Look at 1 Corinthians 12-14 study for more on this subject.

In this lesson when I speak of "tongues" I am speaking of the "tongues as a prayer language" to be used in private. "What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:15)

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit." (Jude 20)

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26-27)

Paul also told the Corinthians that he spoke in tongues more than all of them, but this was in private (his prayer language). "I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue." (1 Corinthians 14:18-19) He concludes that chapter with a fitting ending for this section here as well: "Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:39-40)

So then let's look at a case where a person was definitely filled with the Holy Spirit, but does not say that they spoke in tongues. This is a person that most Christians would have heard about or read one of his books; his name is W. Phillip Keller. He has since gone on to be with the Lord, but when he lived at Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, Alberta Canada I went to school with his son Rod Keller. I visited in their home in Three Hills. Phillip Keller wrote many wonderful books in his life, but one of my favorites is A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 (if you would like to hear a message based on **Psalm 23** from the book by Phillip Keller click here [for mp3](#) or [wma](#)). Here is his story, in his own words, of his filling of the Holy Spirit as found in his book Wonder O' the Wind:

"Moses had his 'burning bush' in the desert. Gideon had his 'oak tree' by the winepress. Elijah had his 'cave in the rock' high on a mountain. And I had my 'high cliffs' overlooking a crystal stream that cascaded out of the foothills.

"There I went, absolutely alone, determined that I would hear from God in a way never experienced before. For hours I paced back and forth atop the cliffs, tears coursing down my cheeks, in agony of earnestness, beseeching Christ to make Himself very real to me.

"It was a man hungry, thirsty, longing for the Lord who cried aloud from those cliff tops. 'Oh, God,' I pleaded from the depths of my spirit. 'You told us, 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled!' 'I raised my arms in anguish of supplication, 'Come now, move into my spirit, fill my life, my entire being with Yourself, just as this stream from the glaciers flows into this valley before me!'

"Then there came the quiet, gentle response of God's voice: 'My Spirit is imparted in plenitude to the one prepared to obey me. Your love for me is demonstrated, not by emotion, but by your readiness to comply with My wishes; to do My will. Are you ready to give me your will?' There was total silence. I was astonished, taken aback at the apparent simplicity of the straightforward exchange extended to me. I would give Him my will (my heart). He would give me Himself.

"In utter brokenness, compounded of joy, light relief and surging gratitude I fell to my knees on the wild sod and there bowed myself before my God. 'Father, from this hour, with Your presence and Your power, I undertake to do whatever You ask; to go wherever You wish; to be whoever You desire.' The words spoken audibly came in clear articulation, 'I am totally available to Your purposes for me upon the planet.'

"It was a compact of tremendous import. It was the pivot point in my walk with God. I had crossed the 'great divide' into a new region of personal, intimate contact with Christ.

"There was no ecstatic sensation. Rather, there enveloped the whole of my being, body, mind, emotions, will and spirit an acute awareness of God's gracious, wondrous Presence. He was with me, in me, to empower, to direct, to abide throughout the rest of life.

"In calm repose and supreme peace I went home. Phyllis, in her cheerful, happy way met me at the door. I had been gone all day. 'Darling!' she ejaculated, surprised and taken aback, 'You are utterly radiant! What has happened?'

"It was weeks before I felt free to tell her even a small part of all that took place that day. For it had been a sacred interlude shared by a common man alone with God's Spirit. But from that hour the entire tenor and direction of my life began to change dramatically." (*Wonder O' the Wind*, chapter: *The Pivot Point* pages 231-232, by W. Phillip Keller) Now let's go back to the Bible Philip that we were speaking of to see what else happened in his life at this time.

(26-40) Philip was told by an angel of the Lord to go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert. God had a purpose in sending Philip (not one of the twelve apostles) from the great revival taking place in Samaria to go to a desert place. Philip was being led by

the Holy Spirit, and so should we be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives! Look what happens as a result, Africa received the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

"Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. 8:26-40. Luke now records a further step in the expansion of the Church beyond its initial Jewish setting by relating the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, who was probably a half-convert to Judaism, although he may possibly have been a Jew. Eunuchs were used in Oriental courts to fill positions of high authority. Candace. Not a proper name but the title of the royal office. The king of Ethiopia was thought to be the child of the sun and therefore too sacred to exercise the actual functions of governing.

The queen mother, who was called Candace, exercised the rule. This eunuch was probably a God-fearing Gentile or half-convert to Judaism, who had gone to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage..." (*Wycliffe*)

"Riding in a covered chariot, probably drawn by oxen, he was reading from the Greek translation of the prophet Isaiah. 30. The ancients commonly read aloud, and Stephen heard the eunuch reading from Isaiah. 32, 33. The passage of Scripture was Isaiah. 53:7, 8. It describes one who suffered in silence, to whom justice was denied, and who was slain.

"Before the coming of Christ, the Jews did understand that this was a Messianic passage and that the sufferings of the servant were a prophecy of the sufferings of their Messiah. Later some interpreted the suffering servant to refer to the prophet and others to the people of Israel. 35. Philip showed the eunuch that this was a prophecy of Jesus. This goes back to our Lord's own teaching that He had come to serve and to give His life a ransom for many (Mk 10:45)." (*Wycliffe*)

"8:35 at the same scripture. Philip realized that the Ethiopian was reading from the great Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53:7, 8, and it was natural to use this Scripture to preach Christ to him. All the Old Testament Scriptures relate to Christ in one way or another."

8:39 out of the water. It is obvious that the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch took place in either a river or a pool. He and Philip first "went down both into the water" (Acts 8:38), and then came "up out of the water." Any other interpretation than immersion would seem forced and unnatural. There would be no need to go down into a pool for any other reason." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

Immersion is taught in Scripture as a study of all the passages relating to baptism both in context of each case and also in the Greek word that is used. "BAPTIZŌ, to baptize, primarily a frequentative form of baptō, to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc. Plutarchus uses it of the drawing of wine by dipping the cup into the bowl (*Alexis*, 67).

"It is used in the N.T. in Luke 11:38 of washing oneself (as in 2 Kings 5:14, 'dipped himself,' Sept.); see also Isaiah 21:4, lit., 'lawlessness overwhelms me.' In the early chapters of the four Gospels and in Acts 1:5; 11:16; 19:4, it is used of the rite performed by John the Baptist who called upon the people to repent that they might receive remission of sins. Those who obeyed came 'confessing their sins,' thus acknowledging their unfitness to be in the Messiah's coming Kingdom.

"Distinct from this is the baptism enjoined by Christ, Matthew 28:19, a baptism to be undergone by believers, thus witnessing to their identification with Him in death, burial and resurrection, e.g., Acts 19:5; Romans 6:3,4; 1 Corinthians 1:13-17; 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Colossians 2:12.

"The phrase in Matthew 28:19, 'baptizing them into the Name' (R.V.; cp. Acts 8:16 R.V.), would indicate that the baptized person was closely bound to, or became the property of the one into whose Name he was baptized." (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*)

This being said, that immersion is what is taught as the ideal symbol of what it means to be buried with Christ in His death and raised with Him to newness of life (Romans 6:3-4), there are times and places something other than immersion has to be practiced. This has happened in history and in our present day. Take for example in places where there is not enough water to immerse a person. I have seen in the Voice of the Martyr's magazine where believers in communist countries are glad for the privilege of having enough water to pour on someone to get them baptized. The mode is not what God is looking at, if it is not possible to immerse someone, the motive is what God is looking at!

"Baptism has, since the apostolic age, been practiced by every major group in the Christian Church and, in Protestant communions, is recognized as one of two sacraments-the other being the Lord's Supper. Since early in the Church's history three different modes of baptism have been used: aspersion (sprinkling); affusion (pouring); and immersion (dipping). John the Baptist, and our Lord also, prophesied a baptism with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16) (*New Scofield Reference Edition*)

God had a miracle for Philip in his mode of travel; I believe this happened in part to leave a lasting impression on the Ethiopian eunuch. We will travel this fast or faster when we are taken to heaven in the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:17), but then we will also be given a glorified body. Philip continued on in his same body, but it must have been an experience he cherished for the rest of his life. God gives us those miracles from time to time just to remind us of His great power and His love for us as individuals, even as He cared for this Black man from Africa. God knew this man would witness for Him in his own country, and so it is today, there is still a Christian churches there that refers to this history as their own.

"39,40. We do not know what became of the eunuch, but tradition says that he became a missionary among his own people. Philip visited Azotus, the old city of Ashdod, some twenty miles north of Gaza, and then journeyed north along the coast, preaching the Gospel in the various cities, probably including Lydda and Joppa (9:32ff.). He then came to Caesarea, where he apparently settled down, for he was living there at a later date (21:8). Caesarea was a Gentile city and the official residence of the Roman procurators of Judea." (*Wycliffe*)

Chapter 9

(1-9) Saul's desire was to stamp out Christianity before this 'false cult,' as he thought of it, spread to other cities. He felt, in his misguided zeal, that he needed to stop this message of Jesus of Nazareth before it 'deceived' other Jews. From the message Jesus gave him, it strongly indicates to us that Saul, even though he was zealous in what he was doing, had a little voice convicting him of sin, and the need of a Savior. Since the time Saul held the coats of those who were throwing stones at Stephen, Saul could not get out of his mind and soul, the last words of Stephen before he died. "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." (Acts 7:60)

"9:3 Damascus. Damascus is one of the world's oldest cities, first mentioned in the Bible at the time of Abraham (Genesis 14:15) and still thriving today as the capital of modern Syria. In Paul's day, it had a large Jewish population and a significant number had become Christians. Paul's commission from the high priest, however, was probably to arrest and bring back to Jerusalem those Christians who had fled the city following the stoning of Stephen." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

The following is an answer I gave on our website to someone who asked about what "goads" are:

For those that are not aware of where this word "goads" is found in Scripture, it is in Acts 9:5 where Jesus appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road and he was saved. This is what it says in the context. Then Saul (Paul's name before conversion), still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord." ["9:4 Saul, Saul. This repetition of the name of the person addressed always indicated a message of special importance. Other examples include the following: Abraham (Genesis 22:11); {Jacob (Genesis 46:2)} Moses (Exodus 3:4); Samuel (1 Samuel 3:10); Absalom (2 Samuel 18:33); Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37); Simon Peter (Luke 22:31)." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)]

Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, who you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads (pricks KJV)." (Acts 9:1-5) To put it simply a goad is a sharp stick that is used to poke at animals to make them move. An animal that is plowing or carrying a heavy load might not want to move (for obvious reasons); you could try convincing them by using a goad once or more than once.

This usually would do the trick, but then you might even have an animal that was particularly stubborn, this one would kick at the goads refusing to move. Jesus is giving Paul an object lesson of something he was, no doubt very aware of, maybe even that day, one of the mules or donkeys that was carrying his supplies didn't want to move. He may even have had to jab it several times, and it started kicking.

Jesus is saying to Paul, "You are acting like a stubborn animal that won't move even when you have had loud and strong warnings to do so!" Paul was intent on persecuting Christians, trying to get them to recant their faith, even as Communists, many Muslims, and other religions do to Christians around the world today. Paul had seen the testimony of many Christians, men and women, as he whipped them, who still held to the Lord Jesus as their Lord:

"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished." (Acts 22:4-5) "And I punished [whipped or scourged] them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities." (Acts 26:11)

Even as he took part in stoning them to death, the Christians still stayed faithful to the Lord. Saul was holding the coats of those who stoned Stephen. "But he [Stephen], being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed

into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!'"

"Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.'" And when he had said this he fell asleep [died]." Acts 7:55-60)

Paul was kicking against Jesus who was "pricking" his heart every time he persecuted or killed Christians. "Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (Acts 8:5) All the time when Saul was hurting Christians he was hurting Christ as He was watching. All the time his heart was being pricked by the "goads" of conviction. Even today, when Christians are being persecuted, the ones who are doing it are hurting Christ's heart and really they are also persecuting Christ!

He is speaking to them and they are kicking against His warnings not to do this, "You need to receive Me and become a Christian like the one you are persecuting," He is saying to them. "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." (Matthew 10:40) "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me." (John 15:20-21)

Thank God, Saul, made the choice to stop kicking and start listening! He received Christ right on the spot, as he said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (9:6) Paul always referred to the Damascus Road experience as where his conversion took place. This is vitally important, because it was not until later when he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Notice that when Ananias spoke to Saul later, he called him 'Brother Saul' even before he was baptized.

Also, it is very important to realize that Saul did see the Lord Jesus and that is one reason he was able to be an Apostle like the Twelve. "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 9:1-2) "Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead).(Galatians 1:1) This point is extremely important because, if Paul were not an Apostle like the Twelve, he could not have authority to direct the Church or to write Scripture.

"That Luke attaches great importance to this event is evidenced by his three long accounts of the incident (cf. chapters 9, 22, 26). With this, the chief persecutor of the Church becomes changed into her most prominent defender and preacher." (*Broadening Your Biblical Horizons*, New Testament Survey by Evangelical Training Association)

"9:6 trembling and astonished. Paul's trembling was probably the result of sudden conviction of his great guilt before the Lord in persecuting His followers. He actually saw the risen and glorified Lord Jesus Christ, even as he had heard Stephen testify and instantly became a believing Christian (Acts 7:56; 1 Corinthians 15:8). The immediate question then was (as it should be for all new believers): "Lord, what shall I do?"

"9:7 hearing a voice. Paul undoubtedly had a large company with him, in order to bring a large group of Christian prisoners back to Jerusalem with him. These men saw the great light but could not see Jesus therein. Also, they heard the voice as a sound, but could not understand the words (Acts 22:9). [Compare 22:9; 26:14. A contradiction has been imagined. The three statements should be taken together. The men heard the "voice" as a sound (GK. Phōnē), but did not hear the "voice" as articulating the words "Saul," "Saul," etc. (*Scofield*)]

"9:15 chosen vessel. God had chosen Paul before he was saved. In fact, Paul later testified that God had 'separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace' (Galatians 1:15). [Paul would minister to three classes of people: Gentiles, Kings and the children of Israel. -G.T.P.]

"9:15 before the Gentiles. It is noteworthy that Paul was now chosen by God to be sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21) and would even become 'the apostle of the Gentiles' (Romans 11:13). This is the same Paul who testified that he had 'profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers' (Galatians 1:14), and who, with the other Pharisees, had been furious at Stephen's intimations that God was now preparing to favor the Gentiles.

"9:17 Brother Saul. Ananias, despite his reservations, graciously recognized Saul 'the requested one,' soon to be known as Paul 'the little one,' as 'Brother.' (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

"Paul's dramatic conversion is considered by many to be one of the two great proofs of the validity of the Christian religion, the other being the Resurrection of Christ. These two key events are the footings of the Book of Acts.

"The Apostle Paul is Filled with the Holy Spirit, HOLY SPIRIT FULLNESS. Saul of Tarsus was filled with the Holy Spirit as a result of Ananias's receiving a vision (v. 10). Saul (later Paul the apostle) was filled with the Holy Spirit as Ananias laid hands on him. The accompanying sign recorded here was the return of Saul's sight (v.18). Some also note that the apostle Paul valued the fact that he spoke with other tongues (1 Cor. 14:18), so the absence of mentioning as much here might be interpreted as 1) evidence of the commonality of this experience in the early church-not necessarily requiring mention every time; or 2) that this followed later in Paul's experience." (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

"filled with the Holy Ghost. Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, and no doubt was baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit immediately, but was not 'filled with the Holy Ghost' until his sight was restored and he received spiritual sight at the same time, submitting himself fully to Christ." (*The Defender's Study Bible* by Dr. Henry M. Morris)

(18-20) "Paul, like all other new converts, was immediately baptized. He had probably been kneeling in Ananias' house, and Ananias put his hands on Paul to give a commission but Paul could not be baptized in such a position. Accordingly, he arose and went to be baptized, probably in one of the two major rivers that flow through Damascus (Abana and Pharpar). It is also noteworthy that the Apostle Paul received his commission as an apostle, not from one of the other apostles, but from the Lord Himself, through Ananias. This undermines the principle of so-called "apostolic succession." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

Paul had been praying and fasting, but now it was time to go out and put his feet, which were covered with the gospel of peace, into action. (9:20) preached Christ. "Paul, already zealous and courageous and learned in the Scriptures, immediately understood and believed the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, as well as Messiah." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

Sometimes we can also learn a lot from an experience with the Lord! Also, those who seem so opposed to the gospel message at first, when they get saved, can make some of the greatest advocates or missionaries for the Lord.

Preached, kerusso (kay-roos-oh); Strong's #2784: "To herald, tell abroad, publish, propagate, publicly proclaim, exhort, call out with a clear voice, communicate, preach. The herald is to give a public announcement of an official message and to issue whatever demands the message entails. The Christian herald is to proclaim the message of salvation through Jesus Christ and issue a summons to repent and receive forgiveness of sins."

(21-22) "The transformation in Saul completely amazed his hearers. Proving. Literally, putting together; that is, putting together the OT prophecies with their fulfillment to show that Jesus was the Messiah. Saul's training in the OT as a rabbi now stood him in good stead." (*Wycliffe*)

(23-25) "The many days include between two and three years after Saul's conversion." (*Wycliffe*) "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days." (Galatians 1:18) 'Three years' in Jewish reckoning may refer to a period of more than two full years. Comparison of this verse with 2 Corinthians 11:32 [33], "In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands." Tells us that the Jews made a plot with the representative of King Aretas of Arabia.

"It is possible that the Nabataean kingdom of Aretas extended at this time so far as to include Damascus; but it is more likely that Aretas had a representative in the person of an ethnarch who ruled over the many Nabataeans living in Damascus. When Saul's ministry in Damascus incurred the animosity of both the Jews and the Nabataean authorities, they joined forces to watch the gates in an effort to capture him as he left the city. One of the Christians owned a house built into the wall of Damascus. Saul was lowered through a window in the wall in a large woven basket, and thus escaped the plot.

(26) "When Saul returned to Jerusalem, he could not rejoin his former Jewish associates; and the few Christians who remained in the city (8:1) suspected that his profession of faith might be merely a front to further his persecution of the church.

(27) "Barnabas had either known Saul previously or he was a man of great discernment, for he recognized Saul's sincerity and introduced him to the apostles. The only apostles in Jerusalem at this time were Peter and James, the Lord's brother 'Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.' (Galatians 1:18, 19) James had been included in the apostolic circle.

(28) "Saul now busied himself with a Gospel ministry in Jerusalem. His ministry did not yet extend beyond the capital city into Judea. 'And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in

Christ. But they were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God in me.' (Galatians 1:22-24)

(29) "He addressed himself primarily to the Greek-speaking Jews or Hellenists-the same group to whom Stephen had previously witnessed (Acts 6:9). The Hellenists attempted to kill Saul as they had earlier brought about the death of Stephen.

(30) "Saul escaped with his life only through the help of his Christian brethren, who took him down to the seaport city of Caesarea, whence he sailed to his home city of Tarsus, in Cilicia. ["Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia." (Galatians 1:21)] We now lose sight of Saul until 11:25; but he was unquestionable busy in Tarsus preaching the Gospel, although there is no record of this ministry.

(31) Luke next describes the growth, both numerical and spiritual, of the Church in all Judea and Galilee and Samaria. The plural churches (AV) is incorrect. The Church is one even though there are many local churches. Here is the first reference to churches in Galilee. We do not know when or how they were founded." (*Wycliffe*)

"This period of 'rest' from persecution, after Paul left Jerusalem and returned to his home town of Tarsus, capital of the Roman province Cilicia, lasted about ten years." (*The Defender's Study Bible*)

"comfort, paraklesis (par-ak-lay-sis); *Strong's #3874*: A calling alongside to help, to comfort, to give consolation or encouragement. The paraklete is a strengthening presence, one who upholds those appealing for assistance. Paraklesis (comfort) can come to us both by the Holy Spirit (31) and by the Scriptures (Romans 15:4).

(32-35) 9:32 Lydda, known as Lod today, was a small village west of Jerusalem on the way to Joppa (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

I know a lot of people reading this account of Acts think that God does not do the same type of things today that He did in the first century, this just is not the case. God is still in the miracle working business, if you don't believe so, just get missionary magazines of missionaries that believe in healing. For an example, a mission like Gospel For Asia that is very conservative, but at the same time they believe God can heal, and He does, and many are saved through the witness to God's power. Here is one example of that:

"Devadutt Sawhney was fascinated by the story he was hearing. Jesus had healed a man with leprosy. Now Devadutt wondered, was there hope for him?"

"Devadutt had leprosy and was separated from his wife and son. Excommunicated from society, he spent his day in loneliness and despair.

"When GFA missionary Karnapriya Bhati told Devadutt that Jesus performed miracles-even healing a man with leprosy-a ray of hope illuminated his weary heart. Devadutt immediately placed his trust in Jesus and joined Karnapriya in prayer, asking God to heal his body. Karnapriya and other believers in the church fasted and prayed for Devadutt, and the leprosy slowly began to disappear. Devadutt's heart overflowed with gratitude toward God for healing his body and reuniting his family.

"Through this miracle, Devadutt's wife and son also came to Christ. Many Hindus and Buddhists from the surrounding area who witnessed the miracle are now curious about God and are attending The GFA-related Believers Church." (*SEND! GOSPEL FOR ASIA News Magazine*, first quarter 2007 / volume 27 / number 1 Cleansing Body and Soul)

Here is another example of how God uses miracles to win souls to Himself. We related the story of Am-Oeurn filling earlier, but here is an experience he had as he went out and witnessed in the power of the Holy Spirit:

"I want to tell you a story about a blind man named Barimaeus,' he began. The Cambodians are story lovers, so this attracted their interest. [Have you ever noticed how Jesus used stories to get His points across?-G. T. Panell] One by one they shuffled closer, some even taking a seat or squatting in the shade of the wooden house on the grounds.

"When Sam-Oeurn reached the part of the story where Jesus touched Bartimaeus,' resulting in his miraculous healing, he was suddenly interrupted.

"Hey!' an elderly woman yelled, as she stumbled and felt her way towards the front of the crowd. Judging from her blank stare, Sam-Oeurn gathered she was blind.

"Which one of you is Jesus?' she asked, pointing a bony finger in Sam-Oeurn's direction. 'Will He do for me as He did for that man? Will He touch my eyes and make me see again?'

"Sam-Oeurn tried to gather his thoughts, not having been prepared to receive such pointed questions. 'Well, un.' he stammered. 'Jesus isn't here...I mean, uh, He isn't here physically. Well. He's here, but even if you had your eyesight, you couldn't see Him. His Spirit is living in us, we are His servants. If you would like, we will pray with you that by His power you will be healed.'

"The little old lady tightened the waist of her sarong as Sam-Oeurn spoke. 'Oh, yes,' she said without hesitation, nodding her head. She didn't appear to be the least disappointed at the fact that Jesus wasn't actually there in person. She seemed to have complete confidence that His servants could help her to reach Him.

"Sam-Oeurn looked over his shoulder and motioned for Sina and Arith to join him in prayer. If she could be healed, he thought to himself, this might make believers out of everyone standing here.

"He had in mind to lay his hands upon her and then make a strong appeal to Jesus in her behalf. He reached down, barely touching her, when suddenly, she jerked back with a startled look on her face. Then she began to shout, 'Look! My eyes! I can see!'

"Probably the one least prepared for this was Sam-Oeurn. He didn't even get a chance to pray for her. He stared in bewilderment at the little lady, who apparently had been completely healed. She made her way through the crowd, touching everyone, and ecstatically remarking about the colors she could see. The crowd was slowly realizing that their fifty-two-year-old blind neighbor, Chankry, was truly healed. They joined her excitement until it almost became a riot.

"Down the street, a young woman dressed in a military uniform neared the elated assembly. Stopping to ask a group of children about the noise, they told her that her mother, who had been blind for fifteen years, had been healed by some man.

"'Mother! Mother!' she cried, running hurriedly the rest of the way to join the boisterous crowd. 'Kim Ly!' Her mother called, recognizing her daughter's voice. 'I can see! I can see you!' With quick, sure steps, Chankry made her way through the crowd to meet her daughter. They embraced while tears flowed freely.

"'Tell me what's happened to you,' Kim Ly lovingly demanded, as she held her mother at arm's length, examining her alert, tear-filled eyes. 'Can you really see me, mother?' 'Yes, oh, yes!' Chankry assured her, shaking with emotion. The God, Jesus, has made my eyes like those of a child again.' 'How did this happen?' her daughter asked in astonishment, looking around at the crowd. Chankry pointed through the mass of people to where Sam-Oeurn was talking with others about the Lord. 'Come,' she said, pulling her daughter's arm gently, 'you must meet this man.'

'Throughout the crowd, members of the evangelism team were counseling, witnessing, praying and teaching those who gathered around to listen. They passed out tracts, and those who showed real interest, they gave a gospel portion in the Cambodian language.

"Chankry and her oldest daughter, Kim Ly, surrendered their lives to follow Jesus that afternoon, along with countless others who witnessed the miracle in her life. Same-Oeurn stressed the importance of abandoning their witchcraft, fetishes and idol worship. After lengthy teaching, almost everyone responded to his appeal. Wads of devil strings, spirit house and fetishes were burned before their eyes.

"The news of Chankry's healing spread through the village like wildfire. It wasn't long before the number of inquirers was uncontrollable. Even the military police were called in to see what the ruckus was all about. Some of the villagers had complained about the burning of the religious items and wanted action taken against Sam-Oeurn and his team. But when the police learned what had actually happened, they were afraid to do anything. The crowd defended Sam-Oeurn saying he didn't make them burn their idols. 'We did it willingly!' they testified. One of the policemen even ended up giving his heart to Jesus when he saw it was Chankry who had been healed of blindness. He had known her for many years."
(Anointed for Burial)

Lest you think that these miracles only happen overseas or sometime ago or even only in wartime, etc. here is what happened in our church recently:

You cannot look at the gospels without seeing that, besides preaching the gospel, a huge part of Jesus' ministry was spent on healing. He healed many types of diseases, and sicknesses. He healed the broken hearted, cast out demons, and raised the dead. Jesus' ministry was one of reversing the damage Satan was doing to people's lives. "The Spirit of The LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." (Luke 4:18-19) So it is only natural that the apostles of Jesus in Acts and Christians today should be involved in healing.

Recently in our church there was a lady who went into the hospital. She had even flat lined twice. The family called for the elders of the church and others to pray, as it says in James. When we went to the room and saw her, for all intents and purposes she looked like she was dying. Among other things, her kidneys had stopped functioning and she was hooked up to several machines, and in a coma. When we prayed, there was no sign of improvement, but we all left blessed knowing we had done what God had commanded us to do for our sister in Christ.

The next morning we got a call from the church that there had been definite signs of improvement. She had come out of the coma that morning. She began to mend, with improvements each day as many prayed. Then the family said the kidneys had begun to function again. You can image our joy when a short time later she walked into the church under her own strength. How we praise the Lord for His healing power!

I believe it does not always take place instantly because God wants us to trust Him. But Scripture is very clear as to what our part is: "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him (her) pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him (her) sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him (her) call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him (her), anointing him (her) with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him (her) up. And if he (she) has committed sins, he (she) will be forgiven." (James 5:13-15)

Sickness does not always come as a result of sin, notice it says "if" they have sinned. So all sickness is not because of our sins, but a lot of sickness is just a result of disease and sickness in the world, as a result of Adam and Eve's sin. "Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.'" (John 9:1-3) Some sickness is allowed in this world to show how God has power over it.

Then again there are verses that make it clear that some people's disease or sicknesses are caused by their own personal sin. "But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, 'See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.'" (John 5:13-14) There may be other things that cause sickness such as smoking, taking drugs or drinking alcohol, having poor eating habits, etc.

Even so, our part is to pray for people and not to judge the reason for their sickness, which is a personal matter between them and the Lord. My father lost a hand in a backhoe accident. It was put back on by microsurgery and he has some use of the hand, but he says the worst part was when someone said, "You must have really sinned bad in order for this to happen to you." This sort of judgment is wrong, only God knows why things happen to people. You only need to read the book of Job to know that bad things happen to good people!

If however, we do know of something in our spirit that may be causing problems in our life or body we are to confess this. "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16)

It is clear that healing is still for today because of the above verse, but also because of what Jesus said to his disciples before He went back to heaven. "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the

gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mark 16:15-18)

Now there may be specific questions about when should we stop praying for healing and let the person go to heaven. This happened to us recently also, my wife was guardian of her aunt who was in her seventies. She was dying of cancer and bed ridden. I had the men at our men's prayer breakfast pray that the Lord's will be done in her life. That afternoon we got a call that she had passed away. She is totally healed now, and I'm sure she is running around heaven having a great time!

I was visiting another time with a lady that was in her forties, as I remember it. She had a sister that had passed away on the operating table while they were doing open heart surgery. This other sister had taken up smoking and ended up getting lung cancer. I don't know for sure if the cancer was as a result of the smoking. It may have been, but she had given up smoking and gotten right with the Lord.

Then she was faced with a similar operation to that of her sister's, but this Christian lady decided that she didn't want to go through with the operation. I visited with her several times as a pastor who was concerned for her well being. She assured me that everything was right between her and the Lord, and that she was ready to go if the Lord called her. She died shortly after that, and I rejoiced that she was with the Lord in heaven. However, others when they heard that she had passed away said, "Oh, if only she had had more faith, this would not have happened." Friends, this is judging, God knows what is best in each life, and it is not for us to judge.

Nothing is too hard for the Lord, but sometimes He does allow us to stay in an unhealed condition. Look at the testimony of Joni Eareckson Tada on our web links; she has the site [Joni and Friends](#). She became a quadriplegic after a diving accident. She prayed earnestly for healing, but God answered a different way. You can go to her web site and hear her testimony. She is not healed physically, but you couldn't find a more healed Christian spiritually. She has led multitudes to the Lord through her testimony, not of healing, but of the power of the Lord during sickness.

Paul was not healed after praying for many others. "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:7-9) So there is a balance here, God is sovereign and He may say yes, no, or often we pray in faith and wait for the answer.

On the other hand, Jesus is the same as He was when He was here. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 12:8) If He healed in the past, He still does today. This is why there are gifts of healing referred to in Scripture: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:4) ".to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit. " (1 Corinthians 12:9). So God wants us to use our gifts of healing. We need to go where the needs are and pray for people trusting God to do the healing. How can you go wrong when He has commanded us to pray for the sick?

God also uses doctors, you may remember that St. Luke was a physician. "Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you." (Colossians 4:14) We need to look to God for guidance because there are false healers out there, and those who want your money. A good rule of thumb is if they ask for money to pray for healing, they are not of God.

"And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' But Peter said to him, 'your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.'" (Acts 8:18-23)

These verses are specifically speaking of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Spirit, but these verses could apply to someone wanting money for praying for people to be healed. Nowhere in Scripture did the true disciples of Christ ask for money for praying for anyone. If you get on the internet you will see many false healers who want your money, know that they are not of God.

We need wisdom when dealing with the sick, and God will give us this wisdom for every given situation if we will ask Him for it. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1:5-8)

"Power Evangelism, GOD'S POWER MINISTRY. There is a clear pattern in the NT in which evangelism or even mass evangelism follows demonstrations of God's kingdom power (Mark 16:14-20; Acts 5:12, 14; 9:35, 42, 13:4-12; 19:11-20). Faith in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 4:20) or 'power evangelism' does not diminish the importance of preaching about sin, the Cross, or Christ's resurrection.

"It does affirm that seeing God act opens people's hearts. Once their hearts are opened, we can more fully instruct them (Acts 18:24-26). As we are available to be used of God in this way, we need to be aware that the words and works of God function together (John 14:8-11); we cannot 'use' God to make Him act for us; and seeing signs and wonders does not convince everyone (Matthew 11:20-24) (*New Spirit Filled Life Bible*)

(36-43) I'm sure some are saying, and don't tell me that God still raises people from the dead today! Let's look at a modern day raising of the dead by the Lord Jesus Christ. This is taken from the book *Anointed for Burial* by Todd and DeAnn Burke. This true story took place in Cambodia as the bloodthirsty Khmer Rouge were killing as many people as they could before the country's fall. During this time God was still doing mighty miracles for the believers. God shows us He is the same yesterday [as He was in the Book of Acts], today, and forever:

"'Brother Todd,' Kong said as his countenance brightened, 'I want to tell you about something wonderful that happened. You remember Ton Kham, don't you?' 'Sure,' I replied. 'He's the elder in your church who was healed of tuberculosis.'

"'Well,' Kong continued, 'on a Sunday morning, eleven days before the fall, there was a loud bang on our door before the sun had dawned. I hurried out of bed, and as I unlocked the door of the church I heard someone weeping. There stood Kham holding the lifeless body of his thirteen-year-old son. He had died in the night after having suffered more than a week with a severe fever. Later that morning as the believers gathered for our meeting, they were broken-hearted when they learned of the boy's death. His body had already become cold and stiff. When it was time for the service, the congregation joined hands in prayer to commit the boy's spirit to the Lord. Suddenly, my wife pierced the air with a frightening scream-'

"'His fingers began to move!' San exclaimed, finishing the story. 'I rushed over and placed my hand underneath the blanket. His chest was growing warm and began to rise and fall as he started to breathe. Within moments he was sitting up and praising the Lord with us!'

"'Fantastic!' I shouted.'

"'That's incredible,' DeAnn said.

"'Yes,' Kong added. 'It really happened. God raised him from the dead!'

"I was jotting down the details of these stories as fast as I could. For a moment I forgot all about the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge.

"'There's something else you should know,' Kong interrupted my writing. 'Two days after this happened I went to Battambang to pick up the motorcycle you bought for me. While I was there I met with Am-Oeurn and Youvannette. I was amazed to see all the new believers; their work had grown so fast! I shared with them the miracle of Ton Kham's son and they all rejoiced. Then Sam-Oeurn got real serious. 'Kruu,' he said soberly, 'the other evening as I was praying I had a vision.' He went on to describe how he felt, he was lifted up where he could see all of Battambang. Suddenly the Khmer Rouge overran the city, burning the buildings and driving the people away. The city was in flames when a voice spoke to him saying,

"'This will happen soon; it will happen very soon. You must prepare your people.'

"'When I first heard this I was shocked,' Kong continued. 'I tried to reject it, but because it came from Sam-Oeurn I figured it might be true. I returned to Pailin, and in less than a week it happened just as he said.'

"Tears of joy filled our eyes as we listened to this amazing account." (If you don't have this book let me encourage you to get it. It is called *Anointed for Burial Cambodia's Like a Mighty Wind* by Todd and DeAnn Burke)

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