

Acts 8:4-40 - Chamy

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Preacher: Felipe Chamy

[0:00] Well, good morning again, Holy Covenant Church. Thank you so much for having us join with you again this week. It's been a joy to share in the worship of the Lord with you and just to pray that God will use His word and that He will show you Jesus through these texts.

Let me pray again for us. Father, thank you once again that we can freely gather before you, that we are welcomed before you, that we have free and gracious access to the throne of grace, and that we enjoy that through Jesus and Jesus alone, not by our own merits, but by what Jesus is and He has done for us.

And I pray that you would speak to us through your word again, that we would be able to see that grace more deeply.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. So we come to chapter 8. We went through a big section where Luke focused his attention on Stephen and his own martyrdom, his own sermon or defense speech of sorts.

And we were introduced there to a man named Saul, which we will later know as Paul. But for chapter 8, Luke is going to leave Paul behind for a little while until chapter 9, when we will hear again about this Saul, a.k.a. Paul.

[2:01] And this apostle Paul will then be used by God to spread the gospel to the nations. But what we have here in this passage with Philip is an avant-premier of the gospel reaching other nations, specifically Samaria and an Ethiopian eunuch.

And we will go through this chapter, two large main sections, Philip in Samaria and Philip with a eunuch.

So throughout the passage, we will learn about God's grace and how grace is an essential aspect of the gospel, an essential aspect of the good news, grace first toward the sinner, as we will find out in Philip's ministry to Samaria, grace towards the sinner, and grace towards the outcast, as we will learn from Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian eunuch.

So two large sections. And then I'll finish up with five implications drawn from the gospel of grace as we distill it from this chapter.

So two main sections, grace toward the sinner, grace toward the outcast, and then five implications drawn from this chapter. So first, the gospel is about grace and grace toward sinners.

[3:55] In chapter 8, verse 4 onwards, we learn that those scattered after Stephen's death went about preaching the word. Literally, they were evangelizing the word.

Luke later in verse 12 defines this and defines what he means by this, saying that Philip proclaimed the good news about the kingdom.

He was evangelizing about the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ. The whole Samaritan episode ends in verse 25 with Peter and John, the apostles, speaking the word of the Lord and preaching the gospel to many villages in verse 25.

So this whole passage, at least the first half of this chapter, is framed in terms of evangelism.

The preaching of the gospel and its effects. It's about the word spreading through the church, not just the apostles, but through the scattered church to other cities and nations.

[5:11] Luke specifically focuses on Philip. Having spent some time on Stephen in chapter 6 and 7, Luke now turns to this other deacon.

Remember, there were several deacons chosen in the beginning of chapter 6. We've heard a lot about Stephen, and now we're going to hear about Philip. Notice how first he, notice first how the city of Samaria is highlighted.

However, on that, on that, on those days, there was no city called Samaria.

So Luke probably refers to the most important city in Samaria, a capital of sorts. It used to be called Samaria, but now it's called something else.

And this city, in particular, is known for its religious and political influence. As one author puts it, In intertestamental times, the Samaritans sought permission from the Greek emperor Alexander the Great to build a temple on Mount Herzim.

[6:38] They denounced the Jews when Antiochus Epiphanes persecuted them. And they dedicated their temple to Zeus, the Greek god.

So not exactly a high point in biblical faithfulness of the northern kingdom of the people of God. The Jewish Maccabean ruler, John Hyrcanus, destroyed the temple approximately in the year 128 BC and later destroyed the city of Samaria approximately on year 108 before Christ.

Herod the Great rebuilt the city of Samaria, but renamed it Sebaste in honor of Caesar Augustus. So leading up to this time, relationships between the Samaritans and the Jews were not exactly friendly, as you probably know from other passages of scripture like John 4.

So throughout the rest of the book of Acts, there's also an emphasis on cities. They're reaching cities with the gospel.

[8:02] The word is proclaimed in cities. And Paul visits and plants churches in cities. And strategically, Paul's goal was to go to Rome with the gospel.

The most influential city in the known world. Cities where, and still are, places of influence. From education to politics, the economy, the arts, and every other sphere of society and culture. Everything flows from cities to the rest of any nation. So that's why it's important to reach cities with the gospel.

Cities like Chicago on the suburbs. Universities. Places where financial institutions are placed.

[9:04] Are leading the culture in the cities we live in. Especially younger generations. Every city needs the gospel.

And in God's providence and plan, it is us. The church scattered. Who are to preach the gospel in every city.

We are to preach the gospel in Wheaton. And this is one of the reasons why in Neapolis, the organization I serve with, our vision is to grow stronger churches in every city.

So that by the preaching of the gospel, in the power of the spirit, churches like this one and many others around the world may be able to be strong and transform or influence their cities.

But going back to Samaria. Samaria is not just important strategically. Samaria is also important theologically. Remember Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8.

[10:15] You will receive power when the spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. And to the ends of the earth.

So when Philip preaches in Samaria, what we see is Jesus fulfilling his purposes. God sovereignly guides his church towards his plans.

This was the long-awaited expectation of a prophet like Ezekiel. Ezekiel had prophesied that the kingdoms of Judah and Samaria would be forgiven of their sins and once again be united under one king.

Listen to Ezekiel 37. I'm about to take the stick of Joseph that is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel associated with him.

And I will join it with the stick of Judah and make them one stick that they may be one in my hand.

[11:21] And I will make them one nation in the land on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all. And they shall be no longer two nations and no longer divided into two kingdoms.

They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned and will cleanse them.

And they shall be my people and I will be their God. In fulfillment of these prophecies, the Samaritans now believe the word of God, the good news of the kingdom.

They are filled with joy and become the next step in reaching the ends of the earth with the gospel. Now look at how they responded to Philip's ministry.

Verse 6. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip. When they heard him and saw the signs that he did.

[12:39] And then verse 8 says there was much joy in that city. The good news of the gospel is grace for the sinner. Even for the Samaritans with all their idolatry and wickedness.

And for the Samaritans in general, despite turning their backs on God. God and his word for centuries, worshiping idols in their own temple.

God reaches out to them and unites them under the lordship of Christ. But look at how verse 9 begins.

But. But. But. There was a man named Simon. So what's with this Simon? He had previously practiced magic.

And amazed the people of Samaria saying. He was someone great. And the people paid attention to him saying. This man is the power of God that is called great.

[13:48] Verse 10. And then again, Luke writes. They paid attention to him. Because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. It's like a battle for the people's attention.

In verses 10 and 11, the crowd paid attention to Simon. Whereas in verse 6. Just a few verses earlier. They paid attention to Philip. And believed as he preached the good news about the kingdom.

And even Simon himself believed and was baptized. Simon amazed the people then. But Simon is amazed now.

He had previously practiced magic. And called his name great. And now he's invited to join in the joy of the gospel. Invited to submit to Jesus.

The greatest one. The good news of the gospel is grace for the sinner. Where even if it's a city.

[14:47] As Samaria with all their idolatry. Or a person. An individual. Like Simon. Invited to join.

That's a humbling thing to recognize. We are offered grace. And forgiveness. Not because we are great.

Or because we say we're great. But despite. Not being great. Despite. Our inadequacy.

Our weakness. Our pride. It is not us reaching out to God. God. God. Is reaching out.

To us. The resurrected Christ. In the power of the Holy Spirit. Is bringing us. To the Father. Through the preaching of the word.

[15:47] And again. The Samaritans. Those syncretistic. People. From the north. Yes. They receive grace. According to God's promises.

As we read them in Ezekiel. Simon. Who had previously. Dazzled people. With magic. And called himself. Great. Yes. He receives grace.

According to God's. Promises. So you may ask. Felipe. You mean.

Me. Who have not honored. God. God. And even though. I call myself. A Christian. I fail. Every time.

Yes. I mean. You and me. Receive grace. We may. Be able. To receive grace. According to God's. Promises. So amazing.

[16:46] Was. That the Samaritans. Had received. This gospel. That the apostles. Peter and John. Had to come. And check. What was going on. If they.

Received. The word. The apostles. Thought. They must have. Received the Holy Spirit. Did you see that. Verse 14. Now. When the apostles.

At Jerusalem. Heard that Samaria. Had received. The word of God. They sent. To them. Peter and John. Who came down. And prayed. For them. That they might. Receive the spirit. For. He.

The spirit. Had yet. Had not yet. Fallen. On any of them. But they had only been. Baptized. In the name. Of the Lord. Jesus.

Then. They laid their hands. On them. And they received. The Holy Spirit. Now. This. This. Poses. Some questions. They believed.

[17:45] But had not yet. Received the spirit. Didn't. Peter. Just preach. A few chapters ago. That those who repent. And believe. Will have.

Forgiveness of sin. And receive. The gift of the Holy Spirit. Didn't Paul. In his letters. Write. That. In Christ.

You also. When you heard the word. The gospel of your salvation. And when you believed. In him. You were sealed. With the promised.

Holy Spirit. Or. Put negatively. Paul. Writes. Anyone. Who does not. Have the spirit of Christ.

Does not. Belong. To him. Perhaps. This means. That there are two stages. In becoming a Christian. Or maybe.

[18:41] Philip's preaching. Was incomplete. Or. Deficient. Or. Maybe. The Samaritan's faith. Was weak. Or false.

What happened? I think Luke is. Actually. Consistent. With the rest of the New Testament. There's no. Two-stage conversion. As Peter and Paul.

Also teach. So Luke is. Actually surprised. That this pouring of the spirit. Happened. Only when. The apostles. Prayed for them. That's not.

The pattern of scripture. Notice how Luke describes it. Again. Verses 15 and 16. They prayed for them. That they may receive the Holy Spirit. For.

Or. Because. He had not fallen on them. Not yet. In other words. This is not the norm. Luke expects. Them. To receive the spirit. When they believe.

[19:38] But they didn't. They had. Only. Been baptized. In the name of Jesus. Suggesting that. The full experience. Of conversion. Indeed. Includes. The Holy Spirit.

So why. Why. Then. Had the spirit. Not yet. Fallen on them. Remember. That. The gospel. Reaching. The Samaritans. Is.

An important event. First. For centuries. They were. Alienated. From the people of God. And from the worship of God. So their inclusion. Had to be witnessed.

By the church. And the apostles. Also. They. They needed. Confirmation. That they. Indeed. Are now. United. Under the lordship of Christ.

Despite. Generations. Of false. Worship. They are fully. Embraced. And receive. The grace. Of the gospel. Including. The gift. Of the holy spirit. When they believe.

[20:33] And in line. With the rest. Of the book. Of acts. Luke highlights. This. As the next. Phase. In reaching. The ends. Of the earth. This event.

Is. Comparable. To acts. 10. Where the coming. Of the holy spirit. Is a sign. That God. Wants to include. Believing. Gentiles.

Not just. Have breed. Samaritans. But also. Gentiles. On the same. Basis. As believing. People. Of God. In the benefits.

Of the people. Of God. On both occasions. Now. Here. In chapter 8. And then. Chapter 10. Samaritans. And Gentiles. There's. There's. A stunning.

Break. With traditional. Cultural. And religious. Barriers. As the spirit. Draws. Samaritans. And Gentiles. Together. Together. With Jews. Into the fellowship.

[21:29] Of Christ. Another commentator. Says. The best explanation. Is that God himself. Withheld.

The spirit. Until the coming. Of Peter and John. In order that the Samaritans. Might be seen. To be fully. Incorporated. Into the community. Of Jerusalem.

Christians. Who had received. The spirit. At Pentecost. And one more thing. Before moving to. Philip. And the Ethiopian. Eunuch. What do we do.

With Simon. We're so excited. For him. We. He believed. And was baptized. But now. Appears to fall back.

And wants to take advantage. Of this power. He clearly. Does not understand. Grace. And offers. Money. So that he too.

[22:24] May lay hands. On people. On people. For them. To receive. This power. There's.

So there are also questions. About Simon's conversion. Was it a genuine conversion? Had he given his life. To Jesus. But was now showing.

Just signs of immaturity. Or had he only shown. External signs. But was now showing. The true colors. Of his heart. I think Luke tells us.

About Simon. Precisely. To contrast him. With the rest of the Samaritans. His initial. Quote unquote. Faith.

Was only superficial. Peter uses. Strong language. Against Simon. Look at verse 20. May your silver.

[23:20] Perish. Or be destroyed. Literally destroyed. With you. Verse 21. You have neither part. Nor lot. In this matter. Or again.

Literally. You have part. Nor lot. In this word. And your heart. Is not right. Verse 23. For I see.

That you are. In the gall. Of bitterness. And in the bond. Of iniquity. Simon. Like many others. May have been baptized.

May have said. He believed. Probably sang songs. With the church. Attended. Bible studies. But none of those things.

Make you a Christian. And that is true. Whether you are. A new believer. Or have. Been. In church. For a long time.

[24 : 17] Your profession. Of faith. Must match. The desire. Of your heart. This does not. This does not. Mean. That you are perfect.

Or that you. Won't sin anymore. Trust me. We will. Very much fall. Again. And again. That's why we need grace.

That's at the heart. Of what Martin Luther. Wrote. In his 95 thesis. That sparked. The reformation. The first.

And really. The only one. I know. Of the 95 thesis. Says. When our Lord. And master. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Said. Repent. He intended. That the entire. Life. Of believers. Should be of. Repentance.

[25 : 14] Your life. As a Christian. Is one. Of continual. Repentance. Enjoying. Grace. After grace. No wonder. Then. Peter. Invites. Simon. To repent. Of his sin. Did you see. Verse 22. Repent. Therefore. Repent. Repent. Of this. Wickedness. Of yours. And pray. Ask. To the Lord. That if possible. The intent.

Of your heart. Might be. Forgiving you. Here again. The goodness. Of the gospel. Grace. To the sinner. He messed up. And messed up.

Badly. And note. That this sin. Is nested. Deep down. In his heart. It's not just. The act. Of offering money.

[26 : 08] But the desire. For greatness. And to manipulate. This power. The real problem. Is. Or the heart. Of the problem. Is.

The problem. Of the heart. Or as Peter. Puts it. The intent. Of your heart. Where. Is. Your heart. Do you need.

Grace. Again. Peter. Provides. Again. The promise. Repent. Perhaps.

God. Will. Forgive you. And it's. It's not clear. If Simon. Really. Repented. It's debated. Something. That. Since he asked.

Peter. To pray for him. And did not pray. Himself. As Peter. Commended. He did not repent. In a sense. It doesn't matter.

[27 : 04] Luke doesn't. Write this. For us to judge. The sincerity. Of Simon's faith. But to consider. The seriousness. Of.

Our sin. Rhetorically. We should wonder. Whether. Or not. We. See the weight. Of God's glory. And holiness. And the depth.

Of our sin. Have you. Repented. Have you. Prayed. Only the cross.

Of Jesus. Can close the gap. Between God's glory. And our sin. Jesus. Jesus was bound. And perished. He was destroyed.

That we might be saved. And delivered. From the bound. From the bond. Of iniquity. The gospel is grace. For the sinner. And we need.

[28 : 03] This grace. All day. Every day. And the good news. Is not just for. The sinner. This is good news.

Also for the outcast. We turn now. To Philip. And his encounter. With the Ethiopian eunuch.

The Lord again. Is. Is the primary character. The protagonist. An angel of the Lord. Directs Philip. To a desert place. The spirit. Tells Philip.

To join the chariot. And later on. In the same. At the end of the passage. The spirit. Takes away Philip. To preach the gospel. In other towns. And he's in.

He finds himself. In the desert. With a man. Carefully described us. An Ethiopian eunuch. A court official.

[28 : 59] Of Candace. Queen. Of the Ethiopians. Who was in charge. Of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem. To worship. Immediately.

Our careful reader. Would know. The tension. A foreigner. And a eunuch. Worshipping. In Jerusalem. Already a Gentile.

As a. And as a Gentile. His access. To the temple. Was restricted. To a. To an outside. Court. And he could not come.

Any closer. And as a eunuch. As many of you. Already know. A eunuch. Is someone. Who has been. Castrated. To serve.

In the queen's house. And in Deuteronomy. We read that. No one. Whose testicles.

[30:01] Are crushed. Or whose male organ. Is cut off. Shall enter. The assembly. Of the Lord. So as a eunuch.

He was not welcome. To join others. In worship. This man. Is a very definition. Of an outcast. On every account.

But the goodness. Of the gospel. Is grace. For the outcast. God promised. In Isaiah. That the foreigner. And the eunuch.

Will one day. Enjoy. Full access. To God. In worship. This is what Isaiah. 56 says. Let no foreigner. Who has bound.

Himself. To the Lord. Say. The Lord. Will surely. Exclude me. From his people. And let. Not any. Eunuch. Complain. I am.

[30:58] Only a dry tree. The Lord. Says to the eunuchs. That to them. I will give. With. I will give. Within my temple. And its walls.

A memorial. And a name. Better. Than sons. And daughters. I will. Give them. A never lasting. Name. That no one.

That. That. That will not be. Cut off. Do you see the grace? Foreigners. Are no longer. Excluded. Eunuchs. Are no longer. Cut off. Appropriately. This eunuch. Was reading. From the book of Isaiah. Only a few chapters.

Before this promises. In Isaiah 53. Perhaps. This man understood. That in order to be. Fully accepted. The servant of the Lord. Had to be cut off.

[31:55] When Philip offered. Guidance. This was the passage. Of scripture. Verse 32. The passage of scripture. That he was reading. Like a sheep.

He was led. To the slaughter. Like a lamb. Before his. Its shearer. Is silent. He. So he opens. Not his mouth. In his humiliation.

Justice was denied him. Who can describe. His generation. For his life. Is taken away. From the earth. And here's a eunuch's question.

Verse 34. About whom? I ask you. Does the prophet say this? About himself? Or about someone else? As a commentator.

Reframes the question. How might. The humiliation. And ministry. Of the despised. And rejected servant. Relate. To me. A despised.

[32:53] And rejected. Eunuch. Who is this man? Who is the prophet. Talking about? Luke.

Then. Gives us. A glimpse. Of Philip's. Interpretation. In verse 35. Then Philip. Opened his mouth. And beginning. With this scripture.

He told them. The good news. About Jesus. What's Isaiah 53 about? It's about the gospel.

The good news of God's servant. Led. To the slaughter. His life. Taken away. In Hebrew. This verse reads.

He was cut off. From the land of the living. Not quoted here. But Isaiah 53. Begins. Describing the servant. As one.

[33:53] Despised. And rejected. By men. A man of sorrows. And acquainted. With grief. And as one. From whom men hide their faces. He was despised. And we esteemed him not.

This servant. This suffering servant. Was despised. And rejected. So that the despised. And rejected. Might be welcomed. The prophet. Is referring to Jesus.

Who died on a cross. And suffered. So that we may be saved. We are loved. We are received. We belong.

As one old. Catechism asks. What is your only comfort. In life and death. That I am not my own. But belong. Body and soul. In life and in death. To my faithful savior. Jesus Christ. He has fully paid. For all my sins.

[34:52] With his precious blood. And has set me free. From the tyranny. Of the devil. This is the goodness. Of the gospel. Grace.

To the outcast. Those who were far off. Are now brought near. By his grace. Through the work of Jesus. According to the promises of God.

God. And this passage. Ends with the Lord. Acting as the main character. Leading Philip away. But not the result. Of Philip's teaching.

The eunuch believed. Was baptized. And went on his way. Rejoicing. Just as there was much joy. In the city of Samaria.

The eunuch went his own way. Rejoicing. Now that's one real effect. Of grace. In the lives. Of those who believe. I can't imagine.

[35 : 48] The kingdom of God. Without people. Responding with joy. It's about joy. And the Holy Spirit. Responding to the good news of grace.

Towards sinners. Grace. Towards the outcast. Let me finish with. Five short implications. Grace toward the sinner.

And the outcast. Is the essence. Of the gospel. God. Loves you. He welcomes you. As a son. As a daughter.

God shows his love for us. In that while we were still sinners. Christ died. For us. We were enemies. Now reconciled. Far away. Now brought close. Dead. In our trespasses and sins. But God. With his great love. With which he loved us.

[36 : 48] Gave us life. By grace. We have been saved. John Bunyan. Who wrote. The Pilgrim's Progress. Wrote another book.

Called. Grace Abounding. To the Chief of Sinners. Grace Abounding. To the Chief of Sinners. In it he writes. About God. I loved you.

While you were committing this sin. I loved you before. I love you still. And I will love you forever.

That is grace. Unmerited. Unconditional. Unending. Favor from God. Grace towards the sinner.

Grace towards the sinner. Is the essence of the gospel. Second. And this is important. We learn.

That God's grace. Expects. A sincere.

[37 : 50] Deep. Hearted. Response. To the preaching of the gospel. Outward expressions of faith. Must come from a truly repented heart. Mere Christian mechanics.

Mere Christian mechanics. Or activism. Or activism. Is not necessarily evidence. That we've received grace. In fact. The opposite. Is often true.

We engage in church activities. Not because we respond to God's grace. But because we. Deep down. Believe. We must earn it. Or. As in Simon's case.

We offer things. Like time. Or money. So that we may take advantage of the gospel. Maybe perhaps. If I continue doing this.

Then the Lord will forgive me. If that's you. Again. Listen to Peter. Repent and pray.

[38 : 51] True mark of a Christian. Is repentance. So let prayer and repentance. Shape your heart. Grace expects. A sincere desire.

From the heart. Three. These promises of grace. Toward the sinner. And the outcast. Are grounded. And promised. In scriptures. In the scriptures.

In this chapter. In particular. We've seen the importance. Of Ezekiel. And Isaiah. And other promises. In the book of Acts. Luke is very explicit. In writing. That this. And other texts.

Point. To Jesus. Beginning with the scripture. He preached good news. About Jesus. So if you want to have. A good grasp. Of God's grace. Look for the gospel.

Look for Jesus. In the scriptures. Read. And learn. Not just about God. But to know God. Grace. Grace. Grace.

[39 : 49] Is. Grounded. In scripture. Fourth. The whole church. Must participate. In God's mission. May the Lord. Guide. Each one of us.

To people. And places. Of influence. That we may preach. The word. Now that Philip. Peter. John. All. Consider. Preaching. Of the gospel.

The primary. Evangelistic. Activity. And they did so. In the power of the spirit. Led by the spirit. How many opportunities. Have we missed.

To share the gospel. Because we're not. Sensitive. To the spirit's guidance. Let's be in constant prayer. It should. It could be a colleague. A friend. A stranger.

It might be a family dinner. Or a plane flight. Perhaps. We should be more intentional. Let's participate. In the service opportunities. Mission strips.

[40 : 48] Bring someone else. From church. To share the gospel. With you. Encourage one another. To share the gospel. In the power. And the guidance.

Of the spirit. And lastly. Joy. Is one of the true effects. Of embracing grace. It's out of joy. That we repent. Of our evil intents.

It's out of joy. That we seek. The Lord. And desire. To please him. Because of the grace. Of the gospel. We embody. The old confession.

The chief end of man. Is to glorify God. And enjoy him. Forever. Are we. Individuals. Are we a community.

By joy. Are grace. And joy. Essential elements. In how we treat. Treat each other. How we relate. To one another.

[41 : 46] Joy is. One of the. Biggest. Evidence. Of being freed. From bitterness. And sin.

Not that we don't cry. Or grieve. But we don't grieve. Like the unbelievers. The gospel is grace. So we're the sinner. The outcast.

And grace changes. Everything. Let's pray. Father thank you for your word. Thank you for grace.

For pouring. Grace. And love. On us. Through the Holy Spirit. For doing it. Through our faith.

In Jesus. Pray that grace. Would. Indeed. Become. Irresistible. That we would run.

[42 : 44] Towards it. Day after day. Because we need it. That we may live. In continual.

Repentance. And. Joy. For your glory.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.