
GOOD NEWS SPREADING

PART 2 · JUDEA AND SAMARIA

This week we take a look in Acts how the Good News started to spread from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria. This Good News was not going to be held back but it wasn't for the lack of trying.

There is always a price to pay for the Good News to spread – time, money, in some cases it may be persecution, but most of all it involves a choice.

Stephen Speaks Up

The gospel has made significant inroads into the Greek-speaking synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:8-15).

Martyr - 'ma:ta; noun - 1. a person who is killed because of their religious or other beliefs.

Stephen fearlessly addresses the Sanhedrin (Acts 7). He talked specifically about the temple (God does not dwell in buildings made by hands, in fulfilment of Isaiah 66:1-2) and how the true lawbreakers are those who crucified Jesus, not the believers.

Stephen references Moses in his speech—that he who was “rejected” by Israel (Acts 7:23-29, 35, 39) also foretold that God would send them “a prophet like me from your own people” (v. 37), who was also rejected (vv. 51 -52).

Stephen pays the ultimate price and under the watchful eye of Saul they stone Stephen to death (Acts 7:57-60).

Paying the Price

The Bible promises that those who live a Godly life for Christ Jesus will be persecuted. It doesn't say in one particular country or time. So if we're not persecuted we have to ask are we really living a Godly life in Christ Jesus? Are we really spreading the Good News?

We face a daily choice of whether we will live as God commands, or whether we will take it easy and accept the status quo.

You won't get a fire and passion for God's kingdom by sitting around waiting for it. If you start spreading the Good News you too will soon experience real persecution. Passion for Christ comes to those who have taken up the cross and followed Him (Acts 8:1-8).

Powerful Proclamation

Philip, presumably, had at least two dominant spiritual gifts, that of evangelist and that of missionary.

Many Samaritans believed the good news concerning the kingdom of God that Philip had been demonstrating before their very eyes. The Kingdom had come and Samaritans were being accepted into it. They sealed their commitment through public baptism, and the Church of Jesus Christ was firmly planted in their midst (Acts 8:12).

Peter and John were now themselves evangelising Samaritans! They were planting churches in Samaritan villages and not requiring them to switch their place of worship to Jerusalem.

Has the Good News grasped your heart this same way?

Are you willing to pay the price of persecution to keep the Good News spreading?

Have you been so changed by this Good News that you are moved by compassion to declare and demonstrate this Good News to all people?

Conclusion

As we prepare to move to 17 Mile Rocks it is obvious that we need to pray that God would deliver the hearts of the people in our new region to Him, through our ministry and obedience.

Will we also be willing to ask Jesus to prepare our hearts to move with love and compassion that we would be so moved by the Good News that we would go out of our comfort zone to share the Good News, demonstrate Kingdom works and even be prepared to suffer persecution.

Discussion Questions

1. Stephen was bold in his defence of Jesus and the Good News. What inhibits you most from being bold about your faith? How could you overcome this?
2. Dying for your faith seems to be such a foreign concept to many of us in Australia. Is the threat of persecution real? Would you be willing to suffer for Jesus?
3. Who were the Samaritans? Why was evangelising them not a normal thing to expect from Jews?
4. Does your passion for sharing the Good News need to be boosted? For who do you need to find greater compassion and a willingness to share the Good News with?
5. Pray that God would stir in us the fires of revival by giving us a deep passion to share the Good News and a compassion for those who we need to share it with.