

Scattered to Gather

I. Announce:

- A. **Slide1** TY Kathy Hintz for putting *a name/story* to this day. [bro Jim, VN]
Memorial Day is a day of remembering the men/women who *died* while serving in *our countries armed services*.
1. Joseph Campbell said, *A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.*
 2. On this Memorial Day *weekend*, we **remember & honor our brave military heroes** who *laid their lives* upon the altar of freedom. Today, with *eternal gratitude* for the sacrifices of these extraordinary Americans, & the sacrifices of their families, we offer a prayer for **peace**.
- B. **Slide2** Drive In Prayer Tonight/Sun night 3-5pm. *pastors/leaders & some of our wives*.
- C. **Slide3** Office Open starting Tues. **AND...** We are close to **opening & getting back together!** Please watch our web site & social media so we can communicate how we will be opening up, that will be *safe & sane* for all of our community at CM.
1. **Should get our regulations Mon. We will plan well.** Watch for updates. Those who are **at risk** or **more comfortable @ home**, we'll of course be continuing **online** (still seeking to make that the *best experience we can!*)

II. Slide4 Intro: Scattered to Gather

- A. **Luke**, in his *2-volume work*, makes up approximately **1/4** of the NT.
1. **Volume 1** (Gospel of Luke) was about **Jesus' ministry on earth, exercised personally and publicly**. Followed by **Volume 2** (Acts) **Jesus' ministry from heaven, exercised through his Holy Spirit by his apostles**.
- B. **Slide5** Here we enter upon the **2nd circle** of Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*
1. The church already needed to be reminded of Jesus' injunction to **Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.**

2. F.B.Meyer, *The light must be diffused, the salt must be scattered.*

C. **Exit** the churches 1st martyr...Stephen; **Enter** *Saul of Tarsus*.

III. Slide6a SAUL THE SCATTERER (1-3)

A. In 7:58 they *laid down their clothes at Saul's feet*. Stephen's witness made a **tremendous impression** on Saul (*Acts 22:20*).

1. The death of Stephen *seemed* to be a **defeat** for the church *but* it resulted in some **great victories** for the Lord.

a) **Slide6b** Never give up when the enemy seems to be winning. It may be *your finest hour of victory*.¹

2. I wonder if *St. Augustine* was correct when he said, *If Stephen had not prayed, Paul had not preached*. (see 7:60)

B. (3) **Ravaging the church** - lit. *the tearing of a body by an animal*. The picture is one of *midnight raids, good people poorly treated, & human rights disregarded in the name of religion...for the sake of God*.²

C. **Here...Saul the persecutor**, entering house to house as *Satan's instrument*.

Later...Paul the pastor, teaching from house to house as *Christ's servant*. (20:20)

IV. Slide7a SCATTERED SAINTS, SCATTER SEEDS (4-8)

A. **Illus**: During the reign of **Oliver Cromwell**, the British government began to run low on **silver** for coins. **Cromwell** sent his men on an investigation of the **local cathedral** to see if they could find any *precious metal* there. After investigating, they reported, *The only silver we could find is in the statues of the saints standing in the corners*. To which the radical soldier and statesman of England replied, **Slide7b** *Good! We'll melt down the saints and put them into circulation!*

1. Here we have 1st **church-wide persecution** (believers in general, not just a designated few) following the death of Stephen, which led to the **scattering** of Jerusalem Christians. **And thus** the 1st **evangelistic tour**,

¹ Warren Wiersbe; With the word; pg.712

² Shepherd's Notes; pg.29

with Philip as the **1st evangelist**, resulting in the **1st mass evangelism**.

- B. **Slide7c** Tertullian said, *the **blood** of the martyrs is the **seed** of the church*.
- C. (5) **Philip went down to Samaria** – a **Test of Sympathy** because of Jewish attitude towards *Samaritans*.
- This hostility had lasted a 1000 yrs. It began w/the breakup of the monarchy (when **10 tribes defected** & made **Samaria their capital**). It became worse when Samaria was captured by the **Assyrians** (722bc) some were deported, re-populated by foreigners. **Then** 4th cent bc they built a **rival temple** on Mnt Gerizim. **Then** they got rid of all **OT scriptures** except the Pent. **They were hybrids** in both **race & religion**. John summed it up, **Jews do not associate w/Samaritans**.
- D. (5b) The refugee **Philip...preached Christ**. **Not a creed**, not a **church**, but **Christ**.
- Wasn't negative, (*i.e.* denouncing *Samaritan error*) **but simply that He is the Christ, the Messiah**.
 - Do you hear from God? Share your faith, you'll experience it too.*
- E. (6) Some think the success of Philip in Samaria was largely due to the influence of his **Master/Jesus** there, not many years before. [*ie.* woman at well, & men from city]
- How'd you like **Jesus** going before you in **your** missionary or evangelist efforts? Well, **He is**, & always does!
- F. **Persecution is like a storm** that scattered the seed of the Word, & dispersed the sowers & reapers over many fields. *Scattered Saints, Scattered Seeds*.
- There is one who scatters, yet increases more**. Prov. 11:24
- G. We may not see the *physical miracles*, **but** we may look confidently for *spiritual miracles* in transformed lives & these are equally strong proofs of true evangelism.
- H. **Great Joy in that city** :) [*fruits* of the scattered seeds]

V. **Slide8a SORCERER'S FOR THE SAVIOR (9-13)**

- A. (9-11) **Magic** was a significant form of *religious expression* in the ancient world.

1. Evidently he was no *trickster*, but used some **satanic arts**.
 2. Like **spiritism** today, it is a mixture of **fraud & demonic power** under the guise of **religion**.
- B. **Slide8b** (10) This man is the **power** of God that is called **Great** - As **Zeus**, the king of the gods was to the **Greeks**. As **Jupiter** was to the **Romans**. As **Indra** is to the **Hindu's**. And as **Thor** was to the **Germanics**. **Simon** was to the **Samaritans**.
- C. (12) They place their trust in **Omnipotence**. (all powerful)
1. Great power is met by **Greater** power. Lk.11:21,22 **For when a strong man is fully armed and guards his palace, his possessions are safe - until someone even stronger attacks and overpowers him, strips him of his weapons, and carries off his belongings.**
- D. Both men & women were baptized – indicating **new allegiance**.
1. Simon's influence was evidently **weakened & neutralized** by preaching of the Gospel.
 2. This gives **great hope** for places where they are **very superstitious**, or have **strong demonic influences**.
- E. (13) Simon **believed** & was **baptized**.
1. I can see Simon sporting his new **Sorcerer's for the Savior Tee shirt**.

VI. Slide9 FIRE FROM HEAVEN (14-17)

- A. No one had yet told them of the HS.
1. Peter informs them of this **great possibility** & they eagerly open the **windows to their souls** to receive **God's gift of the Holy Spirit**.
- B. **Hmmm**: what was going through **John's** mind, **returning** to the place where previously he had **asked Jesus** if he should, **call down fire from heaven**? Lk.9:51-56
1. He now returns to this place with reports of **men's lives being saved**.
 2. This must've been **a long walk**, the kind where **God talks & you just listen**.
 3. **But, I guess John finally got to call down fire from heaven (HS fire) :**
 - a) **John**, you were only off by **what kind of fire to call down & when to call it**.
- C. They received the Holy Spirit – a special acknowledgment of God working in **Samaria**, recognizing them as part of **the universal church**.

1. Have you received the Holy Spirit? (you will receive **power** when the HS comes **upon** you)

VII.Slide10a **STUMBLER, OR NEVER SAVED? (18-25) Simon**

A. **Tradition** gives Simon a permanent place as a **heretic**.

1. Ever since that day, the attempt to turn *the spiritual into the commercial, to traffic in the things of God, and especially to purchase ecclesiastical office, has been termed 'simony'*. [glad that's not an issue today!]
2. **Slide10b** But, was Simon a **heretic**? (somebody who holds to a belief that contradicts *established religious teaching*) **OR** was he a **hypocrite**? (somebody who gives a *false appearance* of having admirable principles, beliefs, or feelings) **OR** was he a **backslider**? (a believer who relapses into a *bad behavior*). [I believe *backslider*]
 - a) Whether this man **truly believed** or was simply a **charlatan seeking power** is **uncertain**. *I would like to give him the benefit of the doubt based on 6 reasons:*

B. (13) *he continued with Philip* - Notice the sequence...

1. **Slide10c** He **heard** Philip's teaching (6,7,12). He **saw** Philip's signs (6,7,13). He **believed** (13). He was **baptized** (13) [same 2 words used in vs.12]. He **continued with** Philip (13).
 - a) **Continued with** is a *Periphrastic Imperfect* (the *ongoing, continuous action* of an event in the past). **Also**, because of vs.24.
2. **So why do we read in falsity, insincerity, or hypocrisy?**

C. (18,19) Maybe Simon learns an important lesson for any *new believer*.

1. Maybe Simon is suddenly tempted along *old lines*.
2. **Have you ever as a believer desired power? prestige? desired to look just a little bit more spiritual than you are?** (we call it FB/IG)

D. (21) *In this matter* – What matter? Salvation? **No**, the matter of being able to **have this power** the apostles had, so people *may receive the HS* (19).

E. **Your heart is not right** - *i.e.* not straight, not upright.

F. (22) **Repent...& pray** – Would this be said to the **unconverted**, with *no mention of faith in Christ's saving power?*

1. The counsel of Peter is more appropriate to a **backslider** *than* to a **hypocrite**.
2. Listen to the **stern language** Paul uses w/another **sorcerer** who really was a scoundrel in Acts 13:8-12 *But Elymas, the sorcerer, interfered and urged the governor to pay no attention to what Barnabas and Saul said. He was trying to keep the governor from believing. 9 Saul, also known as Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked the sorcerer in the eye. 10 Then he said, "You son of the devil, full of every sort of deceit and fraud, and enemy of all that is good! Will you never stop perverting the true ways of the Lord? 11 Watch now, for the Lord has laid his hand of punishment upon you, and you will be struck blind. You will not see the sunlight for some time." Instantly mist and darkness came over the man's eyes, and he began groping around begging for someone to take his hand and lead him. 12 When the governor saw what had happened, he became a believer, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.*
 - G. The intent/intention of your heart – this *1 singular thought* of which he was guilty.
 1. Did he not **slide back** into his *old mode of life*, or into applying his *old standards* to his **new life**?
 - a) What **old way** did you fall back into when you 1st were saved?
 2. Often **old temptations** resurface. Old habits are often **powerful**.
 - a) *i.e.* converted drunkards, fornicators, liars, lust for power, longing for popularity, etc.
 3. A young Christian is *a babe in Christ* & needs *growth in grace* in order to withstand temptations.
 - a) Gal. 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are **spiritual restore such a one** in a spirit of **gentleness**, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.
 - H. (22) Peter hopes to strike a **healthy fear** & **new desire** for *better things*.
 - I. (24) Good response.
 1. Share...Gods *sweet forgiveness, liberating grace, & 2nd chances*.
 - J. **Slide10d** How do **I** keep from backsliding? Allow...

1. The **Spirit of Truth** to instruct you.
 The **Spirit of Holiness** make sensitive your conscience.
 The **Spirit of Power** triumph over your old nature.
 The **Spirit of Love** expel everything else from your heart.³

K. And so, the **linkage** of the apostles in **Jerusalem** and the new believers in **Samaria**...
 & the **ancient division** is *healed*.

1. Remember, the best way to turn **enemies** into **friends** is to make them brothers & sisters in Christ. [Try that with your next enemy]

L. **A holy man** was engaged in his morning meditation under a **tree** whose **roots** stretched out over the **riverbank**. During his meditation he noticed that the river was rising, and **a scorpion** caught in the roots was about to drown. He crawled out on the roots and reached down to free the scorpion, **but** every time he did so, the scorpion *struck back at him*. An observer came along and said to the holy man, *“Don’t you know that’s a scorpion, and it’s in the nature of a scorpion to **want to sting?**”* To which the holy man replied, *“That may well be, **but it is my nature to save, and **Must I change my nature because the scorpion does not change its nature?**”***

M. **Prayer:** May our nature be to *save* others.

³ Griffith Thomas; pg. 149