

Acts 8 -- What can stand in our way of the Gospel?

8 And Saul approved of their killing him. Just like those that approved of the crucifixion of Jesus. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Psalm 80:1 Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth
2 before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us. 3 Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. This persecution has been likened to the wind blowing on a dandelion and sending the seeds in all directions. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Psalm 80:4 How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people? 5 You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have made them drink tears by the bowlful. 6 You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us. This is our history. I heard one atheist mocking Christians as those that believe the reason we don't have unicorns is because they were late to Noah's ark. 4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. 7 For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. 8 So there was great joy in that city. Stephen is killed and Phillip stands up. There is a verse in a song that says "all he could do the foe was just release the flow". Psalm 80:7 Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. 8 You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. 9 You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land. 10 The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. 11 Its branches reached as far as the Sea, its shoots as far as the River. 9 Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, 10 and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is rightly called the Great Power of God." One of the really humiliating aspects of the last 2,000 years is the proliferation of charlatans claiming

“great power of God”. This is a second way in which the enemy lays the groundwork to mock the church and hold us in derision. [Psalm 80:12 Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes? 13 Boars from the forest ravage it, and insects from the fields feed on it. 11 They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. 12 But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.](#) People who are accomplished illusionists are very good at spotting fakes. This is why the FBI hires hackers to catch hackers and counterfeiters to catch counterfeiters. For this many to be astonished and to believe is a powerful testimony. [Psalm 80:14 Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine, 15 the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself. 14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria.15 When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.](#) This word “Spirit” can also be translated as breath or wind. When we breathe in the word of God and it becomes our breath, then we receive the Holy Spirit. The teaching and fellowship of the apostles is the breath of God, receive that word by faith and you will be filled with the Holy Spirit. [Psalm 80:16 Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire; at your rebuke your people perish. 17 Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. 18 Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name. 19 Restore us, Lord God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. 18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money 19 and said, “Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” 20 Peter answered: “May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! 21 You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. 22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord in the hope that he may forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. 23 For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin.”](#) Such a common thought in the world, “how can I make money from this?” The rule in the New Testament

is "freely you have received, freely give". Money is an idol, the world worships this idol. In the church we only worship Jesus who saved us with the free gift of grace. Get your heart right with the Lord and your question will be how can I express Jesus. 24 Then Simon answered, "Pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me." Once we have received Jesus by faith He begins to work in us. We need our mind renewed with the mind of Christ. This is not an instantaneous process, but rather a process that takes time. The more we set our mind on Christ the more our mind is renewed. Prayer, fellowship, reading the word, singing hymns of praise, listening to the apostles fellowship, these are all ways in which we can set our mind on Christ. 25 After they had further proclaimed the word of the Lord and testified about Jesus, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages. The chapter began with a great persecution against the church, and yet almost immediately this is turned to the Lord leading a train of vanquished foes as the gospel is spread far and wide. 26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." Phillip is growing in grace and power in his ministry because he is tuning his ear to hear the Lord's speaking. You do that by obeying the Lord. The more you obey the better your hearing becomes. 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians"). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." 30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." 34 The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. Some remark how perfect this passage is for preaching the gospel, hence it was extremely fortuitous. I disagree. Every chapter in the Bible gives you the good news about Jesus. Some verses are simply more obvious than others. When you read the biographies of evangelists you will see many stories similar to this, where

anything and everything opens the door to talk about the good news of Jesus. This is because all of creation is a shadow and Jesus is the body of all these shadows. 36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" [37] Don't you love this brother's attitude? He heard the word, he's received the word, and now nothing is going to stand in his way of obeying the word. 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. 40 Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. This is a wonderful chapter that reminds me of Caleb and Joshua. These giants are our meat; this persecution is that we can win and be victorious in. Let this be our mindset at this time: "what can stand in our way of immersing this world in the gospel?"