

# Philip – God at work in Samaria

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Preacher: Ian Naismith

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good afternoon, everyone. I'd repeat the welcome that Johnny gave you at the start. And as Johnny said, we're continuing looking at the book of Acts, the serving seven, these seven men who were chosen initially to help with the distribution of food to those in need. But two of them, at least I'm sure others as well, were greatly used by God in other ways. I think this morning's passage is probably going to be the least familiar of the ones we're looking at for many of us. Most of us are quite familiar with the story of the story of Stephen. We know about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. We probably know about the original story of the food being distributed. But the spread of the gospel into Samaria isn't something, perhaps, that we've looked at so much. But as we look at the book of Acts and the plan of Acts that Luke is presenting to us of the spread of the gospel, this is a very important passage. This is a passage of strategic importance in the book of Acts and in the gospel going out into all the world. And we'll have a look at that as we go along. There are also some big characters. We want to look at them and to learn some lessons from them. And there are one or two difficult bits to it. And so we need to put our thinking caps on a bit later and try and get our heads around what the scripture is saying, what it means for us. Quite a lot to do. Let's begin by reading the passage to Acts chapter 8 and reading from the beginning. So Acts chapter 8 and reading from verse 1 and it says, and this is immediately following the stoning of Stephen, Saul was there giving approval to his death. On that great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.

With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city. 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 and all the people both high and low gave him their attention and explained, this man is the divine power known as the great power. They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized and he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them. They had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

Then Peter and John placed their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw that the Spirit was giving at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, give me also this ability so that everyone in whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit. Peter answered, may your money perish with you because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money. You have no part or share in this ministry because your heart is not right before God.

[ 3 : 57 ] Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin. Then Simon answered, pray to the Lord for me so that nothing you have said may happen to me. When they testified and proclaimed the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages. I'm sure God will be with us as we think about this passage of

his word together.

This is Dr. William Franklin. Last time I spoke on a Sunday morning, I introduced Dr. Franklin to you as Bill Franklin, the prisoner of war in Japan. He was the man who said, I'm a Christian. I love people rather than hating them. I couldn't hate my captors because if I hated them, it would do me harm.

It wouldn't do any harm to them at all. This morning, I want to think briefly about Dr. Franklin, the renowned immunologist. He was the assistant to Sir Alexander Fleming in the invention of penicillin. He was the man who popularised the pollen count for hay fever sufferers. And today, at the age of 103, he's believed to be the oldest active scientist in the United Kingdom. He's still in his 90s and 100s, appearing as an expert witness in court and writing academic papers. My favourite story about Dr.

Franklin was when he was asked to go and treat Saddam Hussein for his allergies. And he went and spoke to Saddam Hussein and he said, there's nothing I can do for you. Give us smoking 40 cigarettes a day and then I'll think of coming back and treating you. Quite a brave man, I think, with Saddam Hussein.

[ 5 : 42 ] The reason I'm talking about Dr. Franklin this morning, though, is he's a man who's not been afraid to be a little bit controversial in his views. And one of the theories that he's propounded is that we live in a society where everything is too sterile. And particularly with babies and young children, we are terrified of them getting germs and falling ill. And so we try to protect them.

We take great care over hygiene and so on. And as a result, they don't get exposed to germs early on. And later in life, they may suffer for that. For instance, he says that the great rise in allergies over recent years, in part, may be due to the fact that we don't expose young babies enough to germs and so on. His suggestion was, if you've got a young child before they're born, you should get your cat or their dog, not afterwards. And it would be better for them, in his view.

If I could sum his view up, and this is my words, not his, he perhaps is saying that what doesn't kill you will make you stronger. If you're exposed to germs early on, you build up resistance to them in your body, and ultimately you're stronger as a result. And I was thinking of that as I read this passage this morning. Because what's happening here is there's an attempt being made to destroy the church, and actually what happens is that it gets stronger.

Don't we have the stoning of Stephen, the church in Jerusalem, after the initial flurry with Peter and John in Acts chapter 3 and 4, seems to have gone through a period of relative peace in terms of the authorities. And then that all breaks out with Stephen, and Stephen is killed, and Saul, who would later be Paul, then goes on the rampage.

The word that's used in the original language is the word that might be used of an animal that goes out to kill its prey. And so Paul, Saul, is desperately trying to eradicate the church in Jerusalem, completely going from house to house, dragging people off, and putting them in prison.

[ 7 : 48 ] What happens? Well, he doesn't succeed in destroying the church, does he? Some Christians remained in Jerusalem, particularly apostles. But the other Christians, they moved out of Jerusalem, but as they went, they spread the gospel. And as a result of what Paul, or Saul was doing, the church grew stronger, and it spread into a wider area. I think that's a pattern of history. Johnny very much has been bringing before us this morning the persecuted church in our world. And many regimes have tried to destroy the church. We think of China in the last century, trying to destroy the Christian church completely. And what happens? The church in China is incredibly strong, many, many millions following the Lord Jesus. The regime in North Korea has tried to destroy the church there. And there is some evidence that the great growth of the church in South Korea, where the church is really, really strong, is in a large part people who've come from North Korea, refugees from North Korea, and the influence that they've had on the church in South Korea. When the church is persecuted, when people try to destroy it, it tends to become stronger. And arguably the church in Britain these days is a bit fat and flabby, and the reason for that is it's all a bit too easy for us. We don't suffer that kind of persecution that ultimately leads to a stronger church. But there's a second significance, I think, of the persecution and what's happened as a result. And this is where I come back to what I was talking about, about the plan of the book of Acts. So in the book of Acts, it is the story of the spread of the gospel. It is the message of salvation going out around the world. You may remember in Acts chapter 1, the Lord Jesus says how this will happen. So first of all, we're to go to Jerusalem, to Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth. Very clear order, Jerusalem, Judea, which is the area around

Jerusalem, you can just about see it hopefully on the map there, then to Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth. And what we have in this passage is the spread of the gospel to Samaria. So it is a strategic position in the book of Acts. It is the first time that the gospel has gone outside the immediate surrounds of Jerusalem. Now we need to understand a little bit about Samaria to understand the significance of this. If you read in the gospels, there are a number of stories that involve Samaritans. Most best known one always reads the story of the good Samaritan, this man who was the unexpected benefactor of the one who had been attacked by robbers. There's also the story of the Samaritan woman whom Jesus meets in John chapter 4 and has a discussion about her faith and about the fact that he could give her living water. There's a story about 10 lepers who were cured by the Lord Jesus, only one came back, and that was a Samaritan. There's an element of surprise in the fact it was a Samaritan.

The Jews and the Samaritans didn't get along. The Samaritans were people who were descended from some who had been left behind when the Assyrian empire came and destroyed the nation of Israel.

That's what we're learning about on Sunday evenings at the moment in the book of Amos. Some were left behind. Assyrian port and some other foreigners into that area. There was a lot of intermarriage between the Jews left behind and the foreigners who came. And what grew up was a kind of hybrid of the Jewish religion. It had elements of the true faith of the Old Testament. It had also brought in lots of superstitions and lots of things from outside. So as we see in the story of Simon, it wasn't really the true religion, the true worship of God that the Jews had. It was something that was related to it, but was in many ways inadequate. And for the Jews to go to the Samaritans was quite a big thing.

[12:00] It says in John chapter 4, when the Lord Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman, she was surprised because the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. And so for Philip to go and to preach the Samaritans was in many ways something that was different, something that was quite extraordinary.

But as we think of Philip, the title that is given in the scripture to Philip is that he is Philip the Evangelist. It's not in this passage in chapter 21 of Acts, Paul goes to Caesarea Philippi and he stays with Philip the Evangelist. He's the only person in the Bible who is referred to as being an evangelist. I like to think of him as Philip the good news man. That's what evangelist means, someone who brings good news to others. So as Philip goes and he reaches into Samaria, he is very keen that as he goes, he should tell people the good news about Jesus. That they should learn about the one who came, who lived the perfect life, who is the son of God, who died, and who rose again. And so as he goes in, he preaches Jesus to them. And there's a great response. The Samaritans respond, they believe they put their trust in the Lord Jesus.

I think there's a challenge here for us. Philip was put out of his comfort zone, his comfort zone being with other Christians among Jews in Jerusalem. He goes to Samaria, and what does he do when he gets there? He preaches the message of the gospel to them. He shares with them the good news of Jesus that he has that they don't yet have. Wherever we've been placed, if we know the Lord Jesus of our trust is in him, our responsibility, like Philip, is to be evangelists. To share what the Lord Jesus has given us with others in the trust that they will come to put their faith in him.

There are too many of us, I think, as Christians who are quite silent about our faith. Great to come on a Sunday and to worship together and to learn together. But when we go to work or to college or among our neighbours during the week, how much do we talk of what Jesus means to us and what he can mean to them? And if we do, we may be surprised sometimes at how receptive they are. I'm sure Philip was quite surprised at how receptive the Samaritans were to his message. I was reminded of that this week. We were having a conversation at work. I can't remember how it all started, but it got on to what I do on a Friday, which is broadly things around the church here and what I might do more in my retirement. And people would talk that it was involved with church. It was Christian things. Two or three minutes later, the guy who sat next to me, he was a slightly younger member, the guy in his 50s. He said, Ian, I want to tell you something that might surprise you.

Do you know Crubber's Close? And I said, yes, I know Crubber's very well. He said, when I was 17, I used to sing in the choir there. Now, we didn't have much chance to talk a little bit about Crubber.

[15:15] I was in the much chance to follow up that conversation. But here was someone I had no idea they had any Christian influence or background in their life. And yet, as a young man, he had

been under the preaching of the gospel. He'd even gone to the extent of being involved in the choir. And there are opportunities, hopefully, to talk to him again later on.

Very important that we are known to be Christians, that we're known to be followers of the Lord Jesus and are willing to share our faith with others, as Philip the Evangelist did.

Thank you. So our first big character that we're looking at, Philip the Evangelist, the good news man, the man who shared his faith in Jesus with others. And tremendous results he achieved, didn't he?

Second person who comes into this story is Peter the Rock. Now, it's Peter and John. We're going to focus on Peter, who is probably the more prominent one here. Peter means the Rock. So a bit of repetition there, but that is the meaning of the name Peter. And you may remember back in Matthew and other gospels how Peter got his name. He was Simon, originally Simon the fisherman. And Jesus asked the disciples, who do people say that I am? And they gave various answers. John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets. And Jesus said, who do you say I am? And Peter said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus then said, you are Peter, the Rock. On this rock, I will build my church. Now, different words for rock. So most likely Jesus is talking about Peter's confession, about the truth that he said, rather than Peter himself as being the Rock at that point. But then in the next verse, he says that Peter will have the keys of the kingdom.

[ 17 : 04 ] And I think that is to some extent what is being talked about here in Acts chapter 8. Peter the Rock, the man who has been, Jesus said, you have the keys to the kingdom. He comes to Samaria so that he can validate that what has been done among the Samaritans really is a work of God, that they really have come to trust in the Lord Jesus. He is the one who is able to go back to the church and to say, yes, these people are genuine Christians. They are genuine followers of the Lord Jesus who should be accepted as those who know and love the Christ. So Peter and John sent to validate and they go back eventually and they're able to do that. But while they're there, Peter lays hands on the Samaritans and they receive the Spirit. And that's where we get into the slightly more difficult part of the passage today. Let's take a step back and we'll think about what's involved in coming to know Jesus and then we'll think specifically about the difficulty we face here. If someone is starting out as a Christian, if they're coming to faith in the Lord Jesus, there are three things which would normally happen.

The first thing and the key thing is that they believe in Jesus, that they recognize that he is the Son of God, that they recognize their own sinfulness and inadequacy before God, and they believe that through Jesus' death and taking our place on the cross, they are able to be forgiven and they are able to know the risen Lord Jesus in a personal way today. That is the only thing that is necessary to be saved, to be forgiven for our sins, to know that we have an eternal, secure future.

But there are two other things in the New Testament that are also associated with starting out as a Christian. And the first of these is being baptized. It's in this passage here that the people believed and they were, they believed in the name of Jesus Christ and they were baptized.

In the book of Acts, as we go through again and again, we see this pattern. People believe and shortly afterwards they're baptized. Happened chapter 2, 3,000 people believed and were baptized. Samaritans here believed, were baptized. Later in the chapters, the Ethiopian, he believes he's baptized. Saul, next chapter, believes he's baptized. Cornelius and his family is flipped in jail and the family. We could go on. The pattern of the book of Acts is you believe in the Lord Jesus, that is what's needed for salvation. But afterwards, you go through baptism as a symbol that you have been changed, that you have died with Christ, that you've been buried and that you have been raised with him. I have to say in our day, and actually for most of church history, that immediate link between belief and baptism has been at best diluted. Many churches would baptize those who are too young to have believed in the Lord Jesus based on their faith of their parents and trusting that in due course, they will come to put their faith in the Lord Jesus. Many do, others don't. Other churches like this one, we believe we should baptize people who have already put their faith in the Lord Jesus, that the order in the book of Acts is important, that you believe first and then you're baptized. But we have tended to separate the two. It can be many years between believing and being baptized. It wasn't my case, it is for many others. And perhaps there's a danger that we begin to see baptism as being a kind of optional extra. It's quite nice if people who have believed in the Lord Jesus get baptized, baptized. But it's not really that important. Now I stress again, you come to faith in the Lord

[ 21 : 05 ] Jesus only through believing in him. That is what makes you a Christian. But very important for us that we take that next step, that we publicly declare our allegiance to the Lord Jesus, that we're baptized, and we symbolize in that very physical way what God has done in our lives. So we believe and we're baptized. And then the third element is receiving the Holy Spirit. And that's the one where there's a little bit of difficulty in this passage. Conservative evangelical Christians, that's us, by and large would teach that when you believe in the Lord Jesus, immediately you receive the Holy Spirit. All Christians have the Holy Spirit. But if you look at this passage, it appears that there's a bit of a gap.

The people of Samaria, they believed in the Lord Jesus, they were baptized, and then sometime later, Peter and John come along and they receive the Holy Spirit. Now how can that be? Why is that happening? Well, there are four views on that. I'm going to briefly present all of them. And what I would say is you will find respected Bible commentators who would hold to each one of them. So let me clear what my view is. But if you take a different view, you'll be in good company one way or the other.

But there are two possibilities here. One is that the coming of the Spirit coincided with the people becoming Christians, and the other is that it was a separate event. Those who say it coincides say, well, it must do, because that is the pattern of Scripture. You believe you immediately receive the Holy Spirit. Those who say there are two stages say, well, if you look at this passage, the natural reading of it is they believed at one time and at some time after they received the Spirit. So what are possible explanations? First explanation some people suggest is actually the Samaritans weren't Christians when Peter and John arrived. They'd heard the message from Philip. They'd believed in some kind of way, but perhaps just looking at the signs and outward trappings, not really believing in Jesus, not with their faith in him. I think that's very difficult to justify from the passage. There's no suggestion that Peter and John came and they said, what Philip's taught you isn't really the full message. Here's what you should know if you want to become Christians. No, they came, they saw what had happened, and they laid their hands on the people and they received the Spirit. So I think that one's quite difficult. Second possibility is that the Samaritans already had the Spirit. So when Peter and John came, what was happening was not that they were receiving the Spirit for the first time. They had received that at the point when they became Christians, when they were converted. And what happened here was that the evidence of the Spirit being in them was given as Peter and John came along.

I find that one quite difficult too. If you look in the book of Acts, beginning at chapter 2, as the Spirit came on the early Christians, then there were signs of that they were able to speak in languages they hadn't learned. Same thing happens elsewhere in the book of Acts. There's no mention here of what evidence there was that the Christians in Samaria had received the Spirit.

There's no evidence, nothing to say, here is what happened when Peter and John came. They had evidence of the Spirit, and this happened. Now, it's quite likely they did speak in tongues or something like that, but it's not something that was emphasized. And if this was the evidence of the Spirit having come on them at conversion that was being put out here, then surely Luke would have said, this is why it happened. So again, possible, but I find that view again quite difficult.

[ 24 : 48 ] Third view is people would say, well, actually, what's the fuss about? This is the normal thing that happens for Christians. When you come to faith in the Lord Jesus, you don't immediately receive the Spirit, that you get baptized in the Spirit at some future point in your Christian life.

Again, I find that quite difficult to tie in with the general teaching of the Old Testament, of New Testament. For example, Paul says in Romans chapter 8, if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not have Christ. In other words, if you don't have the Spirit, then you're not a Christian. In other passages saying similar things. So again, I would find that quite a difficult, quote, interpretation. Which just leaves us with one option there, if you accept what I've said, that the circumstances here were quite exceptional. So the normal pattern of the New Testament is you receive the Lord Jesus by faith and immediately receive the Holy Spirit. But in this particular situation in Samaria, there was something different, something exceptional happening.

And was that something exceptional? Well, it was the fact that for the first time, the message of the Christian faith was going beyond the Jews and people who weren't Jews were being brought into knowledge of the Lord Jesus. There'll be something similar, a couple of chapters on, when the Gentiles were brought into the church. And the importance, I think, the significance of the fact that the Spirit is received a bit later than when the people first became Christians, is that this was a

validation for them and for the church at Jerusalem. It was a validation for the Samaritans, because Samaritans, we said, they're a kind of superstitious form of religion, and they had many different gods and people they saw as being great powers. And there was a danger they saw this as just being something along the same lines. That they trusted in the Lord Jesus, and they would add that to all the other things that they did as part of their religious life. Peter and John coming from Jerusalem, and the coming of the Spirit upon them as a result of that, was evidence to them that this was something different, that this was the real thing. Jesus, in his conversation with the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4, said salvation comes from the Jews. And here, in a sense, was it being worked out in practice, that the Jews came, they brought the message of the gospel, the message of the Lord Jesus for the whole world. And as Peter and John came, they were able to show the Samaritans that this was really something that was very different from what they had. This was the truth of God in their lives.

But it was also important for the church in Jerusalem, because if Philip had preached to the Samaritans, they believed the word, and they'd received the Spirit, then the Jews in Jerusalem, the Christian Jews in Jerusalem, might have had the same suspicion that the non-Christian Jews, if we can call them that, had of the Samaritans. That they were people who were different, that they are an inadequate religion, and that they just bolted Christianity onto that. The coming of the Spirit, as Peter prays for these Samaritans, was evidence to the church in Jerusalem that this was the real thing, that God was at work outside the Jewish nation, that the Samaritans too had been received into the church. And what it does above all, it prevents two churches growing up. The church of the Jews, who followed the Jewish tradition, and the church of the Samaritans, who still didn't have very much to do with them, and to follow some of the traditions of the Samaritans. There is one church, because there is one Spirit who has been given to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus.

So I think it's an exceptional circumstance for exceptional reasons. But actually, the key thing in it, I think, is not how the Spirit came upon the Samaritans, but the fact that the Samaritans, as Christians, had the Spirit, and there were evidences of that. Whatever our beliefs about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, it is really important, if we believe in the Lord Jesus, that we have the Spirit in us and working in our lives, transforming us to be more like Jesus, helping us take on the character of Jesus, empowering us to do things which, in our normal physical sense, we might think we weren't able to do. But as the Spirit gives us his gifts, he enables us to do them. Providing us with assurance of the fact that we know Jesus, that we trust in him, and that we have an eternally secure future. Guiding us in our lives, helping us to know what is God's way for us through reading the Scripture, and helping us to do what is right.

[ 29 : 42 ] That is the work of the Spirit. That is why we need the Holy Spirit. And to be a Christian, to have the Holy Spirit, means to have a life that is being changed, that is being transformed, transformed, and it really does need to make a difference for us. If we become a Christian, it shouldn't be possible for us just to go on and to do the things we always did, but say, well, I believe in Jesus now, but nothing else has changed. If we know Christ, if we have faith in him, if we have the Spirit, that should make a real difference in our lives.

Very briefly, because we almost run out of time, Simon. Simon, who is known as the Great Power, and probably thinking of as he was the kind of divine messenger come to Samaria.

Well, unfortunately for Simon, that nickname hasn't really stuck. We tend to call him Simon the Sorcerer these days. Down through church history, he's been known as Simon Magus, and was the first really strong heretic in the Christian church. He hasn't come out well in history, doesn't come out well in this passage. Simon, who appears at first to believe, who appears like all the other Samaritans have come into faith in the Lord Jesus, and yet who makes it clear by his actions that his faith isn't real. Who thinks he can buy power from God. Who covets what other people have for himself, but not because he wants to have faith in the Lord Jesus. Perhaps because the on which he'd been held before was now diluted, because these people were coming, and the work of the Spirit was much greater than the work that Simon could do. Very briefly, what's the lesson of Simon for us?

I think it's this. It is possible to be apparently part of the church of the Lord Jesus, but actually to have no real part in it. To appear to outward appearances, to be a Christian, to be a follower of Jesus, but actually our heart hasn't been changed. Even Simon's reaction to the way Peter rebuked him suggests his heart hadn't been changed. He isn't repentant. He asked Peter to pray for him. And there's a real danger that we could be sitting in a church, we could be enjoying the worship, we

could enjoy the fellowship, the companionship, the love that is there. We could even have a great respect for Jesus and think of him as being a great teacher, even the son of God, but not to have a personal relationship with him. To be interested in the trappings of Christianity, humanity, but not to have come ourselves to the point of trusting in Jesus, committing our lives to him and following him. As we said, when we were looking at the steps of coming into the Christian church, the first thing, the key thing is that we believe in Jesus, we believe in who he is, we believe in what we are, that we are sinful, that we are inadequate before God, and we trust in him as the only one who can bring us forgiveness and bring us eternal life. And sadly, in our churches,

I suspect there are many, many people who on the outside would appear to be Christians like those around them, but actually have never come to that point of trusting in Jesus and allowing him to change their lives. Can I throw that challenge out today? Examine your heart before God, whether you really are trusting in Jesus, whether you really have come to that point of believing in him and committing yourself to him. Time's gone. A visitor just says, some of the things that we've said, just to remind ourselves, what I've just said, the priority of faith, the key thing in becoming a Christian is to believe in the Lord Jesus. The obedience of baptism. If you've trusted in the Lord Jesus but haven't yet followed him in baptism, then please do consider that very seriously. It is a key step in your Christian life. The transformation of the Spirit, the fact that when we have the Holy Spirit, that makes a difference in our lives. Where we started with Philip, the privilege of witness, that as Philip was the good news man, so we can be the good news men and women going and telling others, if we know the

[ 33 : 59 ] Lord Jesus, telling others about him and bringing them to faith in him as well. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word to us. We thank you for this passage, for the way in which persecution couldn't stop the growth of your church, how even in the most difficult times, your people grew and flourished and were able to reach out to others. Help us as a church and as individuals, if we know the Lord, to be those who take the good news to others, who are witnesses to him, who see others coming to put their faith in him. Pray for any today who haven't yet put their trust in Jesus, that they may realize the vital importance of that and take that step of commitment, of faith, of passing from death to life.

Pray for any who haven't been baptized and might be considering that. Pray for any who might feel their lives haven't been changed as they would like, that the Spirit may work in them as well. Apply your word to us.

Help us to take it seriously and we pray our lives may be changed as a result. Thank you for your presence with us and we commit ourselves to you now in Jesus' name. Amen.