

THE BIG IDEA: We can never be outnumbered.

The Take-Off

Today is the last Sunday in 2012, and so I want us to end the year by taking a look at the end of Acts 8, because there is a truth in this passage that we need to learn in order to be prepared for 2013.

When we last looked in Acts before Christmas, we found a church that was being called to conquer, and yet was hesitant because they were too comfortable. We learned that they were a lot like us, and that they chose to pull in during hard times instead of stepping out. We do, too.

So God used persecution to push them out into the world around them. Often, **God often uses our discomfort to shorten the distance between us and the world.**

Today, we're going to get our first glimpse at the spiritual warfare awaiting the early church. What they encountered - and what they knew that allowed them to overcome it - is going to be critical for our church in the upcoming year. They encountered 2 things that I believe we will encounter over the next 12 months, and they overcame them because they knew one powerful spiritual truth.

First, let's look at what they encountered and then we'll learn the truth that kept them through those situations. If we believe the truth like they did, I think we'll be ready for anything 2013 throws our way:

1. They faced divine showdowns

- To this point in Acts, we've seen some pretty powerful things, but we haven't seen anything that would be classified as spiritual warfare
- In one chapter, all of that changes
- The simple preaching of the gospel in verse 5, evil spirits came out of many
- Demons are not driven out by our volume, but by God's word.
- verse 7 is not a quiet verse, is it? Shrieking, people throwing away mats and crutches. Basic mayhem. But the result was joy in the city.
- And then it happened again: Philip continued his preaching in Samaria and this time meets a sorcerer named Simon
- He was known as "The Great Power" by the people in that region, but his power (v. 11) was no match for the power of the preaching of the word of God (v. 12)
- The power we need for divine, spiritual showdowns comes from the Word
 - Matt. 4:1-11 / Jesus counters Satan's attack each time with Scripture
 - Romans 1:16 / the power is in the Gospel
 - Hebrews 4:12 / the Word is alive, active and able
- I believe that in 2013, God is going to put our church in places where we will face divine showdowns, and in order to be prepared for that, we need to make reading the Word a top priority

2. They were placed in divine situations

- Once this was over, an angel gave Philip very specific instructions about a very strange assignment
- Go south on the desert road, the one going away from Jerusalem
- Run next to a chariot with a eunuch in it
- Just so happens that he's reading a passage in Isaiah that specifically points to Jesus as our Savior
- Philip shares with him the good news of Jesus, the eunuch is saved, baptized, and Philip vanishes into this air when the eunuch comes up out of the water
- Very weird.
- Now, here's what I want you to know: in 2013, I am praying for God to orchestrate some divine situations to put each of us in
 - And one of the ways that will happen is by getting control of our finances
 - It's one thing to say God wants to use us, it's another thing to be freed enough financially to be able to be used
 - Are you and I in a position to "go south to the road" at a moment's notice?
 - I believe that God wants us to be. To be in a position where we can be placed in divine situations.
 - And verse 35 just brings it back again to being full of the Word, doesn't it? How else could Philip have explained the Scriptures unless he knew them?
 - Philip was a man full of the Word, equipped for divine showdowns, and a man free to follow at a moment's notice wherever a divine situation was waiting for him

The Landing

The question has to be: what gave Philip (and others) the confidence they needed to face showdowns and situations like these?

Sure, we're a culture obsessed with the supernatural, but not if we really saw it, right?

I mean, what we see in the movies is just in the movies, but if somebody let out a shriek and convulsed on the floor right next to you this morning and you might not come back!

Bottom line: these types of showdowns and situations seem good in Acts, but seem bizarre in Albemarle.

But if we understand one truth, we'll be prepared for the battles that God puts us in throughout the next year, and the truth is found in 2 Kings 6:16 - those who are with us are more than those who are with them

The Big Idea? **We can never be outnumbered.**

Need a few more verses to back that up? Romans 8:31 and 37; Isaiah 54:17; 1 John 4:4

And here's why that's important:

When we're outnumbered, we get scared. When we outnumber, we get strong.

When we're outnumbered, we begin to doubt. When we outnumber, we begin to drive.

When we're outnumbered, we put our heads down. When we outnumber, we lift our heads up.

When we're outnumbered, we feel small. When we outnumber, we feel big.

And it's all because we put ourselves in the Word and in a position to be free from the cares of this world.

Next week, we're going to start a 10-week series called "10" and it will help us take the first 10 weeks of 2013 and begin to do exactly what we've talked about this morning.

But as the old year goes out and the new year comes in, I want you to hear this one truth ringing in your heart and minds: If God is for us, who can be against us? **We can never be outnumbered.**

Let's pray.