

WORSHIP SERVICE - 7.13.2025

PART 23 - EVANGELISM AND GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

I. INTRODUCTION

- Today's passage is full of vital truths concerning our evangelistic efforts and how God works through his Spirit-empowered witnesses.
- May you be encouraged today that evangelism is not something just for the gifted, it's something that every follower of Jesus is able to engage in.
- God can use you right where you are, with one person, and God can and does lead you to share the good news with one person.
- Be encouraged and motivated to trust in God's sovereignty, obey the leading of the Spirit, and boldly share the gospel with the many and the one.

Acts 8:26-40

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south[d] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. 27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." 30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth.

33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

34 And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

II. A SUPERNATURAL APPOINTMENT

- We last saw Philip being used to bring the gospel to the Samaritans.
- As he preached about the kingdom of God and proclaimed the gospel and name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Samaritans believed his message and many were baptized.
- Now Luke records that “an angel of the Lord” directed Philip to leave Samaria and to head south, taking the desert road to Gaza.
- Pause for a moment to consider the references in our passage that clearly demonstrate the divine initiative in gospel proclamation and salvation.
- The angel of the Lord directed Philip to head south; the Spirit of the Lord directed Philip to come alongside the Ethiopian eunuch at the precise moment he was reading from the prophet Isaiah, and then the Spirit of the Lord whisked Philip away to preach the gospel in Azotus and other towns as he made his way to Caesarea.
- Philip is taking the gospel outside of Jerusalem to other outcast groups of people.
- But it was not the church who had the idea to take the gospel to these people, they did so at the direction of God himself.
- As we walk through this I want you to see how evangelistic efforts begin with God, not us.
- It is God who initiates. It is God who seeks out. It is God who directs our efforts.
- God is already at work through His Spirit drawing some to Christ.

PHILIP’S OBEDIENCE

- The angel tells him to head south, taking the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.
- Philip was north of Jerusalem in Samaria. It’s possible he was moving back south already towards Jerusalem, but it’s not clear.
- Everything that has happened so far in Acts has taken place in a city, with lots of people and crowds, and now he is to go down a desolate road through the desert that goes to the coastal city of Gaza.
- The angel instructs Philip to leave a place of fruitful ministry to go down a desolate, dangerous, dusty road through desert places.
- And there is no hesitation noted on Philip’s part.
- No excuses, just obedience.
- “*Rise and go*” and “*he rose and went.*”
- God sovereignly moved and positioned his witnesses.
- Faithfulness in evangelism begins with a posture and heart of readiness and obedience.
- Are you interruptible? Can God disrupt your plans and redirect you to a seeking soul?

THE SEEKER

- Luke wants to make sure his readers don’t miss the identity of the person to whom Philip is directed.
- He was an Ethiopian man— from Africa in the distant south.
- He was a court official of the Queen Mother in charge of her treasury.
- He was a eunuch—that means he had been physically emasculated.
- He had come to Jerusalem to worship.
- He was a God-fearer who had gone on pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem to worship.
- The important thing to note from all these descriptors is that this individual, though a God-fearer perhaps marginally attached to Judaism, would have been excluded from full participation in the temple.

- He had a physical defect and was viewed as unclean and kept out of the temple under the law (Lev. 21:20; 22:24; Deut 23:1).
 - Luke repeatedly refers to him as “the eunuch” which suggests that he is concentrating on his gendered defect and identity as an outcast and someone excluded from the temple.
 - God sent Philip to him in order to include outcasts like the eunuch among the people of God.
 - God had promised through the prophets that foreigners would praise the God of Israel as the nations would be converted.
 - We caught a glimpse of this on the Day of Pentecost and we see it here in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.
 - God is saving outsiders!
 - The eunuch is an outsider—racially, sexually, and geographically—yet he is still a candidate for God’s saving grace!
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- The gospel crosses all boundaries, there is no one outside of the gospel’s reach.
 - The offer of salvation is to be made to every people group.
 - We cannot be afraid to go to the least, the last, the lost, the outcast, or the ones designated as unlovable and unreachable.
 - We need a heart like Philip’s that is open to reach all types of people—that’s the heart of God.
 - If you don’t have a heart to reach all types of people, ask God to fill you afresh with his Spirit and to remind you of your lost and hopeless condition apart from Christ!

III. A SEEKING SOUL

- The eunuch is wealthy, he is traveling in relative comfort for the times, but most importantly he has a scroll of Isaiah.
 - Now the Spirit tells Philip to get closer, to catch up to the chariot and come alongside this man.
 - Philip, without hesitation, ran toward the chariot, heard what the man was reading, and asked him, “*Do you understand what you’re reading?*”
 - This was the supernatural and sovereign work of God in evangelism and salvation.
 - The Holy Spirit directed Philip not only to the right place, but at the right time!
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- God will providentially arrange what seem to us as “chance” encounters and give us opportune moments to share the good news with someone.
 - We need to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading and we need to be listening.
 - You’ll find that there are genuinely open people all around us who are seeking.
 - The eunuch was a seeking soul.
 - Notice how Philip engages him—with a question.
 - The eunuch’s response shows humility and teachability, “*I don’t understand. How can I unless someone guides me?*”
 - Philip’s question provided a great opening to the conversation, “*Do you understand?*”
 - And the response provided a wonderful invitation for Philip to share the gospel with him.
 - The eunuch invites him up to sit with him in his chariot.
 - God divinely arranged this conversation.
 - And God will do that with us. He continues to guide this way and we must be willing and ready to make the most of every opportunity presented to us.

- Maybe you have a co-worker who talks to you about something they are struggling with.
 - Maybe you have a neighbor you've been meaning to visit.
 - Or there is a family you know that is going through a really hard time and you've been meaning to reach out to them. .
 - Maybe there is someone that has been on your mind and heart and you haven't been able to shake the thought of them, and you need to text or call them.
 - That could be the chariot that is waiting for you.
 - That could be the opportune time you will be invited to have a gospel conversation with someone.
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- I know many of us have felt the prompting of the Spirit, we've all gotten that inner sense that we need to speak to someone, we need to engage someone in a gospel conversation, and we suppress it.
 - But you don't need to wait until you feel led by the Spirit to share the gospel before you actually do it.
 - We have a great commission we've been given to obey.
 - We need to pray, obey, and speak.
 - We can expect God to lead and guide us to people with whom we can share the gospel.
 - And when we live that way, we'll find plenty of invitations to come up and sit with people and share the good news with them.

IV. A SAVING MESSAGE

- Vv 32-33 In the middle of the story, Philip is asked to explain a portion of Scripture from Isaiah 53.
- Isaiah 53 is a central passage in Isaiah's Servant songs.
- The context of Isaiah 53 concerns an individual, the Lord's servant, who suffers not for his own sin, but for the sins of others. A person who is rejected by his own people, who experiences humiliation, who was led like a lamb to the slaughter, like lamb before a shearer is silent, he opened not his mouth, and who was cut off from the living, but who is then exalted.
- The eunuch asks Philip, "*Who is the prophet saying this about? Himself or someone else?*"
- Philip seizes the opportunity to explain this passage through a Christological lens.
- V35 Beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.
- How did Philip know to apply this passage to Jesus?
- Jesus applied Isaiah 53 to himself.
- Luke 22:37 It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."
- The early Christians learned to interpret Isaiah 53 in this way—from Jesus himself.
- Jesus is the point of Scripture. All of Scripture testifies to him.
- Luke 24:25-27 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.
- Philip is following Jesus's example explaining to the eunuch how all of Scripture speaks about Jesus.
- He used the Isaiah 53 passage to tell the eunuch that some 750 years before the crucifixion, Isaiah had described the suffering and exaltation of Jesus and then told him the good news of how Jesus saves sinners through his substitutionary sacrifice.

- And Philip was able to share with him that he is loved and welcomed by the Messiah that Isaiah was writing about.
- Just a short section down on the Isaiah scroll was another glorious promise for the eunuch.
- Isaiah 56:4-5 For this is what the Lord says: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant —5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever.
- Could you imagine this eunuch personally experiencing the fulfillment of that promise as he heard the gospel for the first time!
- What can we learn from Philip’s encounter?
- Asking questions provides a great way to start gospel conversations. Anyone can do that.
- Philip didn’t use a canned gospel presentation. He asked a question and that question that opened the door for conversation.
- The best resource for effective evangelism is God’s Word.
- Know the gospel well and be prepared to explain the good news to others.
- We need the Holy Spirit, we need a good grasp of Scripture, we need to pray—but you probably already know all the gospel you need to effectively share the good news with someone.

THE EUNUCH’S RESPONSE

- In the last part of the narrative the eunuch expresses the desire to identify with Christ in baptism.
- Luke doesn’t say this, but we can naturally infer that the eunuch believed the good news about Jesus and he demonstrated genuine saving faith.
- In the previous story, only those who believed and made professions of faith would have been baptized, it’s not likely Philip would have baptized this man had he not.
- Philip baptizes the eunuch, he receives the visible sign of his sins being washed away and being baptized into Christ, and having received the Holy Spirit.
- He went away rejoicing having experienced salvation through Jesus Christ.
- We don’t know what happened to him after this encounter. Some early church traditions suggest that the eunuch returned and helped start the first churches in that part of the world.
- Zephaniah 3:9-10 “For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord. 10 From beyond the rivers of Cush (ancient Ethiopia) my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.
- Luke notes another supernatural event.
- Just as the Spirit directed Philip to come this way for this encounter, the Spirit takes him away.
- Philip finds himself in Azotus and he preached the gospel there and through every town he came to as he made his way back up north until he reached Caesarea.

CONCLUSION

- Phil was a truly remarkable figure of the early church.
- The only other reference to Philip is found in Acts 21, a couple of decades later, Paul and his companions are making their way to Jerusalem and they stop in Caesarea and “stayed at the house of Philip

the evangelist, one of the seven, he had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.”

- What a legacy!
 - Philip was renowned as an evangelist.
 - We should all desire to be known as evangelists.
 - God used Philip mightily to preach the gospel to the many and to the one.
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- This amazing story reveals to us a God who sovereignly directs our evangelistic efforts and saves through the proclamation of the gospel.
 - It depicts a faithful and obedient witness in Philip, who is willing to go down a desert road for the sake of one soul.
 - Don't assume people around you are uninterested and don't want anything to do with Jesus.
 - We need to lift our eyes and see that the fields are white unto harvest.
 - We need to pray and ask the Lord to send us out as laborers, as evangelists, into his harvest.
 - The same Spirit who was in Philip and directed Philip is in you.
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- Who's your "one?"
 - Pray and ask the Lord to direct you to the divine appointments he has prepared.
 - Pray that God would lead you to have one gospel conversation this week with a coworker, neighbor, family member or friend.
 - Be willing to go to the one who is overlooked and ignored, to go down a desert road for the sake of a soul.
 - Trust that God is directing your evangelistic efforts
 - Trust that he has already prepared hearts to receive the gospel message.
 - You are the Philip someone has been waiting for and when you open your mouth, they will invite you up into their chariots to sit with them.
 - And as you do, the Holy Spirit will empower you to boldly herald the good news!

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?