



Acts 8:25-40

Philip – the Lay Evangelist

Jorge Washington Leon is one of my favorite Ecuadorian pastors. We were visiting one day and I asked how his work was going. With excitement he told about a new church plant in Tampala. One day he saddled up his mule and was on this way to visit one of his mission churches at Porvenir. As he rode along he came to a fork in the road. One way went to Porvenir and the other to Tampala. The old stubborn mule wanted to go to Tampala. Jorge did not have any work in Tampala. He said he got off the mule pulled him, beat him, and tried his best to coach the mule to go in the direction of Porvenir. To no avail he climbed on the mule and they headed to Tampala. As he rode along he prayed, "Lord, I do not know anyone in Tampala. I have no place to stay. I do not know where to begin visiting in this community. I don't have any contacts. You lead me and bring me in contact to people whom you have chosen. Lord, I need a place to stay this week, and a place to preach. Lord, I pray that the first person I see will be open to renting me a room and provide meals. Lord, everything is in your hands. Use me for your glory."

When he arrived in Tampala the first person he saw as a man sitting on his front porch. He introduced himself as Misael. Jorge introduced himself and said, "I am an evangelical pastor and I came to visit your town and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I need a place to stay this week and a place to hold meetings at night." Misael jumped to his feet and said, "I am believer. I listen to H.C.J.B, the Voice of the Andes and one day I put my trust in Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. Come, you are welcome to stay here in my home and hold evangelistic meetings here. I have been praying for years that God would send someone to our town to share the Good News of Jesus Christ."

Jorge and Misael went out visiting Misael's friend and neighbors. The first night his house was full and twelve people made professions of faith in Christ as their savior. Each night individuals placed their trust in Christ as the only means of salvation. By the end of the week thirty people made decisions for Christ and a new preaching point had begun.

One man and an old stubborn mule were available to God to be used for His glory. You could almost say any ole mule will do when he is available to God.

God is looking for a man, a woman, a teen who will make themselves available to do His bidding. When God invites us to join Him it will always cause us to stand back and say I saw God do it! It will be beyond us. It will be something that only God can do.

We see this in Acts chapter eight. Stephen had just been murdered by religious leaders in Jerusalem. The rabbi "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1, NASB95). Unless otherwise noted all Scriptures are from New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update.

Devout Jewish Christians buried the first Christian martyr, Stephen (v. 2). "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church," is a keen observation held down through the centuries. Stephen's death marked the beginning of persecution against the Jerusalem church. F. F. Bruce draws the conclusion that "it was the Hellenists in the church (the group in which Stephen had been a leader) who formed the main target of attack, and that it was they for the most part who were compelled to leave Jerusalem (cf. 11:19f). From this time onward the Jerusalem church appears to have consisted almost entirely of 'Hebrews'" (*The Book of Acts*, p. 174). This would appear to be true at least until A.D. 135. When Emperor Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem as the Roman colony of Aelia Capitolina, the church of Jerusalem was completely Gentile Christians.

This scattering or dispersion brought about the fulfillment of the promise in Acts 1:8. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Beginning with Acts 8:1, the church at Jerusalem is no longer the center of attention. God dispersed His people among the gentiles. In fact, the church is scattered to other areas.

G. Campbell Morgan observed, "Whenever the Church is governed from Jerusalem, or from Rome, or from anywhere else other than Heaven, it is hindered and hampered and prevented from fulfilling the great functions of its life" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 195).

Persecution spread the church like wildfire. It has been suggested that there were 25,000 Christians in Jerusalem at the time of Stephen's death (H. C. Lenski). Saul was dragging off men and women and putting them in jail. He was "ravaging the church." The Greek word for ravaging denotes a brutal cruelty. It is used of wild animals such as lions mangling a body. The figurative language is powerful. Saul laid waste the church like a wild animal. He was trying his best to destroy the church. He dragged some away by force and kept on handing them over to prison. It was something he continued to do until God intervened and saved him. Sad to say there are people who hate the name of Jesus and all that He stands for. Some are filled with the same kind of "zeal" as Saul.

"Persecution never for a moment weakened their consciousness of Christ or their loyalty to Him. . . . The one thing persecution can never do for a true witness, is to blur the vision of Christ or change the loyalty of the witness to Him" (Morgan, p. 201).

Philip the Evangelist Experienced God at work in His life (Acts 8:4-8)

What was the response of the church to this persecution? Did they cower and go into hiding? Did they reject the name of Jesus? No, the persecution ignited an evangelistic fire. Luke, the physician and ancient historian tells us: "Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). This has happened down through the history of the church. When everything is peaceful the church becomes complacent. When fires of persecution sweep over a land the church comes alive and God uses it to His glory. "Those who had been scattered went about preaching the word." They became heralds announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ. The word for "preaching" (*euaggelizo*) is used five times in this chapter (vv. 4, 12, 25, 35, 40). The word means to bring or announce good news. It is the divine message of salvation, the Messianic message of sovereign saving grace. They proclaimed the message of salvation with full authority and power. Persecution scattered the church like seed blowing in the wind. The word for "scattered" is used to disperse, to sow in separate or scattered places. They were driven out of town, and everywhere they went they proclaimed as heralds the gospel of Christ. Perhaps we in the United States need a little of this incentive in our day.

God had a chosen man for a special witness.

God always has His man or woman whom He has chosen to be His witness. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them" (Acts 8:5). Philip was that man. He was available to God. He was one of the seven deacons we met in Acts 6. Philip the deacon was an evangelist. When a person makes himself available to God, God will take that person and fashion him and perfect him and equip that person to accomplish the task God has for him. All a person has to do is make himself available to God. He will put you right where He wants you and equip you. When God calls a person to be His witness He will equip you and provide all that you need to accomplish that mission. When God calls He equips and provides according to His good pleasure.

"Jews have no dealings with Samaritans," wrote John, but the Christians do. Philip went to Samaria and "began proclaiming Christ to them" (v. 5). He began to preach Jesus the Messiah, the anointed of God, and kept on at it. Saul was the instrument of persecution, but Philip was the witness to the Samaritans.

God has a prepared people for a prepared message.

Not only has God a prepared person to do the witnessing He also has a prepared people to respond to the message. God prepared a people to respond to Philip's message.

"The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing" (Acts 8:6). Philip went about preaching and the audience kept on listening eagerly to the things he said. Their mind was focused on it. They were spellbound by the Word of God. The multitudes were listening to the message declared by Philip and they came to a saving faith in Christ. The church did not have the New Testament Scriptures at this time so the "signs" or mighty works were external attesting "signs" confirming that the message that he announced was legitimate.

"For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was much rejoicing in that city" (Acts 8:7-8). The "unclean spirits" (*akathartos*) are the unclean, impure vicious evil spirits. By the power of God they screamed and came out. This in contrast to Simon the magic man we encounter in Acts 8:9-24. The healing took place by the power of the Person of the Holy Spirit. May I remind you the Holy Spirit is a person, not an "it." Simon's understanding of the Holy Spirit is like many in our day. They think of Him as a power, and they want more power as if they can get more of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a divine person. He is God. He is a member of the holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is important that we clearly understand that we cannot get more of Him, but that He might get more of us, and use of to the Father's glory. Philip did mighty signs because the Holy Spirit was in control of His ministry.

Literally, that city was graced because of the preaching of the gospel. You want to clean up a city; that is the way to do it. I have watched for fifty years what happens when people hear the gospel and respond to its message. Lives get cleaned up as a result of people putting their faith in Christ. Quichuas in Ecuador would drink up every dime they made during the week in a drunken rage on Saturday, and unfit to work on Monday. In their drunkenness they would beat their wives and children. I have seen on many occasions women walking along a highway almost dragging their drunken husbands home. Then the gospel came and lives were changed. Instead of drinking they built homes, purchased land, and educated their children. The love of God made a difference in their lives. They were healed.

"When they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike" (Acts 8:12). This was a crucial moment in the expansion of the Gospel out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Samaria becomes a new center for the Gospel to radiate outward. There is the fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit and incorporation of these new believers in the body of Christ.

This new work of evangelism and church planting received special assurance that they were fully incorporated into the church just like the believers in Jerusalem. The confirmation of this assurance was when they experienced the signs when John and Peter arrive from Jerusalem. In verses 14-17 the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and faith are not in view. That had already taken place as recorded in v. 12. This was a time of new beginning in a new geographical area fulfilling the great commission in Acts 1:8. The reception of the Holy Spirit was attended by external manifestations similar to Acts 2. Here was the confirmation that this new work among the Samaritans was by the hand of God. It was a legitimate new ministry fulfilling God's promise. It will happen again when the Gentile ministry is commenced in Acts 10 in the home of Cornelius.

G. W. H. Lampe notes, "The imposition of hands is then primarily a token of fellowship and solidarity; it is only secondarily an effective symbol of the gift of the Spirit; it becomes such a symbol solely in virtue of being a sign of incorporation into the Church of the Spirit" (*The Seal of the Spirit*, p. 70).

"If confirmation by an apostle were necessary for the reception of the Spirit, we should have expected to find further references to so important a matter in the New Testament. . . . In other places in Acts, too, there is no suggestion that apostolic hands were laid on converts before they received the Spirit. Nothing is said about that being done to the Pentecostal believers in Ch. 2, to the Ethiopian chamberlain towards the end of Ch. 8, to the household of Cornelius in Ch. 10 or to the Philippian jailor's household in Ch. 16." The only exception is

possibly the Ephesian disciples in Ch. 19. "In general, it seems to be assumed in the New Testament that those who believe are baptized have also the Spirit of God. Cf. Rom. 5:5; 8:9-11; 1 cor. 6:19; 12:3-13; Eph. 1:13; 4:30)" (F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 182).

It is interesting that Philip is the only person in the New Testament who is actually called an evangelist (Acts 21:8). The "evangelist" is one who brings good news. He is a herald of salvation, the bearer of good news. He was a layman and a deacon (Acts 6:5) in the Jerusalem church. Some of the most winsome and effective evangelists I have ever met are laymen. They just made themselves available to the Lord, and share His sovereign grace. God chooses and brings together men who love Christ for our evangelism teams and we go door to door sharing Christ.

The apostle Peter and John went down to Samaria to investigate what was happening when they heard the Samaritans were coming to Christ. The apostles seem to have regarded it their duty to exercise supervision over the progress of the gospel. "So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans" (Acts 8:25). God had a prepared people to hear prepared preachers.

God has a prepared people to respond to your witness.

God puts us in the right place at the right time.

God led me to the rural town of Zapotillo, Honduras. I went searching for a place to take a medical dental evangelism team in 2003. After travelling all day I saw a sign along a winding dirt road that pointed to a school. When I got to the school it was a two room school with two teachers. I was greeted with this vivacious talkative teacher who became animated when she inquired what this griengo was doing at her school. I was looking for a school with 10 to 12 class rooms to use for a medical team. She got even more excited with all four hands moving as she talked. "You just have to come to my school. We have great needs in our community." I told her my team was too big for her small school. "Then you have to go to Zapotillo and talk to my mother who is director of the elementary school there. She will work with you." I did, and when I left Zapotillo that afternoon I had the sense that this was where God was at work. I took a medical-dental-evangelism team later that year to Zapotillo. The next year I began teaching seminary extension classes at Danli, Honduras, and made a trip one afternoon out to Zapotillo to visit the mother and daughter teachers. Sitting on their front porch they told me, "See that piece of land across the street. We want a Baptist church here in Zapotillo preaching the same message you preached when the medical dental team was here." I saw God do it. I challenged my students to visit Zapotillo and begin a preaching point there. Later, I took two more medical dental evangelism teams there to follow-up on the witnessing. Then the Lord provided funds for a building, a parsonage and the work continues to this day with a strong church witnessing to the community. I can stand back and say I saw God do it. He opened the door for a witness to the people whom He had prepared to receive the message. God prepares His people for a prepared people who will respond to the gospel. Are you that person?

Philip the Evangelist Shared the Gospel with an Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-29)

God prepared the lay evangelist Philip to share the gospel with a foreign dignitary who was visiting Jerusalem. This gets exciting because this is the way God works. This is the normal Christian life. Observe the strong emphasis on the leading of the Holy Spirit in this passage.

Philip heard God speaking.

He sensed the leading of the Holy Spirit and he yielded to His inner witness. He simply made Himself available to the Lord and obeyed. "An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a desert road.) So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship" (Acts 8:26-27). This Ethiopian man was an important man, the treasurer of the Queen. He held an important, powerful position in the government of Ethiopia. "Candace" was a hereditary title of the Ethiopian queens. He was in charge of all of her treasure. The man had been to Jerusalem

to worship. He was probably a "god-fearer," a Gentile who worshiped Israel's God, but had not become a full convert or "proselyte."

Philip overcame the cultural and racial prejudice of the Jewish people against Gentiles and eunuchs. The Gentile could only go so far in the temple court, and as an eunuch he could not fully participate in the temple worship (Deut. 23:1). Christianity removed this barrier just as the Old Testament prophets foretold (Isa. 56:3-7; 1 Kings 8:41-43).

Every believer is being touched and protected by angels all the time. They are all about us ministering to us (Heb. 1:14; 13:2). Luke mentions angels in four places in Acts (Acts 7:30-38; 8:26; 12:7-10, 23).

What is God saying to you through His Word? "If you have trouble hearing God speak, you are in trouble at the very heart of your Christian experience," observes William Blackaby.

Philip had the deep conviction that God was leading him to go to a desert road. I can hear the professionals saying, "Wait, that is not good use of a church planter's time. That is not the way we do it. Go where the crowds are; there are no people in the desert. We have our proven methods of church planting." But it is God's way. Find out where God is at work, and get in the middle of it. He is sovereign, and He knows what He is doing, and how He wants to do it. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD" (Isaiah 55:8, ESV). There is something astounding about the sweet, quiet whisper of God's voice. At that point we may not understand everything completely, but our responsibility is to obey Him.

I go into some congregations and the music is so loud that you cannot hear God speaking. They drown out the still small voice of God's Spirit. They have the idea that the louder the music and the speaker is the louder God speaks. It is so loud you cannot hear the soft whisper of God's voice. There is a lot of emotion, but no Spirit. You cannot sense His peace, His presence with all that noise.

Philip sensed the presence of God. The Spirit of God whispered in his heart, "Go." "And he arose and went." The imperfect tense in the Greek stresses the importance that Philip was to get at once and keep on going. Verse 27 tells us there was prompt obedience to the command.

Perhaps you are a single and you are afraid of the loneliness of going out to serve by yourself. There are no desert roads when the Spirit of Christ is with you always. His angels accompany you and there is no loneliness in fellowship with Him.

God had a prepared man. He also had a prepared heart ready to listen and believe the messenger.

The Ethiopian eunuch had been to Jerusalem to worship the LORD God, "and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah" (Acts 8:28). God had prepared his heart for the message. He is riding along reading out loud the Scriptures. Reading in the ancient times was almost always out loud.

There is the perfect preparation and perfect timing of the Holy Spirit. "Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot'" (Acts 8:28-29). Philip is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and available.

Philip was ready to witness (Acts 8:30).

The adventure of the Spirit-filled life is much that is ordinary, yet touched with the flame of God's presence. The Holy Spirit directed Philip to approach the man in the chariot. "Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'" (Acts 8:30).

Philip took the initiative to share the good news of Jesus Christ. You can open the conversation by asking, "Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know when you die you will go to heaven?" Then listen carefully to the response and give the person plenty of time to respond. Most of the time I ask the question: "What is your personal relationship with Jesus Christ?"

Depending on the response I will respond with the suggestion of Donald Barnhouse. "Let's suppose you died today and stood before the Lord God and He should ask you, 'Why should I let you into My heaven?' What would you say? How would you answer Him?"

That is the best spiritual value clarifier I have ever found. What is your relationship with Jesus Christ? Upon what or upon whom are you placing your trust for salvation?

Philip heard the man reading the Scriptures from Isaiah 53:7-8 and he asked a simple question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" God was preparing the man's heart by placing in his hands the very heart of the gospel in the Old Testament. Isaiah 53 presents Jesus Christ as the suffering servant who came to die for our sins.

God opened the heart of the Ethiopian (Acts 8:31-34).

The Ethiopian dignitary was honest. He said, "'Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him" (Acts 8:31). This is when witnessing is easy. I love it. God opens the doors. God prepares the hearts. God is at work in the individual. God's Word penetrates the mind and the heart. God brings the man to a saving relationship with Himself. You can only stand back and say I saw God do it. You are only an instrument, a voice in the wilderness.

"Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: 'He was led as a sheep to slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He does not open His mouth. In humiliation His judgment was taken away; Who will relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth.' The eunuch answered Philip and said, 'Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?'" (Acts 8:32-34).

"Now the passage of Scripture" he was reading was from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. The scroll was made of papyrus leaves glued together to form a sheet and each end was fastened to a stick. The reader would simultaneously roll and unroll the ends to find the passage he wanted to read. The Ethiopian had probably purchased the entire text of Isaiah which was a very costly investment. He was reading the Isaiah 53. His eyes were focused on verses seven and eight. The wording of this passage in Luke is exactly the same as the Greek translation of the Old Testament (*Septuagint, LXX*). We know Jesus Christ only through the Scriptures. We would see Jesus! The great prophets spoke of the suffering of Christ and the glories to follow (1 Pet. 1:11). Everything Jesus did according to His messianic mission is in terms of this prophecy.

"He was led as a sheep to slaughter" This passage and its context is a messianic passage that clearly speaks of the life and death of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. Change the pronouns in Isaiah 52:12-53:12 from first and second person to Christ and you have the full meaning of the passage. Christ was led as a sheep to slaughter. Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and led to the house of the high priest for trial. Jesus said He came "not to be served by others but to be a Servant, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

"As a lamb before its shearer is silent" Jesus "did not open His mouth." He remained silent at the trial (Matt. 26:60-63). Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36). He was without blemish and a perfect sacrificial sacrifice that God provided (1 Pet. 1:19). Only one individual down through history fulfills the function of an animal that is sacrificed. He is Jesus. How can He suffer so many things and be counted as nothing unless He the Son of man be also the Servant of Yahweh?

"In humiliation His judgment was taken away." Why? He was deprived of justice. The trial before Pilate and Herod was unjust. The humble silent lamb was sacrificed at Calvary.

"Who will relate His generation? For his life is removed from the earth." The NET translates: "Who can describe his posterity? For His life was taken away from the earth." Who are the descendants of this man? However, Jesus' life came to an untimely end without descendants, or did it? Jesus said in John 12:32, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32). Every born again believer in Jesus Christ is one of His descendants. This humble Ethiopian man has come to Jerusalem seeking the LORD God and He has found Him in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Philip got out of the way and pointed him to Jesus through the Word of God.

Patently, silently, without resisting the Lamb of God was led away to be crucified. "He [Jesus] was led like a sheep to be slaughtered; and like a lamb that is dumb before the shearer, he [Jesus] does not open his mouth" (NEB, the emphasis mine). Justice was denied Jesus. The judgment was executed upon Jesus as our substitute.

He rendered the full satisfaction and atonement for our sins. All the claims against the righteousness of God were satisfied in His atoning death. Jesus paid in full the demands of a righteous God against the sinner.

If one of your friends or acquaintances asked you this week that question how would you reply? Let's say a friend at work or a neighbor said to you: "You are always going to church. What makes it so special? Why do you go?" How would you respond? Or if they ask, "You are a religious person. I have watched you and see how you treat your family and live. What makes you so special? What is it about you that makes you different?" How would you respond? Or perhaps, "You know, I was bored the other night and I flipped through the channels and saw Billy Graham preaching and listened. He talked about death and heaven. How can I know for sure that heaven is real and God can save me?" What would you say?

God is at work in that person's heart. And you and I had better have the right answer. Eternity depends on it.

Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:35).

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35). Philip clearly identified Jesus as the suffering Servant of Isaiah.

Philip told the man about Jesus, and explained to him that Isaiah was speaking of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Christ was led as a sheep to slaughter. Jesus was the lamb before the shearer who was silent. He did not open His mouth. In humiliation His judgment was taken away. For His life was removed from the earth. Why? Why did this happen to Jesus? The prophet Isaiah wrote 750 years before the coming of Christ: "But He [Jesus] was pierced through for our transgressions, He [Jesus] was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His [Jesus] scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him [Jesus]" (Isaiah 53:5-6). Jesus alone took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, and was pierced for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities. The Lord laid on Him all of our sins and He died for us. "The wages of sin is death." Jesus died our death.

Jesus died as your substitute. He bore the penalty of your sins. He died in your place on the cross. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). You can have that perfect peace with God and assurance of your salvation right now. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

Philip pleaded for a personal decision (Acts 8:36-39).

"As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:36-39).

Remember, they are in the desert. Gaza was the last watering place before the desert on the road from Jerusalem to Egypt. The Ethiopian put his trust in Jesus, and they arrive at a rare watering hole in the desert precisely when the man is ready to be baptized. The work of the Holy Spirit is all over this passage. God is at work.

The unusual expression "Spirit of the Lord" suggests the idea that both the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus removed Philip, and did it suddenly and miraculously. Philip was literally snatched away or taken away by force (*harpazo*). It was a sudden action. In some miraculous action Philip was taken bodily away and transported to Ashdod. "Philip found himself at Azotus." The action of the Spirit reminds us of 2 Kings 2:11 when Elijah was carried away. He preached the good news in all the cities along the way until at last he reached

Caesarea. He just kept on doing what God called him to do. He kept telling people about Jesus. Caesarea was a large Greek speaking city, and this seems to be the place where Philip settled down and continued to minister.

The Holy Spirit is still conducting missions in the same manner as revealed in Acts 8. The Holy Spirit went ahead of Philip preparing the lost man to receive Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Christ commanded His servant to leave the multitudes in the city and go to a desert road where He had prepared a man to listen. When He opens the door, no man shuts it, and when He shuts the door, no man opens it. He still opens the doors, and when we enter the door He opens He has people ready to listen and believe on Him.

The Ethiopian demonstrates implicit and immediate obedience to the words of Jesus. "Look, here is water; what hinders me from being baptized?" Because he believed on Jesus Christ as his Savior he wanted to obey Him and be baptized by immersion in water. Baptism is a personal identification with Jesus Christ. It is a testimony before men that Jesus Christ is your personal Savior. The person being baptized is bearing witness of everyone observing that he has believed on Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Verse 37 is the Ethiopian's public confession of his new faith in Jesus Christ. It probably reflects the Christian confession in the early church. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Philip knew his Bible, the Old Testament. Can you take your Bible and share Jesus Christ with your lost friends. The whole Bible talks about Jesus in both the Old and the New Testaments. Begin right where the inquirer or seeker is and preach Jesus. How difficult it must have been for those who read the Old Testament to understand the prophecy regarding the Suffering Servant of the LORD before Jesus came, but how simple and easy for us who have seen the One who fulfilled it. How easy it is to understand the prophecy now that it has been fulfilled in the person and saving work of Jesus Christ. Our job is to go out and tell it. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God."

Did the water save the Ethiopian eunuch? No. Did the baptism by immersion save him? No. Did church membership save him? No. Jesus did, and Jesus alone. Jesus said to his disciple Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

What is your personal relationship with Jesus Christ? If He were to ask you why He should let you into His heaven how would you answer?

One final word: Responsibility is written all over this chapter. "***If Christ is hindered, it is because some Philip is not willing to go!***" (Morgan, p. 219).

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