

"Philip and the man from Ethiopia"

Acts 8

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we looked at the confrontation between Peter and Simon the wizard in Samaria. After that we hear no more about this man. He knew the Gospel and he was a witness to the power of God, but we have no idea if Simon was later saved. After this Peter and John made their way back to Jerusalem and now the Spirit of God focuses upon Philip again.

Notice Acts 8:25-26

Philip had proved to be faithful and therefore God would entrust him with more opportunities to share the Truth of the Gospel.

Matthew 25:21

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

This verse is teaching that faithfulness in this life will bring more opportunities to serve in the Kingdom, however I believe there is a principle in this that helps us to understand that faithfulness today will also open the door for more opportunities tomorrow. Philip showed himself faithful by going to the Samaritans and therefore God sent him to Gaza to share the Gospel again.

Notice Acts 8:27

Here we see a Divine appointment. When Philip goes to Gaza, he encounters a man who served under the Candace. Candace was not a name it was a title just like Pharaoh. This was a man who had great authority under the Candace and we see that he was a highly trusted man because he was over all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship. He could have been a Jewish proselyte.

Notice the words of Whitcomb on this man.

"What we have here in Acts 8 is the first Gentile outreach. It was not official because the official outreach to Gentiles would come later in Acts 10 as Peter would open the door of faith to them. But here in Acts 8 we have one African man being reached with the gospel, and this African could then return to his country bringing good news to others. This was the beginning of what would become a thriving Church in North Africa."

Notice Acts 8:28-31

This man was a Truth seeker who had made the journey to Jerusalem but came away empty. Jerusalem was in a sad spiritual state for they had crucified their Messiah. They were supposed to be the people who were God's representatives who would point the world to the Truth, but they had failed and here was a man who was there and he came away empty.

There will be a day when the Jews and their beloved city will be what God intended them to be and this will happen in the Kingdom.

Zechariah 8:20-23

²⁰ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:

²¹ And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.

²² Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

²³ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

Application:

We cannot be too hard on the Jews of Jerusalem in Acts 8 because many churches today are in a sad spiritual condition as well. The church is to be a place where believers come to be taught the Truth of God's Word but many have drifted away from giving time to the Bible and so many people are much like the eunuch because while they attend services they come away empty.

1 Timothy 4:1-5

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

² *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.*

³ *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*

⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

We are seeing these verses fulfilled in our day today. The church has departed from the Truth to please people who do not want to hear the Truth. In all of this many have become places of entertainment instead of a barracks to train soldiers. Therefore, many believers are not grounded in the Word, and they are then carried about with every wind of doctrine that blows through. This is shameful for the church.

Ephesians 4:11-14

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

¹⁴ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Now let us get back to the Ethiopian.

Notice Acts 8:28-31 again.

There is something here that we need to see. This man desired to know the Truth, so God sent Philip to him.

Romans 1:18-22

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

I show you these verses because I want you to see that every person in this world is without excuse. God has revealed Himself to every person through creation, the conscience, and through the law written within the heart. The people who suppress this Truth sink deeper and deeper into sin and many eventually die in their sins and they go to hell. This includes people who have never heard the Gospel. This is a Truth that causes many people to struggle. I have heard many people ask, "How could God send anyone to hell who has never heard the Gospel?" Let me give you two things to consider here and one connects with Acts 8.

1. People do not go to hell because they have not heard the Gospel. They go into to hell because they are sinners. Sin must be judged!
2. The people described in Romans 1 suppressed the Truth but in Acts 8 we see a man who did not suppress the Truth and God sent someone to preach the Gospel.

This is one point to be learned from Acts 8. When someone refuses to suppress the truth of God and they desire to know more it is then that God will send someone who will carry the Truth to them. We see this again in Acts 10.

Acts 10:1-5

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

² *A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.*

³ *He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.*

⁴ *And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.*

⁵ *And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:*

Peter was sent by God to preach the Gospel to Cornelius. Cornelius did not suppress the Truth he had by instead he longed to know more and therefore God sent Peter.

Notice Acts 8:28-29 again.

This man was reading in from the book of Isaiah, and we shall see in a moment exactly what he was reading when Philip sat with him. But there is a passage in Isaiah that would have been very special to this eunuch

Isaiah 56:3-6

³ *Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.*

⁴ *For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant:*

⁵ *Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.*

⁶ *Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant:*

Getting back to Philip, he was led of the Spirit to go to this man.

Application:

When it comes to reaching the lost, or serving the Lord in any situation, we must be very sensitive to the leading of the holy Spirit and we must be sure we are obedient. It is the Spirit that goes before us to prepare the heart of those who are not saved so that they will be receptive to the Gospel. It is the Holy Spirit that lights the flame within us to face the dark world.

1 Thessalonians 5:19

¹⁹ *Quench not the Spirit.*

This verse has the idea of the Spirit of God being a flame or a fire. He is the One who puts the fire within us to serve the Lord.

Jeremiah 20:7-10

⁷ O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.

⁸ For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.

⁹ Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

¹⁰ For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

This is what the Holy Spirit does within us and we must be careful to not "quench" the fire. This is why some believers are so set and determined to serve no matter what others do and it is because the fire of the Spirit is burning within them. Then there are others who are content to sit back and watch. These have quenched the Holy Spirit. Let us be ever so careful to not quench Him. There is another way to quench the Spirit that we also must be very cautious of and that is quenching Him in the lives of others.

Notice the words of Poole:

"There is a quenching of the Spirit in others as well as ourselves; people may quench it in their ministers by discouraging them, and in one another by bad examples, or reproaching the zeal and forwardness that they see in them."

Notice Acts 8:30

Philip **RAN** to the chariot. He knew the urgency of the moment and he did not want to see it get away.

Conclusion:

We will come back to this text next week but as we close I want to remind you of the need to be urgent when there is an opportunity set before us. The doors do not always stay open. If there is an open door through which we can step and share the Gospel with someone with a tender heart it needs to be done as quickly as possible. That opportunity will not always be before you. The person could die, or they may move on and we might never see them again. But even if they are close by we cannot be sure the Holy Spirit will work again like He is working now. He may have a fire burning in you and He has went ahead to prepare the lost heart to listen. If you wait this opportunity may never be set up like this again.