

An effective evangelist

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[0 : 00] Now friends, shall we turn for a little time tonight to the passage of scripture that we read together. The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 8.

And we may read again at verse 34. Acts chapter 8, and reading at verse 34. And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

There is a story told of the American preacher, Dr. A.J. Gordon, that one time he was alone in the house with his children.

And while he was studying, he gave them a jigsaw puzzle, and told them to complete it, in order that he would have quietness for his work.

[1 : 26] And soon afterwards, he came into the children's room unexpectedly.

And they were very excited. And they said to their father, We've got it all together. We've solved the puzzle.

Oh, he said, How did you manage to do it so quickly, children? And they pointed to the box that had contained the puzzle.

And they said, Well, there is a picture of a man on the back. Now, the Ethiopian was puzzled about the identity of the suffering servant in the prophecy of Isaiah.

It was only when Philip told him the good news about Jesus that everything fell into place.

[2 : 49] of whom speaketh the prophet this of himself or of some other man.

Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. Now, friends, as we meditate for a little time on the words of our text, we would seek to notice in it, first of all, an obedient servant.

An obedient servant. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

And he arose and went. Philip, the evangelist, is an interesting character.

He must be distinguished from Philip, the apostle. Philip, the evangelist, was one of the seven deacons who were appointed by the apostles to superintend the daily ministrations of food and other necessities to the poor widows at Jerusalem.

[4 : 35] But now the church was scattered abroad through persecution. And if you notice, in the appointment of the seven deacons, the apostles sought out men who were full of the Holy Spirit.

Men of honest report and of wisdom. Now this is significant for the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian Yuna.

Philip, for it tells us that Philip was a man who was in touch with God.

He was full of the Holy Spirit. Recently, he had been laboring in the gospel in the city of Samaria. Samaria. This man full of the Holy Spirit. He would not have chosen to minister in Samaria for there were no dealings between the Jews and the Samaritans.

[6 : 07] They hated one another. But you see, here was a man filled with the Holy Spirit.

He was under God's compulsion. He was a man who waited on the Lord and who was obedient to his voice.

And we're told that Philip went down to Samaria and he preached Christ unto them. He preached Christ. And wherever you read about Philip, he is speaking about Christ.

We're told that they went and they spoke the word of the Lord. He preached Christ unto them.

When the Ethiopian asked him about the mysterious figure in Isaiah chapter 53, he preached unto him Jesus.

Philip's message from beginning to last was the Lord Jesus Christ. And we read about this great work of God in Samaria that many were brought to Christ.

[7 : 27] That the whole city was stirred. There was great joy in that city. there was great joy. And there is always joy where the gospel triumphs.

Oh, there are ungodly men who try to tell us that the gospel restricts men's freedom. They tell us that to be a Christian is to be a kill joy.

That to follow Christ means being sour-faced and without any life about you. But that is contradicted by the scripture.

There was great joy in that city. And surely friend, it is joy. Joy to see a sinner redeemed. Joy to see the devil's power broken in a human life.

Joy to see the alcoholic delivered from his bondage. Joy to see the man of unclean life brought to the path of purity. There must be joy where the gospel triumphs.

[8 : 35] There was great joy in that city. He was a man full of the Holy Ghost. And surely that suggests to us that Philip was a man who was flexibly in touch with the Holy Spirit.

The angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. Philip was sensitive. Philip was aware of the angel's presence.

This man so walked with God that spiritual realities were very important in his life.

And the angel gave him the message go down south, go down unto the way that goeth from Jerusalem unto Gaza which is desert.

Go to the desert place to the place, Philip. It was an unexpected call. And was it not a strange call?

[10 : 03] For when you look at it from a human point of view, here was this great preacher being sent away from the teeming crowds in Samaria to go down to the desert place.

And you could imagine that an ordinary man might say, well, Lord, why should I go to the desert place?

There is nobody there. what work could I do for thee in those parts? Why should I leave the multitudes in Samaria and go down there to leave the multitudes for a congregation of one soul? What can I do for thee there? But you see, this was a man full of the Holy Spirit. And he did not dictate the sphere of his service.

Nor he was in the Lord's hands. He was in the Lord's hands. He was full of the Holy Spirit. And he was sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

[11 : 36] Arise and go down to the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went.

He was an obedient servant. He was not like some of our modern evangelists of whom we have been told that they required to have a guaranteed audience and a fixed fee before they would conduct a mission.

God's servant. Ah, no, this is a man full of the Holy Ghost. This is God's obedient servant.

He was a man of integrity. He was a man of wisdom. And he was a man full of the Holy Spirit.

And this is seen in his availability for service. He was an obedient servant. It was what the Lord said that mattered to Philip. It was where God told him to go.

[12 : 53] Not his own ideas, not his own choice about the sphere of service, but where God said go. There Philip was ready to obey.

The angel said arise and go south. and he obeyed and went. But then also friends, in this story, we see a seeking soul, a seeking soul.

Behold a man of Ethiopia and eunuch of great authority under Candacy, queen of the Ethiopian, who had the charge of all her treasure and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the prophet.

When Philip arrived at the desert road, he saw a party approaching, an impressive retinue, and in the chariot a distinguished stranger, a Gentile, a black man.

man. Philip knew that his master's commission was to go and preach first of all to the Jew and then to the Gentile, to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature.

[14 : 53] And you remember how the apostle Paul says that in Christ, the middle wall of partition between the races has been broken down.

Now the Ethiopian was a man of eminence in his own country. He was the treasurer of Queen Candacy, a man who would be known in our country as the chancellor of the exchequer.

He was a seeker after God. evidently this man had become wearied of idolatry, of its pagan rites and ceremonies, of the cruelty and the immorality of heathen religion.

And perhaps because of his high office, he had come into contact with Judaism. and he had come to admire the high moral standards of the Jew, their faith in the one through God.

He loved the Old Testament scripture scripture. And now perhaps on this latest visit to Jerusalem, he had purchased a script of the prophecy of Isaiah.

[16 : 41] It would be an expensive and a beautifully produced scroll. old. And because of his association with the Hebrew religion, he had become what was known as a proselyte of the gate.

He was not admitted to the full membership of the Jewish church. He worshipped in that part of the temple that was set apart for the Gentile proselytes.

But he was learning more and more about the pure faith of Israel. And now he is reading from the prophecy of Isaiah.

And Philip, sensitive to the spirit, hears the command, go and join thyself to this chariot.

Probably it was an ox wagon. It would be going very slowly. And so Philip, walking in the same direction, could catch up with it.

[18 : 02] And as was the oriental custom, the Ethiopian was reading aloud. He was reading the famous passage of the Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 53.

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb done before his shearer, so openeth he not his mouth.

That wonderful chapter that speaks so eloquently and with such detail of the passion and the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the Ethiopian invited Philip to come and sit beside him. And he puts the question, of whom is the prophet speaking?

Of himself? or of some other man? And the word says that he began with that very passage and told him the good news about Jesus.

[19 : 24] He preached unto him Jesus. He would speak of Jesus as a saviour from sin.

Or he would give him all the details of the gospel message. He would have spoken of Jesus as a peerless teacher of morality.

And of Jesus as the perfect example. And of the mighty miracles of mercy that Christ performed.

But above all, my friend, he would speak of Jesus and the saving work of Calvary. He would speak of Jesus, the substitute of sinners.

Of how he died that just in the room of the unjust that he might bring us to God. He would speak of the substitutionary death of the cross.

[20 : 38] He would tell him of how Christ met all the laws' demands. How on behalf of those that believe on his name, he finished transgression and made an end of sin and brought in an everlasting righteousness.

He would tell him of the triumphant cry, it is finished, it is finished. He would tell of the royal burial when two of the most distinguished counselors in the land were present to give him a royal burial, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the two secret disciples, the two who were following Christ, unknown to men, they were brought out into the open by the cross, they boldly came out on the Lord's side, and Philip would tell the Ethiopian chancellor of how God raised him from the dead on the third day in accordance with the prophecies of the scripture, he would tell him of the spirit's power, do you remember how Peter talks about the spirit who raised up Jesus

Christ again from the dead, and he said may he quicken your mortal body, the spirit who is the quickener, who convinces men of sin, and Philip would tell him about about all the post-resurrection appearances of our Lord, he would tell him of how he appeared in the upper room, of how he rebuked the unbelief of Thomas, and said, take thy hand and thrust it into my side, and put thy finger into the print of the nails, house, and be not faithless, but believing, and no doubt Philip would tell him about the ascension into glory, of how he was carried up into heaven, of how the angel said, this same

Jesus that has been taken from you will so come in like manner, and he would tell him that this same Jesus has been appointed to be the judge of the dead and the living, that he comes at last to judge the world, just as to give each one.

He preached unto him Jesus, bearing sin and scoffing rude, in my place, condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood, hallelujah, what a savior, what a savior.

[24 : 21] But then friends, we would see finally in our text the good confession, good confession. As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, see, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?

And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Now evidently, Philip gave the eunuch a detailed explanation of the Christian way.

He would have told him that the gospel call demands a response from those who hear did. And baptism is the symbol of confession of faith in Christ.

The symbol of confession of faith. faith. And evidently, the eunuch understood Philip's teaching.

[25 : 53] And when they came to this pool of water, he said, see, here is water. What does hinder me to be baptized?

eyes. And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.

If you believe on Christ, if you commit yourself to him, if you put your trust in that atoning death, if by grace you rest in him alone for salvation.

Now, one early mode of baptism was by what is called a fusion. The preacher stood in the water with the candidate and a vessel was dipped into the water and then it was poured over the head of the new convert.

And this man made his confession of Christ. He was a seeking soul. He had known the burden of sin.

[27 : 20] He was conscious of his guilt in the sight of God. But now by faith he beheld the cross.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe in the message. I know the identity of the great sufferer of Isaiah's prophecy.

I believe he bore my sin. I believe that his sacrifice avails for me. if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest.

And there were witnesses at this baptism for this great man would have servants.

Possibly there would be a military escort. There would be soldiers accompanying him. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

[28 : 31] I commit myself entirely to him. I trust in his atoning death as my only hope for eternity.

Ah yes, he could join in the testimony of the Apostle Paul we have peace with God through the blood of the cross.

And you remember our Lord's words, he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

What doth hinder me to be baptized? What doth hinder me? And friend, as we are approaching another communion season, is this not a question that some of us should be asking ourselves?

[29 : 57] What doth hinder me? Look at this man. At this wonderful incident, a man from a heathen land, a man with a pagan background, and yet when he is told the meaning of the cross, he responds by faith and embraces Christ as his savior.

Oh friend, think then of your greater privileges. I am sure there are some of us of whom it could be said as it was said of Timothy that from a child we have known the holy scripture.

The gospel has been preached in our midst all our days. we have known examples of Christian witness both in the home and in the community and do we ever ask this question what doth hinder me what doth hinder me from confessing Christ from acknowledging him before men from standing out openly on his side do you remember how the apostle Paul said for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth what doth hinder me to be baptized in the last few days we have witnessed a general election in this country we have seen the various parties displaying their color and wearing their badges they are not ashamed to declare before all men which political party they support our friend how much more how much more should we declare our allegiance to the

Lord Jesus Christ should we be willing to show to show that we stand on his side that he is the ruler of our lives what does hinder me and if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ if you're trusting him alone as your savior if you are willing to cast off your own self righteousness then why friend why should you blush to own his name to confess him before men ah we have an adversary there is the devil who seeks to instill doubts and fears into our mind and he comes to us as he came to Eve and he says yea hath

God said hath God said he would put doubts on the good news of the gospel on the power of that cross to save your soul on the all sufficiency of the sacrifice to atone for your sin oh may we be able through grace to say with the psalmist that we will make mention of his righteousness and of his own his righteousness we do not say that we are worthy we do not say that we are better than other men are we do not say that we have any fitness for that table all our fitness is in him it is the robes of the redeemer righteousness that make us meet for acceptance with God

[35 : 07] I will make mention of thy righteousness even of thine only and the Lord gave the command do this in remembrance of me as oft as you eat this bread and drink this cup you do show the Lord's death till he come you are proclaiming that death when friend by grace you take into your hands the symbols the broken bread and the poured out wine you are saying that death and Calvary is all my hope the finished work of Christ is my only boast I am confessing my dependence upon him my allegiance to him as my

Lord and my loyalty to his cause among men what doth hinder me to be baptized if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest it is related of Sir James Young Simpson who was the discoverer of anaesthetics and who incidentally was an elder of the Free Church of Scotland it is said of Sir James that in his old age someone put the question to him Sir James what was your greatest discovery and that great physician answered my greatest discovery was when as a sinner I saw Jesus Christ as my savior that was my greatest discovery what doth hinder me to be baptized said the Ethiopian to Philip what doth hinder me why should I not acknowledge his name can I make the good confession and Philip said if thou believest with all thine heart if if you have a grain of faith faith as a grain of mustard seed thou mayest and he commanded the chariot to be stopped and they went down both Philip and the eunuch into the water and he made the good confession and he acknowledged that

Christ was his lord and his savior now we know that very early in the history of the church the gospel spread throughout Ethiopia and in that land there has been a Christian church from earliest time now the gospel the act of the apostle does not record anything further about the Ethiopian but we can well believe that he was the means of evangelizing his own country that this man of great influence spoke for Christ and spread the message so that Ethiopia would soon stretch out her hands to God what does hinder me to be baptized and my friend if if you are a secret disciple of the Lord Jesus will you go away with this thought in your mind what does hinder me what does hinder me from making the good confession from acknowledging my Lord before me may he bless our meditation on his word