

ACTS #9 CHAPTER8 A CONCERNED SEEKER -THE ETHIOPIAN

Acts 8:26-40

Continuing our sermon series on the book of Acts
 We look today at Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.
 It is a story of direct intervention of God
 To reach a man's heart for Christ.
 The question is, does it happen today?

I read of a young man who had left his
 Wednesday evening Bible study on listening to God.
 Sitting in his car he prayed,
 "Lord, we studied tonight about your speaking to Samuel.
 Do you still speak to people today?
 If you'll speak to me, I'll try to obey."
 On the way home, he passed a corner grocery store
 when he heard a voice in his head saying, "Buy a gallon of milk!"
 He hesitated but then he decided to act.
 If it's the Lord, I told him I would obey. Besides, I can always use the milk."
 He bought the milk and started home when he heard the voice again:
 "Turn down this street and stop."
 He did so reluctantly, all the while asking himself, "Am I going crazy?"
 Again, the voice prompted him,
 "Take the milk to that house."
 These were small row houses, it was late, and the occupants appeared to be asleep.
 Sheepishly, the young man knocked on the door.
 It opened with a man starring at him.
 Trembling, the young man said,
 "I don't know why, but I felt like I should bring you some milk."
 The man grabbed the milk and ran back down the hall shouting in Spanish.
 A young woman carrying a baby came to the door with tears on her face,
 She explained in broken English,
 "We had no money to buy milk for our baby, so I prayed and asked God to send an angel
 with some milk. Are you an angel?"

The young man explained his strange urge to bring milk to their house,
 And then, before he left, gave them all the money he had.
 He left praising God and thanking him that
 God still speaks today if we will only listen for His voice!

2,000 years ago a man heard a voice,
 and obeyed an angel,
 He took a trip out to the desert road,
 Where he encountered a chariot and
 And God opened the door to the Gentile world.

I. PHILIP HEARD AN ANGEL'S VOICE

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." Acts 8:26

This divine direction is given through the "angel of the Lord" (8:26)
 and through the Holy Spirit 8:29,

29 The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." Acts 8:29

I think it is significant that both the "angel of the Lord" and the Holy Spirit are employed in guiding Philip to the Ethiopian man.

The "**angel of the Lord**" was God's primary means of specifically guiding individuals in the Old Testament, while the Holy Spirit is the more dominant instrument of guidance in the New Testament.

Here we see them coming together,
Which is significant because it brings together
The fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and promise
As well as New Testament Phenomenon of Pentecost
To bring about the Ethiopian Eunuch's salvation.
And open the Gentile world to Christianity.

Philip was one of the seven stewards chosen to serve the widows.
And when persecution arose
Philip had to flee from Jerusalem,
He preached in Samaria where there was a great revival with
Amazing signs and conversions.
And many Samaritans were saved,

The question that arises is "why wasn't this Ethiopian saved in Jerusalem?"

This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. Acts 8:27b-28

God wanted to show us that it is not religious shrines that save us
It is not laying prostrate and praying to the east that saves us.
It is not visiting Mecca or Jerusalem, or some Hindu shrine.
It is not how many trips we make to the communion table.
We might say this Ethiopian man was a VRP
A very religious person.
But he was not saved.
He had traveled all the way from Africa,
Up through Egypt
Along the Mediterranean coast to Jerusalem
Over 200 some miles in his search for the true God.

If you are searching for God you will try anything.
I'm sure the Ethiopian stopped to check out the Mystic religions of Africa.
He bowed before the multiple gods of Egypt
He probably offered sacrifice to the Canaanite gods of Philistia and Gaza
And when he got to Jerusalem.
He found in Judaism only an empty shell of religion
God had removed his Ark of the covenant and his presence from Jerusalem.

Not long ago a commentator on television said:

That "Due to the current financial crisis, the light at the end of the tunnel will be turned off."

Our world turns off lights.

Christians turn them on - look around you, in your neighborhoods, in this season. Light (especially light at the end of a tunnel) represents hope. Something that pierces the darkness. Light had been turned off in Jerusalem.

And Alas the man from Ethiopia was returning like he came--EMPTY.
Still hungry for the Bread of life
And still thirsting for the spring of living water.

I wonder today how many people,
Visit religious web site after web site
Even visit church after church
And then drive to the restaurant and try to eat their way to spiritual fullness.
Yet go home with the same emptiness,
The same sense of loss and loneliness.

He had been to Jerusalem, and come up wanting.
Even Peter and John didn't help him in Jerusalem.
But out in the desert which represented his own barrenness,
An angel directed Philip, a Grecian Jew
To lead this lost man to Jesus.
The Ethiopian Eunuch became the first true Gentile Convert.

Philip not only heard the voice of the angel, but

II. PHILIP OBEYED AND WENT IMMEDIATELY.

GOD uses people who move to do his will.

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian ^{F38} eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. Acts 8:26-27

Now would you have gone?

Look at what was happening in Philip's own church.

There was great success in preaching Jesus to the Samaritans.

Men and women were getting saved.

Children were moved to accept Christ.

A Great Evangelist Dwight L. Moody was once asked, 'How many converts did you have last night?' Moody answered, 'Two and one half.' The other person said, 'Two adults and a child?' 'No,' Moody replied. 'Two children and one adult. A child converted is an entire life converted.'"

Philip was having entire lives converted.

People were being healed,

The lame could walk,

The blind could see.

This revival was so hot that the

The Mother Church in Jerusalem sent a credentials committee to check out what was happening in Samaria.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. Acts 8:14

But God had other plans for Philip.

He was to leave this successful crusade and go one-on-one in the desert.

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian ^{F38} eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. Acts 8:26-27

This Ethiopian official was in charge of the treasury of Candace,
Queen of the Ethiopians.

He was the secretary of finance.

The officials of Jerusalem should have welcome him like royalty.

And the Rabbis should have instructed him in the faith.

But it didn't happen.

Well then why bother with Philip.

Why doesn't the Angel of the Lord just tell
the Ethiopian how to be saved?

We don't pray to angels to save us

Because they won't and they can't

But God has not commission the angels with the Gospel.

He has given it to his people.

Angels have never personally experienced God's grace like we humans,

Therefore they can never bear witness of what it means to be saved.

They can minister to us comfort and encouragement,

Give us direction and guidance,

But praying for divine intervention of angels for our families or children

Is not very wise.

It won't help us anymore than praying to dead saints,

Or to the Mother Mary.

We need to pray for faithful Godly men or women,

A teacher, pastor, neighbor, doctor, lawyer

Waitress buss boy, friend, school classmate

To touch our loved ones for Christ.

Had this Ethiopian already prayed and ask God to send someone?

To interpret the scriptures for him?

Philip was not only a faithful preacher,

He was an obedient personal worker.

Just like Jesus he left the crowds

And deal with the one lost soul in need.

That is the kind of God we serve.

On who cares about us personally.

Not like most pastors or evangelists who would have said:

"We can't go now, the revival is hot.

The action is here not in the desert."

But God shows us that one soul is our business.

Evangelist D.L. Moody once asked a man about his soul,

and the man replied, "It's none of your business."

Moody said: "Oh, yes, it is my business."

The man exclaimed then you must be D.L. Moody.

It is the business of every Christian to share the Gospel with others,

To do it without fear or apology.

Philip not only heard, but he obeyed,

And

III. PHILLIP WITNESS GOD'S HARVEST

The Ethiopian was saved.

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. 31 "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Acts 8:30-31

This Ethiopian represents many people, who are religious,

Read the scriptures,

Seek the truth,

Yet do not have saving faith in Jesus Christ.

They are sincere, but they are lost.

They need someone to show them the way.

Philip drew near to the chariot.

He heard the man reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

In those days, students read aloud.

Because the Ethiopian was reading the Old Testament.

God had already prepared the man's heart to receive

Philip's witness.

If we obey the Lord's leading, and use the word of God

We can be sure that results will follow.

God's Holy Spirit has already gone before us.

A missionary went back to the head-hunters of Formosa after the war.

Food was scarce in Formosa and scarcer in the hills where the head-hunters lived, and

they were semi-starved. He expected them first of all to ask for food, but their first question was not food, but: "Are there any Bibles in America? Please get us some."

Thousands had come to Christ because of the witness of their people and they were hungry for the word of God.

God's words bring us healing,

It opens the door to salvation not just for our souls,

But for our psyche, for our relationships,

It can heal the subconscious minds and set the sinner free.

The Ethiopian Eunuch was reading Isaiah 53

The story of the Suffering servant.

It was this very passage that brought him to salvation.

Don't let people say "I don't bother with the Old Testament.
Because it isn't relative today."

God's word is true in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

All Scripture is God breathed (inspired) and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. II Timothy 3:16-17

And the Ethiopian took his faith one step further.

"Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. Acts 8:36-38

The Ethiopian's experience was so real

That he insisted on stopping the caravan and being baptized immediately.

This was no closet Christian.

He wanted everybody to know what the Lord had done for him.

When he came up out of the water.

He went on his way rejoicing

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

There is always joy over one sinner who repents.

God took Philip away.

God gave old Philip the ride of his life.

He transported him.

Philip ended up 20 miles away at Azotus

And then made his way to Caesarea

About 60 more miles.

Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. Acts 8:40

He preached his way home. Acts 8:25

Twenty years later we find Philip living in Caesarea and still serving God as an evangelist Acts 21:8

Philip was physically transported to Azotus,

But the Ethiopian was spiritually transported into Eternity.

Nothing energizes a person more than knowing Christ.

And second nothing energizes a Christian more

Than leading another person to Christ.

It is the ultimate experience of joy and wonder.

If you want joy real joy in your life.

Pray for God to give you opportunity to share Jesus with someone else

And then be ready, for God will use you.