



Sermon Series Notes

“A Truth Seeker & an Obedient Disciple” (Acts 8: 26-40)

Danny Hodges - NT3630

Saul of Tarsus will soon be radically saved and become a great apostle for Christ, but at this point in our study he is leading a hellacious persecution against the church. But the persecution has backfired in hell's face. Every time Saul pounds the church, it's like hitting a fire and sending sparks flying. The scattered believers preached the Word wherever they ended up. Philip preaches the gospel in Samaria, and a revival breaks out.

Read the text. There are several things we can learn from this passage.

PHILIP'S WILLINGNESS TO BREAK TRADITIONAL BELIEFS IN ORDER TO SHARE WITH THIS EUNUCH.

There is a racial issue - this man is black; There is a cultural issue - This man is an Ethiopian; There is a biblical issue: This man is a eunuch; Deut. 23:1 No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the LORD.

To associate with this eunuch violated OT laws, as well as religious traditional beliefs. But the new covenant is changing the way men like Philip once thought & acted.

PHILIP'S WILLINGNESS TO OBEY THE LORD'S DIRECTION FOR HIS LIFE.

Scattering as a result of persecution was not by choice. But here Philip is commanded to move. The place he is asked to leave is a place where revival has broken out, and the direction he is given is a desert road toward Philistine territory. “There were two roads from Jerusalem to Gaza, and the Spirit commands Philip to take the one that was seldom used.” (MacArthur). So it is a desert road, and one seldom used. This is going to be a dry, dusty, lonely experience. But Philip goes, by faith, in simple obedience.

How are you at taking direction from the Lord?

Matt.4:19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

I like catching fish, but I love catching people for Jesus! I love catching lots of fish. I love catching lots of men for Jesus. But sometimes God directs us down a path where there are not many fish to be caught, but one fish. That's the way it was when the Spirit led Jesus to go through Samaria, and one fish was caught, the woman at the well. And it was her testimony that spawned many people putting their faith in Jesus, and laid the groundwork for now many more coming to faith in Christ through Philip's ministry in Samaria.

When the Lord gives commands/directions, he doesn't usually fill in a lot of details. Abraham left Ur of the Chaldeans, not knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8).

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, ***even though he did not know where he was going.***

Philip is up north when he gets the angel's call. Now he is told to go south. But what is down south? Desert! It's a kind of no man's land. Humanly speaking it doesn't make sense.

Would you move when it doesn't humanly speaking make sense?

I Cor.2:14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they discerned only through the Spirit.

Other examples of God's directives that didn't seem to make sense:

- * Abraham and Isaac (Gen.22)
- * The Red Sea (Ex.14;1-4, 10-14)
- * Gideon (Judges 6)
- * Widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17:7-16)
- * See Luke 5:4b-6; Mark 6:35-44

Prov.3: 5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Hebrews 11:6...without faith it is impossible to please God...

An angel gave the initial command, and the Spirit guided him after he obeyed. The leading of the Holy Spirit is one proof that we are truly born again.

Romans 8:14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

Gal.5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Read Romans 8:5

Two overall directions that get me out of step with the Spirit

1. I do something that I shouldn't
 - Eph.4: 30 And do not ***grieve*** the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
2. I don't do something that I should
 - I Thess.5: 19 Do not ***quench*** the Spirit. ("put out the Spirit's fire").

Examples of being led by the Spirit? Me calling Ken Ortize

The Spirit will never lead us in a direction contrary to the clear Word of God. Example?

PHILIP'S DISCOVERY OF HIS PRIMARY GIFT & CALLING

v.40 Azotus is about 20 miles north of Gaza, on the Mediterranean coast. What a way to travel. I grew up watching the original Star Trek with Captain James T. Kirk & Spock. I loved the way they could beam people from place to place. I always wanted to do that!

Philip would pop in and out of places lots of times after this, because that's what evangelists do, they pop in, share the gospel, then pop out. And we know this is what Philip became, an evangelist.

Acts 21: 8 Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of **Philip the evangelist**, one of the Seven.

Think back with me Philip's path in discovering God's gifting & calling upon his life. He was one of the first deacons of the early church, so he was a servant. He persevered in persecution, and after being scattered as a result of persecution, shared the gospel in Samaria. He followed God's direction by leaving the revival that was happening in Samaria, & headed down a desert road without knowing any details of why. That road was dry, dusty, & lonely. But he stayed the course. Philip's servant heart, perseverance, and willingness to obey by faith enabled him to discover God's calling upon his life.

PHILIP'S ABILITY TO SHARE JESUS FROM THE OT SCRIPTURES

I Peter 3:15...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...

II Tim.2:15 Do your best to present yourself as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

It is always fascinating to me how God works these kinds of things out apart from violating man's free will. Just "by chance," when Philip comes alongside the chariot, this man is reading aloud from Isaiah. It was common for people to read aloud in ancient times because of the way the text was written (no punctuations or word divisions), and because it aided the memory. Just as Philip arrives, the eunuch reads Isa.53:7-8. And Philip "began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus."

Luke 24:44...Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

My top 8 favorite OT prophecies that prove Jesus is the Christ:

1. Micah 5:2 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.
2. Abraham & Isaac (Gen.22)
3. Psalm 41:9 Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.

4. Zech.11:12-13
5. Psalm 22:16...they pierce my hands and my feet.
6. Psalm 22:18 They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.
7. Isa.53:8 is Jesus' death, verse 9 is his burial, and verse 11 is his resurrection; verse 9a is especially fascinating; note also verses 5 & 6.
8. Daniel 9:26; March 5, 444 B.C to March 30, A.D. 33 (Triumphal Entry)

THE EUNUCH'S SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

The people of ancient Ethiopia worshipped the sun god, the moon god, & the serpent. Archeological discoveries have uncovered altars where they sacrificed to these gods. But during the reign of Solomon, a queen hears of Solomon's wisdom and riches, and she travels to Israel to see if everything she has heard is true. Read Matthew 12:42; Knowledge about the God of Israel among the people of ancient Ethiopia seems to have begun with the Queen of the South. The Queen of the South is the Queen of Sheeba, and Sheeba was in the territory of ancient Ethiopia.

To ancient Greeks and Romans, Ethiopia was at the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8 says the disciples would be Jesus' witnesses "to the ends of the earth." And the beginning of Jesus' witness to the ends of the earth comes as a result of one obedient deacon who obeyed God by going down a desert and sharing the gospel with a truth seeking eunuch.

If he covered an average of 25 miles per day, this trip would have taken anywhere from 48-60 days, round trip 96-120 days, depending on how often he stopped, and for how long. This man is not just seeking truth, and he is desperately seeking truth.

What he had experienced in Jerusalem was a worship service devoid of any genuine worship. And whatever teaching he heard was from men who spoke with no authority, and who talked more about religious tradition than truth. And because he was a eunuch, even though he is a man of position in Ethiopia, the best he spot he could get to worship in Jerusalem was the Court of the Gentiles. And so he left Jerusalem as spiritually empty as when he arrived. Yet he's still searching. He has somehow obtained a scroll of Isaiah, and he is reading, searching for answers, searching for understanding, seeking revelation. These scrolls were not normally owned by individuals, but were kept in the synagogues and read from each Sabbath. They were very expensive because each one was produced by hand. Remember it was from the scroll of Isaiah that Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth had read a prophecy about Himself (Luke 4; Isa.61).

How had he missed running into any of the apostles in Jerusalem? God could have worked that out, couldn't he? But for whatever reason, that did not happen. God chooses to send Phillip to this truth seeker, Philip obeys, and not only is this man saved and baptized, but he takes the gospel to "the ends of the earth."

Ethiopia was one of the first ancient countries to accept Christianity, and it appears that the one who first brought Christianity to this country was the Ethiopian eunuch in our story.

Prov. 2:3-5...if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

The magi who came to worship the one born King of the Jews, they also were truth seekers, and God rewarded them by leading them to Jesus.

This eunuch had come to question or outright reject whatever religious beliefs he had grown up with in his culture. He realized that what he was taught was not the truth, and he began a desperate journey to discover truth. I have met many people over the years that have a belief system about something that they have never investigated to find out if what they believe is true. For example, I have talked with many people who criticize the Bible. When they do I always ask, "So you've read the Bible?" I can't remember ever personally talking to a critic of the Bible who has actually read it.

I've talked with Catholics who believe unbiblical Catholic doctrines, yet have never examined those doctrines under the microscope of Scripture. I have discovered that lots of people believe things without thoroughly examining the basis for their belief against the Word of God.

SCRIPTURE IS WHERE WE MUST GO TO FIND TRUTH

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth.

John1:1 In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

Rev.19:13...his name is the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

How are you doing at taking directions from the Lord? Are you keeping in step with the Spirit?

Would you make a commitment to go wherever God commands you to go? (Matt.28:19-20). Is God perhaps calling some of us to leave this place, this local church, and go to reach people who are just like this Ethiopian eunuch.

Who might God want you to "come alongside" and share the gospel with?

Prov.11: 30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.

Are you studying to show yourself approved, a workman who doesn't need to be ashamed? Could you share Christ from the OT Scriptures?

Are you a truth seeker? What sacrifices would you make, how far would you go, to find the truth?

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.