

Acts 8, Lessons from the Ethiopian Eunuch

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Background:

This is the story of the Apostle Philip. At the height of his ministry, God called him to go miles away from home into a sparsely populated, desolate and deadly desert region.

It was in this place that Philip encountered the Ethiopian eunuch, an official in the house of Queen Candace, also known as Kandake of Kush, the great female ruler of ancient Ethiopia, known then as Nubia or Kush.

The Hook:

The chapter begins with the spreading of the glorious Gospel out of Jerusalem. Saul's great persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem had driven everyone but the apostles out. These persecuted Christians spread out to the surrounding Judean villages like dandelion seeds and sowed the Gospel there.

Afterward, Philip went into Samaria and multitudes accepted Christ. "And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city. " Acts 8: 6-8

Our text today begins with the Holy Spirit telling Philip, at the pinnacle of his ministry, to take the road less travelled to Gaza. "Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert."" Acts 8:26

This desert was very dangerous because of the intense heat. You could easily die of thirst or heat stroke within a few hours due to its extreme heat and dryness. In this vast, dry expanse with no vegetation to give shade, was sparsely populated and avoided by most travellers, but on this day Philip met one other traveller.

It was in this place that Philip encountered the Ethiopian eunuch, an official in the house of Queen Candace, and his chariot driver. (see Background notes)

We gather from the text that the Ethiopian eunuch had come to Jerusalem to worship. Although "eunuch" was a term referring to a high government official, it seems likely that this man was also physically a eunuch, and therefore would not be allowed to enter even the outer courts of the temple, even if he was of the Jewish faith. "

Many Christians had escaped to Ethiopia and married and settled there. "O you children of Benjamin, Gather yourselves to flee from the midst of Jerusalem! Blow the trumpet in Tekoa, And set up a signal-fire in Beth Haccerem; For disaster appears out of the north, And great destruction." Jeremiah 6: 1

This Ethiopian was allowed some level of privilege, as he would likely have been well dressed and carried himself with distinction, but even with all that privilege, he would not have been able to enter the temple. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? *Then* may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil. " Jeremiah 13:23

However, he did have some degree of wealth and so had been able to purchase a scroll of Isaiah. Since a scroll in those times would have had to be hand-copied and the cost of parchment was quite high, it would have cost him a small fortune. Many believe this was a Greek copy, and not in Hebrew. Many Jews of this period did not speak Hebrew, but rather they spoke Aramaic. Also there were a large number of Greek speaking Jewish people in Jerusalem, so the Greek language scrolls would have been most available, but at a very high price.

Now if, and I say IF, it was a Hebrew copy then it would demonstrate even more faith as the eunuch would have had to be able to know and understand Hebrew to read the scroll.

Also, at that time it was the custom to read aloud, even when alone, and obviously the eunuch could read the text well enough to question Philip about what it meant.

The Book 1:

No chance Meeting

The first thing to notice is that this was no chance meeting between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. It was arranged by the Holy Spirit!! "Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert." Acts 8:26

Oh! How Wonderful that was!! The Ethiopian followed the light that he had, even though he had not yet experienced the Greatness of our LORD!!!

Friends, he was obviously prepared to follow the truth wherever her flaming torch led him!!! So you too, should be true to truth as it comes to you, even if GOD only gives you common candle light, make good use of it!!! Those who are WILLING to see GOD by the moon of night-time shall soon be illuminated by The SON of Revelation!!!! Instead of complaining that you need more light, make use of what light you have!!

So many groan over their inabilities, and yet they have never gone to the end of their abilities!!!

The eunuch made a long and perilous journey, and as he travelled, he read the Word of GOD! This is an incredible thing!! Time spent reading and studying the Word is never wasted!!!

And so the book of Isaiah was the portion of scripture chosen for the eunuch's reading! Does it strike you as being remarkable that, at that moment, he should be reading the best text Philip could have selected for him? He had reached the point in scripture in which the prophet preaches about Jesus as The Lamb of GOD! It describes how Jesus was the willing sacrifice for guilty men and women!! It highlights the incredible junction of providence and The Holy Spirit which constantly occurs in the course of conversion.

We cannot see Evangelism without The Holy Spirit! My friends, beg for The Holy Spirit to move in you and for it to fall on others. Pray for it! Beg for it!!! Don't be discouraged if it does not work as you expect, because when The Holy Spirit is at work, It will accomplish It's task!

Friends, GOD has servants everywhere, and His secret directions are given out so that all these servants, though they are hardly aware of it, are led to work together for some glorious, predestined, divine end. GOD's Glory!!!

"He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake." Psalms 23: 2 & 3

"The way of the just *is* uprightness; O Most Upright, You weigh the path of the just." Isaiah 26: 7

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." Proverbs 3: 5 & 6

"I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, *and* hear my speech."

Psalms 17:6

"All the paths of the Lord *are* mercy and truth, To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies."

Psalms 25: 10

"Thus says the Lord: "Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way *is*, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk *in it*.'" Jeremiah 6:16

"But the path of the just *is* like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day."

Proverbs 4: 18

How amazing! This eminent nobleman was reading. What a great occupation! These days we hardly hear of anyone reading.

The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy: "for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained." 2 Timothy 2: 9 and "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3: 14-17

So many books today are produced that are just rubbish! Multitudes of books are the fruits of the accursed tree of evil knowledge which pervert the truth and pollute the imagination. Souls have been ruined to all eternity by vile books and magazines which leave gaping wounds and ugly scars on the conscience. The writer of an evil book is a poisoner!!

We as believers must learn to think critically with the wisdom of the scriptures to guide us. I bear personal testimony today that the best writing is the reading of the best of books, the Holy Scriptures!!!! The more we read the precious Bible, the better it is for us!!!!

Let all believers know we must be a Bible reading people!!! This is what the eunuch was doing.

Philip engaged the eunuch with a very interesting question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" verse 30 This was a Spirit driven question. God loves these types of questions. God Himself asks these types of questions. (See "Questions GOD Asks")

Take note that Philip was far out-ranked by this nobleman and his entourage. As a poor preacher of The Word, he notices the eunuch reading and runs up to him, and solemnly asks him, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

What a great question, with great timing! Holy timing!!

Their meeting was no accident! It was a divine appointment set up at the right moment!!!

Friends, never be irritated by questions, they are often paving the way to salvation!!!

2. Philip was not told what to say. His message was to be indicated by the passage the eunuch was reading.

3. The eunuch was divinely prepared for Philip's appearance. It was the right people, in the right place, sharing the right scripture, at the right time, bringing the right message!!!!

The eunuch was not saved by one of the apostles, but rather through Philip.

In this the sovereignty of GOD is once more emphasized. The eunuch did not receive help to salvation in the holy city of Jerusalem, he was brought to faith in a remote and foreboding desert.

Like the woman at the well (John 4: 4 - 42), conversion occurred not because of the right place, but because the right person was sent at the right time. by the strength of the HOLY SPIRIT.

The process by which GOD saved the Ethiopian eunuch provides us with an important lesson in divine guidance. Philip is specifically directed to the Ethiopian eunuch, in a remote desert. "For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off. " Isaiah 56: 4 & 5

Hallelujah GOD guides!!! GOD guides spiritually! GOD undeniably guides men and women to do that which they would not have ordinarily done!

Don't be afraid to follow GOD's guidance! You may look foolish to the world, but GOD will reward your obedient submission richly. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18

GOD guided Philip to set aside, in it's greatest time (verses 5-8), his Samaritan ministry for a time, to go to this remote desert, to bring about one man's conversion. It's important to think about this! Philip would never have chosen to do this on his own! He had a very successful ministry where he was, why leave it, even for a short while?5

Be sure of this, GOD succeeds where man does not! GOD succeeds in HIS mission because HE is LORD of the Harvest! Whether that harvest is for one , or for many, GOD succeeds. GOD succeeds in putting men and women where HE wants them.

Faith trusts GOD in the middle of a desert place! GOD always meets the needs.

The eunuch had only the Word of GOD, and the moving of the Spirit of GOD, and that was enough.

GOD has planned a unique work for each of you to do. Reconciliation is a ministry where GOD is involved. Seeking reconciliation with your Saviour is never a waste of time!

"But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

Here is my own personal testimony about how GOD honours submission:

In 2013 I went to plan a revival meeting in Keswick with evangelist, Jim Cash. I was concerned because 3 churches in the local area had closed that year.

We encountered many obstacles. Everyone wanted to know why we were holding it in Keswick, why not Pefferlaw or Sutton? We had trouble obtaining permits. We were boycotted by some of the local churches, we even received death threats, but we forged ahead knowing GOD was in it.

What happened? Not one convert was received at the event, but Hope for Today was born and is now thriving. 4 converts were won after the event.

When GOD is moving, sometimes we can look foolish, but he rewards obedience.

The Ethiopian eunuch met GOD in a deserted place, and realized that religion was not enough, only Jesus is enough and then he was baptized!! His obedience was incredible!!!

Whatever it takes to seek Christ, pursue it!! Just do It!! Be diligent in your search, be hungry for HIS Word in your quest!! Be relentless in your pilgrimage!!!

Step away from puny pursuits and seek Christ, and once you have found HIM tell others!!!!

Go live for Christ!!! Be a fool for Christ!!!!There is nothing better in life!!!

And, thus ends the sermon!