

28. The Lord Worked Through Philip Again

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children fully understand the destructive power of bitterness. We also saw that we want to help them learn how to explain the difference between false repentance and true repentance. We saw that the Lord worked through the life of Philip to bring great joy to the city of Samaria. Today, we are going to see that God recognized that Philip had completed his ministry in Samaria and led him to the next person to whom the Lord wanted him to share the Gospel.

In Acts 8:26-31, we read, “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. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’ So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.” Philip gives us a real example of the importance of being led by the Spirit. When the Lord sent an angel to Philip with a message, Philip was obedient immediately and went to the road leading to Gaza.

The area where the Holy Spirit led Philip was an area that is desert. However, the Lord had one person with whom Philip was to share the message of Christ. This man was the man in charge of the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This was a position of great authority for the entire land of Ethiopia. We see that he had come to Jerusalem to worship God and was now returning to the land of Ethiopia. While he had been in Jerusalem, he had bought a copy of the book of Isaiah and was reading it as he traveled back toward Ethiopia. At that point, the Holy Spirit told Philip to catch up with the chariot. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Then, Galatians 5:18 says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Here, we see that Philip was led by the Spirit and the Lord led him to an opportunity to serve the Ethiopian eunuch in love.

Philip ran to the chariot. He heard the man reading from Isaiah. Philip began the conversation with a question, “Do you understand what you are reading?” This gives us an effective illustration of a way to show our children how to begin an evangelistic Bible study. Many people are curious about the Bible. However, they do not understand when they try to read the Bible. As we are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, He will guide us to ask such people if they would like help in understanding the Bible. The man showed by his question his desire for understanding when he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” Then he asked Philip to come up and sit with him in the chariot so that Philip could explain what he was reading. The same thing will happen to us if we are available to be used by the Lord to help others understand about Jesus.

Acts 8:32-35 says, “The place in the Scripture which he read was this: ‘He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His

humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.’ So the eunuch answered Philip and said, ‘I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?’ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.” Here, we see how the Lord works to prepare people to hear the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This man was reading from Isaiah 53:7-8. He could have been reading from anywhere in the entire book but the Lord brought Philip just at the time when the man was reading a passage about the suffering and death of Christ.

Then, the eunuch asked Philip the question, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” Here, we see two things. First, we see the lack of understanding that people without Christ have about the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. Second, we see that the Father draws people to Christ by giving people a desire for understanding of the Word of God. The same thing happened to Paul and Silas in the city of Berea. Acts 17:11-12 says, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.” Here, we see that these people were ready to study the Scriptures so that they could understand.

We see that Philip began at the very Scripture about which the man had questions and used those verses to explain to the man what Isaiah had predicted about the suffering and death of Christ. A key thing to recognize from this event is that people that have been reading the Bible have questions because they lack understanding. If we begin with their questions, the Holy Spirit in time will guide us to share exactly what each person needs to hear to come to a clear understanding of who Christ is and why He came to die. Romans 10:17 promises, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The Lord will work through His Word to draw people to Himself. In fact, the whole Trinity will be involved in their salvation because the Holy Spirit convicts (John 16:8-11), the Father draws (John 6:44) and the Son seeks and saves (Luke 19:10).

Philip began by answering the question of the man and then explained why Christ died and rose again. It was important to begin with his question because at that time the Jews thought that there were three possible meanings. Some Jewish teachers thought the sheep referred to Israel, some thought Isaiah spoke of himself and some thought that the sheep that was slaughtered was the Messiah. That discussion may have gone on for many hours as Philip explained the meaning of that passage and explained how Jesus provided salvation through His death and resurrection. As Philip explained about Christ, the Lord was working in the heart of the eunuch.

Acts 8:36-40 says, “Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, *here* is water. What hinders me from being baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.” Notice that it was the explanation of the Word of God that drew this man to Christ.

The eunuch is the one who asked Philip if he could be baptized to show that he had repented of sin and had placed his faith in Christ. Philip then asked him if he believed with his heart. Philip had good reason to ask this question after his experience with Simon the sorcerer in the previous verses. Philip wanted to make sure there was genuine faith. Romans 10:9-10 says, “That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” It is this belief in one’s heart, that God sees. In 1 Samuel 16:7, we read, “But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” We believe in the heart (the inner person). The man showed his belief by his action.

The man commanded the chariot to stop. Then, Philip and the eunuch both got off the chariot. They walked together down into the water and Philip baptized the eunuch. Here, we see the meaning of water baptism. Water baptism is a public testimony to others that a person has repented of the sin of unbelief and placed his or her faith in Christ and His death and resurrection. True belief happens in our hearts and gives us new life at the moment of salvation. Romans 6:3-4 says about baptism, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Here, we see that from the moment of true belief we are able to begin to walk in newness of life.

When Philip and the eunuch came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit caught away Philip and the eunuch saw him no more. However, that miracle was also seen by any that were traveling with the eunuch as people in that day often traveled together in caravans. Since we read in the earlier verses that the eunuch worshiped God, he had knowledge of at least parts of the Old Testament. Now he understood that Christ was the One that God had promised would come to pay the penalty for sin. At the moment he placed his faith in Christ, he also received the Holy Spirit. Christ promised in John 14:26, “‘But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.’” The eunuch could depend on the Holy Spirit to guide him to a greater understanding of the Old Testament teaching about Christ. Philip was found in Azotus and preached in the cities along the coast.

We see that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to be led by the Spirit and see Him lead us as we share the message of Christ with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide your children with an example of being led by the Spirit.