

Acts Chapter 8 v 26 - 40

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Preacher: David Williams

[0 : 00] Let's hear God's word. God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you shall judge the people righteously and govern the nations on earth.

Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you. Then the earth shall yield her increase. God, our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

Amen. Turn to God in prayer, let's pray. Our God and our Father, we thank you that we are found here in your presence this morning. Father, we thank you that you have drawn us into this place. And we pray, O God, that we might just wait upon you and ask, O God, that indeed you will speak to each one of us as we are gathered in this place together.

[1 : 18] We pray that in all that we do, that your name will be glorified. Because we acknowledge that you are the great and the almighty God. And that you deserve our worship, our praise, our thanksgiving.

So be with us in all we do. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. To the word of God now, to the Acts of the Apostles, and chapter 8.

The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 8. For those who are following in the Church Bible, it's on page 1101. So it's 1101 in the Church Bible.

And what we have in this account in the Acts of the Apostles is a work of God begun in Samaria, and how Philip, one of the deacons and evangelists, has gone down to Samaria.

There's been great success in the gospel work. The Lord is working. But in the midst of all that success, we turn to verse 26 of Acts chapter 8, and we find out what happens next to Philip.

[2 : 37] Let's share God's word. Acts chapter 8 and verse 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.

So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake, which means Queen of the Ethiopians.

This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot, reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The spirit told Philip, Go to that chariot and stay near it.

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. Do you understand what you're reading? Philip asked.

How can I, he said, unless someone explains it to me. So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. And this is the passage of scripture that eunuch was reading.

[3 : 43] He was led like a sheep to the slaughter. And as a lamb before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

In his humiliation, he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.

The eunuch asked Philip, Tell me, please. Who is the prophet talking about? Himself or someone else? Then Philip began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

And as they traveled along the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized? And he gave orders to stop the chariot.

Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. And when they come 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.

[4 : 57] Philip, however, appeared in Azotus and traveled about preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea. And may God add his blessing to that reading was holy and inspired word.

Let's pray. Father God, we come now to your word. We pray, Lord God, for again the presence of your Holy Spirit among us. We pray that he will open the scriptures up to us.

That we might not just be hearers of your word, but doers also. That we might take what we hear and put it into practice.

That again, that we might be faithful witnesses of the Lord Jesus. Again, we ask it in his name. Amen. Amen. I'm going to start this morning with a question.

Do you want to know more about God? Well, I said the fact is you're found in a church this morning. Mike suggests that the answer to that is yes, that you would like to know more about God.

[6 : 17] But I think it's more important in one sense, not just to know about God, but actually to know him personally.

Because there is a difference. You know, there was a time that I was brought up in a church background and I could say that I knew an awful lot about God. just picking up things as you went along to the church.

But there came a time in my life when that knowledge about became a knowledge of. And that's when my life really did change.

And so this morning, I want to look at the instance that we read about this morning of Philip's meeting with this Ethiopian eunuch.

Because really, it's a story about a man who was taken by surprise when he was simply returning to his own land after visiting Jerusalem to worship God.

[7 : 30] In many ways, we could say that this man knew something about God. But in his journey home, he found the joy of knowing God for himself.

And this is something, a discovery that every single one of us can make if we humble ourselves before our God this day.

And as we go through this account, I want to look at the three questions that this Ethiopian asked and the three actions that he took.

And again, they are questions that we need to be asking and the actions that we need to be taking. And so firstly, we come and to look about, well, what's happening?

Remember that Philip had been working in Samaria. He'd gone down. He'd preached the word of God there. And people had accepted his message.

[8 : 44] And people had become Christians. And there was a great work being done. And you think, well, surely Philip would have been needed there to teach and to help people being built up in their faith.

But no, that's not what we hear. We read, Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, Go south to the road, the desert road, that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.

And Philip, as a disciple, as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, did exactly what he was told.

Philip was someone who knew his God. He'd come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He knew that the Lord Jesus Christ was his Lord and Savior. He knew that the Lord Jesus had gone to the cross and there died, laid down his life, that his sins might be forgiven.

[9 : 48] And in response to all that God had done for him, Philip had made that decision, I want to live no longer for myself.

I want to live for God. I want to be involved in his service. And so he went. And he went into this road.

And I want you to notice something important here. It would be so easy to think that this is an account about a man who is looking for God.

Whereas in fact, it is an account of God looking for a man. in our children's story this morning, we had the parable of the lost sheep.

The shepherd went in search for the sheep that was lost. And in this account, we see very much something similar of God seeking out one who was to be his child.

[11 : 06] he didn't know God. But God knew him. And one other vital thing to see here is that the living God is a God who speaks.

On this occasion, he sends a messenger. He sends a messenger in the form of an angel to Philip. Philip. And then he sends Philip as a messenger to this Ethiopian.

So Philip is told, go down to the Gaza road. And when he gets there, he's told to attach himself, to stay near to the chariot that was going past.

Because in that chariot, there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch. He was an important official in charge of the treasury of Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians.

And this is what God had planned. This appointment, God led Philip to this man.

[12 : 25] Who was he? Well, we're not told much about him, except he was an important official. He was, as it were, the minister of finance of the Ethiopia.

And what about you? Who are you? It may be that you are influential in your place of work or in your community.

Or maybe that you're not particularly influential at this time. You could say, well, I'm just an ordinary person. Why should God want to bother with me?

But the fact is that we are all made in the image of God. We all have a living soul. God is concerned about us.

He wants every single one of us to repent and to follow after him. Yes, this man was important. But he could have been anybody.

[13 : 42] you don't have to be important for God to take an interest in you. The fact is he does take interest.

So remember that you matter to God and that God wants to be at the center of your life, whoever you are, whether you consider yourself important or not.

We know that this man had gone up to Jerusalem to worship. And so what we do find out about this man is that really, when you think about it, he wasn't satisfied.

You know, they would have been gods in his own land, the gods of the Ethiopians. but they didn't meet this man's need.

He was dissatisfied. He saw something in his life. He saw something was missing. And so what he did, he started looking around. And he came, I don't know how he did, but he came into contact with teachings concerning the God of Israel.

[15 : 00] And he started to show an interest. And so he travels to Jerusalem, the center of that place of worship. Perhaps what he thought he might find out more to bring him peace, to bring him understanding, to bring him satisfaction.

And again, it may be that you're here this morning and you're dissatisfied. you've tried perhaps other religions.

You've tried to find satisfaction in the things of this world, but nothing has filled that void. And you feel empty.

There's got to be something there. there. And so, perhaps like this man, you're on a journey, a journey to find the answer.

And we find that this man was reading the scriptures. on his way home, he was sitting in his chair reading the book of Isaiah the prophet.

[16 : 25] And so, that's the first action that this man has taken. His action is to read the word of God.

And as he reads, he's finding out something about God. Something about God's interaction with men.

I don't know if he's read already the beginning of the Bible from the Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers, and whatever. And now he's come to Isaiah, or he's just picked up Isaiah and he's dipping into this. We don't know. but he's reading. He's reading the words of the prophet Isaiah, the prophet, one who, to whom God speaks, one who passes on that message from God.

And so, that helps us, again, to understand what the scriptures are. They are the message of God, passed on to men, that we might read them, that we might understand them.

[17 : 48] And so, the spirit told Philip, go to that chariot, stay near to it. And as Philip ran up to the chariot, he heard the man reading Isaiah, and he says, do you understand what you're reading?

And the man said, the eunuch said, well, how can I? How can I unless someone explains it to me?

And so, we come to the first question. How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?

And that's a question we need to ask. When I read the Bible, do I understand it? And why, if the answer is no, well, why don't I understand it?

It's written in our own language. But this man realized it wasn't just the matter of reading words.

[18 : 58] He could read the words, but he didn't know what those words really meant. And so, the second good move he makes, the second action he takes, is to invite Philip into his chariot, that he might explain the word of God to him.

he understands that he doesn't understand.

And so, he asks for help. And do you do that? Are you willing to do that? Sometimes pride gets in the way, doesn't it?

we don't want to be reliant upon anyone else. We want to do things on our own. but if we don't know, we need to ask.

We need to put up our hands and say, look, I need help with this. And there are various different ways that we can help you to understand what the Bible says.

[20 : 19] as you come to this church, coming along on a Sunday, listening to the preaching of God where the man at the front explains what the Bible is saying.

Or likewise, it's the midweek meeting. Or there may be special courses that are arranged.

Christianity explored or the like.

where, again, you're invited to come along and take them to a course of study where the Word of God is just simply explained so people might understand what God has done and what God is doing.

But we have to come to that position and say, well, look, I need help in this. And the man, the eunuch, riding his chariot, reading these words.

He was led like a sheep to the slaughter and a lamb before his shearer is silent so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation, he was deprived of justice.

[21 : 38] Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth. This is a passage from Isaiah chapter 53. It's a familiar passage of some.

It's a passage which speaks about the suffering of God's servant. About one who suffers as a lamb to the shearer or as a sheep to the shearer.

lamb to the slaughterer. A lamb who suffers as a substitute.

One who died that others might escape death and find peace with God. in that portion just before the words that this eunuch was reading, we read, he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed.

[23 : 08] We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. It's a passage of scripture that speaks of one who takes the place of others.

And the second question that this Ethiopian asks is who is this? Who is this all about? Is the prophet speaking of himself or someone else?

Who is it? And we have to come to that position and say, what is the Bible talking about?

Who is it speaking of? And Philip had no hesitation.

salvation. He knew exactly who this passage was speaking about. One who died to save others.

[24 : 15] One who took the place of others that they might be acceptable unto God. God. The Lord Jesus in his own life speaking to his disciples said this, how foolish you are, how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.

On the road to Emmaus, the Lord Jesus met with some of his disciples there. And beginning with Moses and the prophets, opened up the scriptures and explained those things concerning himself.

and Philip, we read beginning at this very passage, he preached Christ.

He spoke of the suffering servant, the one whom God sent to be the saviour of the world.

[25 : 48] he spoke of Jesus. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

And Peter, one of those men who knew Jesus best while he was on earth, explained why his death by crucifixion was so important. he put it like this, for Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God.

He was put to death in the body but made alive by the spirit. and as Philip explained to this Ethiopian yurk about all that Christ had done, then something happened in the life of this man.

His eyes were opened to see the truth concerning the Lord Jesus. He saw that Jesus had loved him so much as to be willing to die in his place.

And no doubt Philip must have spoken about baptism as a sign and seal of what God had done for those who would belong to him.

[27 : 39] And so the third question that this man asked is, why shouldn't I be baptized? His first question was, how can I understand the Bible unless someone explains it to me?

the second question, who is the Savior? And the third question, which again speaks to us about the way that this man has moved already in this journey.

Why shouldn't I be baptized? baptized? It speaks to us of someone who'd come to a realization of just who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

So, Philip and the Ethiopian, the chariot was stopped. They both got down. They went into the water and Philip baptized him there and then.

what's to stop him being baptized? The answer to the question is, well, absolutely nothing. This man had come to faith.

[28 : 57] And in one sense, that is the third action that this Ethiopian took. He read the scriptures. He asked for help in understanding and now the third action, he makes that decision for Christ.

He moves, as it were, across the line from being an unbeliever to being a believer. He got out of the chariot went down into the water and was baptized.

It's a sign and a seal of what God has accomplished in our lives. We have been washed, we have been cleansed from our sin, sealed with a promised Holy Spirit proclaiming that we are secure in our faith, that nothing can pluck us out of the hand of God.

It was an amazing event. God pursued a man because he wanted him saved.

We know nothing else about this man. We don't know what happened to him when he got back to the palace in Ethiopia. We don't know how he may have set up a church there.

[30 : 58] We know nothing about him. The only thing we are left with is this. He went on his way rejoicing.

Remember, he was searching. He was dissatisfied with his life. He was looking for a relationship with God.

And here he found it. and he went on his way rejoicing. And that is true for every single person who puts their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We can rejoice knowing that God is our God. That Jesus Christ is our Savior. Knowing that we have that wonderful hope of heaven which can never be taken away from us, we can go on our way rejoicing.

But what if you're already a Christian this morning? Well, let's think about Philip. He obeyed the word of God.

[32 : 19] He went and he spoke to that man concerning the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. God used him to bring that man into salvation.

And then as they came out of the water miraculously Philip is taken away and finds himself in Azotus.

And what does he do? He carries on. He carries on proclaiming the word of God to all those villages as he approaches Caesarea.

He doesn't say, well, you know, I've been used to God to save someone. Now I can put my feet up. Now I can take things easy.

There's a whole world out there. there's a world of people who are lost, who know nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they need to know.

[33 : 35] Philip went on his way, continued to preach the word of God wherever he went, and surely that is our responsibility as the people of God today, to work and to witness for our Saviour.

Again, when we think of all that has been accomplished for us, when we think of all that's been done for us, that we have been saved, then surely we cannot be that selfish to keep these things to ourself.

We need to be going forward and faithfully proclaiming the word of God, that the church of God might be built up in these days, and that God's name will be glorified through the salvation of precious souls.

Amen. Let's pray.