

Acts 8:26-40

“And the [an] angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30 And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understand thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.”

Introduction

[Audio version: <http://resources.ccphilly.org/SPM603>]

“We have come as far as verse 26 in chapter 8, how many of you didn’t come Sunday morning to, some of you are not sure. The morning is when the sun comes up, the evening is when the sun goes down. Ah, we have covered this section, Philip having been driven out of Jerusalem with the persecution that started, it said they were scattered, and Philip finds himself in Samaria. There in Samaria he begins to preach the Word, God begins to bless it, signs and wonders begin to take place through his hands, confirmed that word that he was preaching. And the whole area, it says, was filled with joy, they received the message of Jesus Christ and his forgiveness. Interesting too, because the Lord had said he would endue them with power, they were to wait in Jerusalem, that they might go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. But it says they were all scattered, but the apostles, the ones who should have gone, the apostles stayed in Jerusalem. Philip, this deacon [not Philip the apostle], this evangelist, this first missionary, ends up in Samaria where this great working was taking place. Now Jerusalem gets word of that. And there was such prejudice between the Jews in Jerusalem and those in Samaria, they worshipped at Mount Gerizim, that they sent Peter and John, because there needed to be apostolic sanction and attestation, that in fact the Samaritans had received the word, and when they came there they saw the work that was going on, they laid hands on them that they might be filled with the Holy Spirit, because he was fallen upon none of them to that point, they were still saved and indwelt, but not empowered. And then John and Peter, at least, it’s the last we hear of John in the Book of Acts, it says they preached the gospel in many Samaritan cities as they’re returning to Jerusalem. The Scripture’s not clear whether Philip returns with them to Jerusalem, or whether Philip remains in Samaria. What the Scripture is very clear about in verse 26 is that then the angel of the Lord, as you see in **verse 26, “the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.”** ah, not “the” angel of the Lord, there’s not a definite article there. It’s “an angel of the Lord,” an unnamed angel. I can understand why an angel was sent to Philip, Philip is in the midst of this remarkable revival. We have prayed for revival here for years. And you think of the great revivals that took place in this country [and in England] and George Whitfield and when Finney preached and so forth, and how God moved in remarkable ways, and now that’s happening in Samaria, and for

Philip, you know, he's I'm sure as surprised as anyone, God is using him to witness in Samaria. For Philip, he's as surprised as anyone that God is using him for miracles, that many are being saved, joy has come to the whole area, and he's not just part of the revival, he's the epicenter, he's in the very middle of it. Down in verse 29 it tells us the Holy Ghost spoke to him, and I'm sure that was by an impression upon his heart, it seems with great clarity. But I think if the Holy Spirit would have spoken to him in verse 26 and said *'Leave Samaria and go towards the south, take the road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza,'* I think Philip would have said *'That's not the Lord, that's gotta be the enemy, trying to distract me from my ministry, there's revival going on, why would I leave revival? God is moving powerfully, things are happening,'* he didn't say where to go, go into the desert. The only fact the angel is specific about is the road he wants him to take, it isn't the one that goes from Samaria to Gaza, it's the one that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza, and the only information he has about that road is, by the way, it's in the middle of nowhere, it's in the desert. And just remarkable I think, that an angel has to come, and because of the supernatural way things were moving in the Book of Acts, you look at this and think, there's Philip on speaking terms with an angel. It doesn't say he gets a heart attack and falls over, this angel appears to him and says ***'Philip, you need to head south.'*** That's not real specific, that's like *'Abraham, load up and go, and I'll tell you where you're going.'* The angel tells Philip ***'Go south, and I want you to get on the road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza, and it's desert.'*** Now look, that's the step, that's the obedience that's asked for, there's no step B, step C, there's no long-range plan, there's just make this first step. And look, again, in our lives, I'm convinced that that's the exception, not the rule. Most of the time, the way God leads is very pragmatic, it's very straight forward, it's very in keeping with everything you would read in Scripture about common sense, and so forth. But there are times when God may speak to us and ask us to do something that doesn't make that much sense, at least to us. Evidently it makes perfect sense to him. Because God knows this man he's going to encounter, this Ethiopian eunuch. God knows this man has come from great distance, God knows who this man works for, God knows his social-economic position, God knows he's come to Jerusalem, God knows he's disappointed there. God knows he's returning to Ethiopia. God knows what road he's on. God knows who his driver is, and God knows what book he's reading, and God knows what chapter he'd be in when Philip encounters him.

So it all makes perfect sense to God. But to Philip it's just **'I want you to leave this, and I want you to head south, and I want you to get yourself on the road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza, and that road is desert.'** And remarkably he responds, and the verse says **'so he went.'** And that's tremendous faith. Again, think of Philip. Philip is in Jerusalem, the church is growing, increasing by thousands, and there's a dispute about the widows, so they say **'Pick out seven men who you really trust,'** and Philip is one of them. Philip's not expecting anything, and Philip is a man whose content to wait on tables, to make sure there's not indiscretion in regards to serving and care of the widows, it's not too low for him, it's not stooping down, he's willing to do that. And then as the persecution starts, he finds himself in Samaria, he never expected that, and then God is doing miracles through this man, and touching the entire area through the Word he's preaching. So Philip has nothing to lose by yielding again, because each step of his life in recent times, has been incredible, and it's been supernatural, and it's been simply by being obedient and yielding to the next thing God had him to do. So now he's asked to head south, **'just head south, and get on the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza, forget about the revival, move in the direction I'm aiming you, and I'll explain the rest then.'**

Philip's Amazing Encounter With The Ethiopian Eunuch

"And he rose" it says. And the Scripture says "behold, consider this," **"and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet."** (verses 27-28) So, consider this, here's Philip being obedient, he's out in the middle of nowhere, looking around, wondering *'Why am I here, why did I leave a revival for this?'* I don't even know if he has a canteen, and he starts to hear this ruckus, and here comes, no doubt, an entourage, this man is wealthy beyond your imagination, this man has power and influence beyond your imagination, this man is a eunuch, he is from Ethiopia, which was extremely wealthy in this particular day. Ah, the gold of Ethiopia was some of the purest gold in the world, besides spices and other things they traded in. And he serves in the court of

Candace, Luke says. No Candace is not a name like Candace Bergin, Candace is from the Nubian, Candake, which is the Nubian word for queen. So Candace is just a title, like Pharaoh, he works for Candace, Luke says that's queen of Ethiopia, and we know right away that's the Queen Mother, because the Ethiopians had kings. So evidently the king has died, there's a young prince being raised somewhere, and they were very specific about that entire process. And at this point there's this Queen Mother in Ethiopia, and this man, this eunuch serves her, but he is in charge of the entire treasury of the nation. He is the secretary of the treasury of Ethiopia. Again, I believe he paid his taxes. But he's the secretary of the treasury of the nation. And he is wealthy beyond what you and I imagine, he is of incredible influence, he is a man with great power, and somehow he has come in contact with the religion of the Jews. Understand, that when people in this world, Romans, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Babylonians, when they come in contact with Judaism, there is an appeal to monotheism. Pagan cultures, people of pagan cultures that are searching for God were very much enthralled with Judaism, because there was one God, it wasn't complicated. He was the only true God, he was the Creator, he had granted a Book to this people, they had his Law, they had his ordinances, and that was very attractive. [Comment: And the Jews from the period of the Maccabees were great proselyters, evangelizing Judaism, which in its pure form was God's true religion until it was corrupted at various times in the House of Judah's history. From Joshua through king Josiah, and then through the Babylonian captivity, and then through Ezra and Nehemiah, Judaism was God's true religion, which was intended to be given to the entire nation of Israel, but ended up being God's true religion to the Jews, up until the time of Malachi and then into the time of the Maccabees. It was almost totally corrupted by the time of Christ, when after Jesus' death and resurrection, God's true religion of Judaism was replaced by the early Church. That's what the Book of Acts and this series on the Book of Acts proves beyond a shadow of a doubt. The early Church was thought to be by many looking at it both from within Judea and Jerusalem and those looking at it from without, at Rome, it was thought to be an extension of Judaism, another offshoot of Judaism. And recent Church history, as shown in Oskar Skarsaune's *In The Shadow of the Temple*, and Rodney Stark's *The Rise of Christianity* show the early Church for its first 300 years was basically Jewish in practice and observance of days of worship. For historic proof of that, see

<https://unityinchrist.com/history2/index3.htm>] You see the way Islam spreads today, it's a monotheistic religion, people are drawn to that, one God, there's one God. And there was one God in Judaism, and they were drawn to this one God, and this man, the Ethiopian eunuch, was drawn to that from whatever paganism he had been in. Now there, even to Halle Selassie, they claim their lineage back to Solomon, in fact there are traditions that go all the way back to the Queen of Sheba in Ethiopia, and Ethiopia then was Sudan, it was south of Egypt. Herodotus called it the end of the world, go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the uttermost parts of the earth, that was to them in that day, that was the area of Ethiopia. And there was tradition that when that queen came and she saw Solomon's kingdom and his glory, she said *"The half I've not been told me."* and it says that Solomon gave her all the desire of her heart, and one Jewish tradition says that was to take his baby and she got pregnant and went back to Ethiopia, and that the Ethiopians claim a lineage to Solomon that predates Christ by 700 years at least. Now it's very interesting, of course there is the Coptic Church, there is an ancient tradition of Christianity that traces itself back to this man, no doubt, this Ethiopian eunuch. [Comment: I have spoken to a Coptic Christian, and it has devolved to being much like the Roman Catholic church, and now is seeking unity with that church.] I have in my office a Codice that somebody gave me as a gift, in fact a friend of mine was in Oxam, and you know that the Christian church there believed they have the Ark of the Covenant, nobody knows for sure. And a friend of mine shared with the Prime Minister and his son, verses about Isaiah about bringing the gift from Ethiopia and so forth, and they were impressed and there was interest and so forth, so he gave him these two ancient Codices, as a gift. So he said to me, I don't know what they are, you want one? I said *'sure,'* so he sent it to me in the mail, it's all in velum, and I've looked at it, trying to figure it out, so I took it over to the University [of Pennsylvania] *'You should wear latex gloves,'* I said *'This has been around for a thousand years without latex gloves, I ain't gonna wear it out.'* And finally a couple here in church brought a man who had been raised in Ethiopia, and he said *"This is called Gaez, this dialect that goes back at least 3,000 years, and that small children in Ethiopia are taught Gaez,"* and he said *'After that he had emigrated to Israel, fought in the Israeli Army and so forth,'* he was a black man from Ethiopia, and he said *"This is the Book of Psalms,"* and he started to read it for me, and it's all 150 Psalms, so there's great tradition in Ethiopia of faith, both in regards to Judaism and

Christianity, very interesting. When the Falchem Jews began to emigrate from Ethiopia to Israel, one of the problems was, remember in the late 1980s you hear about all the starving people in Ethiopia, money was being sent there from around the world, and it was being used to buy arms, people weren't getting the food, and the Israelis went in and brought planeloads of Ethiopians back to Israel. And what they found when they brought them there, is that the Ethiopian Judaism predated the Sephardic and Falsian Jews, and the other Jews from Europe that had come, that the Ethiopian Judaism was a more ancient form, it was almost offensive to them, it was purer, very interesting. So, here this man is from Ethiopia, somewhere had he traveled to Alexandria where there was great Jewish populations, had he met in his own community there Jews that had spoken to him about the one true living God? Whatever the case, he had the means and he had the wealth, and he's making possibly a once in a lifetime trip to Jerusalem, it says **"for to worship."** That is a forty to sixty day journey. In fact most scholars I read said 48 to 60 day journey, it's two months one way and two months the other way to come to Jerusalem to worship. And Philip is out in the middle of the desert and he hears this ruckus, and here comes no doubt a number of chariots, this man was a government official, he did not travel alone, and he looks up and he sees this chariot, which is a stretch-chariot, it's not a little chariot, because a guy's reading out loud, so somebody's driving for him. He asks Philip to come up into the chariot with him, so this is not your regular Ben Hur let's have a race chariot, this is a nice long, drawn out six-seater or something. And here he comes through the desert and Philip looks up and sees him. Now he's probably what's called in Judaism a seeker of Jehovah, they had different terms. He's not a Proselyte of the Gate, which is more official, because he's a eunuch. Deuteronomy 23:1 says that anybody who was castrated or anybody who had gone through that process was never allowed to be a part of the Congregation of the LORD, so no doubt he had been rejected on that level. But as in every culture, money talks. Mine does, it says *'Good-bye!'* But money talks, and here comes this wealthy man into Jerusalem and I'm sure Caiaphas and Anas had made time to meet with him. Somehow now at an incredible expense he has a Scroll, we can tell by the way it's quoted, it's a copy of the Septuagint, it's written in Greek, but it's written by hand, and the cost is unimaginable. And he's on his way back from Jerusalem, and he's reading the Scroll of Isaiah it says. No doubt he has been very discouraged by religion (especially if he spent time with

Caiaphas and Anas). He has seen things in the Temple precincts, he's seen much blood flowing, he's seen much incense ascend, he's seen the fire on the altar, the smoke rising, he's seen much, but no doubt he's returned from a religious system without life. We don't know, had he heard Saul of Tarsus there, when he was there? Had he heard Peter preaching in Solomon's Portico? We don't know, but he's returning now, and though the religious system seemed dead, the Word that he has, no doubt, seems alive to him, so he's on his way back to his native country of Ethiopia, and he's returning it says, **"sitting in his chariot"** and he's reading Isaiah the prophet. And then, now look in **verse 29**, there's never a "then" unless there's a "so he arose and went." You never get to the "then" unless you obey the first command, and that's how there gets to be "then's" in our lives, **"Then"** it says, **"the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."** (**verse 29**) Now, how did the Spirit say that? Does the Spirit speak to you? Does the Spirit speak to me? And how does he speak when he speaks? Does he speak in English? Well I'd think he has to, or else I wouldn't understand. He prompts my heart, sometimes I know when the Lord is prompting me. But isn't it interesting with what clarity Philip is able to hear the Spirit speaking to him? Again, imagine a world without computers, without cell-phones, without televisions, without radios, without distractions, without all of the things that ramp up our dendrites all day long, imagine to cultivate the ability to hear the voice of the Lord. Imagine what a human brain might do if you just left it alone? I wonder what it's really for? We keep it busy with all kinds of things. Philip hears the Spirit say **'Go.'** Now no doubt, look, the next verse says **'he ran.'** When the Spirit said **'Go to him,'** Philip understood clearly the Spirit was saying that to him with great urgency. Now he's out in the middle of the desert, here comes a government official from another country, and he starts running to the chariot. They guy's guards probably took out their spears and their swords, you know, here's this wild man running through the desert, getting close to you. But Philip wasn't running to the eunuch, he was running to the text. If he'd have walked up to this eunuch I don't know how long it would have taken, he might have been in Isaiah 54 by then. He's running to Isaiah 53, verses 7 and 8, he's running to the text that the man's reading. And evidently the man's reading out loud. The Jews taught their disciples to read out loud as they read the Word. He has a driver, because he's not driving and reading a scroll at the same time, he's reading out loud. As Philip draws near, he hears him reading Isaiah 53. Now look,

this is a set-up, you're out in the middle of a desert and here comes somebody reading Isaiah 53. That's a set-up, in case you don't realize it.

God Usually Calls One Person At A Time

And again, for you and I, you know we read through the Book of Acts, we see on the Day of Pentecost, we see 3,000 people saved. After the incident with the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate being healed, **'Silver and gold have I not, that which I have give I thee in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk,'** you see 5,000 people saved out of that. But the truth is, you and I are not going to be the people that lead 3,000 people to Christ, 5,000 people to Christ, we're going to be the ones who lead, you know, one person at a time, it's so important to God. That is generally how the conquest is made, a person at a time. In this chapter, the next chapter with Saul of Tarsus, the next chapter with the Centurion, we're seeing one person at a time coming to faith, and there's much more detail given to the one person than there is to the thousands. The entire story is here. If someone, look, if you feel the Spirit prompting you *'Go talk to that person,'* what do you do? *'That's not you, Lord, if I go and talk to that person I'm going to really feel stupid,'* **'No, you go up to that person and tell them I love them, you walk up to them right now...the Holy Spirit says run to that guy,'** just imagine what might happen if each of us were responsive to the degree that Philip was responsive, what might take place? Again, I read this on Sunday morning, if you've heard it before, just humor me, but I'll read it again for those of you who may not have heard this. It said Edward Kimball had a burden for one of his Sunday school students to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour. He went to see him at the shoe store where he worked, and led him to Christ in the shoe store. The young man was Dwight L. Moody, and he went on to become an evangelist whose ministry rocked two continents. While preaching the British Isles Moody spoke at a small chapel pastored by F.B. Meyers, in his sermon Moody told an emotional-charged story of a Chicago Sunday school teacher he knew, who personally went to every student in his class and won them to Christ. The message changed F.B. Meyers entire ministry, inspiring him to become an evangelist. Over the years Meyers came to America several times to preach. Once, in Northfield,

Massachusetts a confused young preacher sitting in the back row heard Meyers say *"If you are not willing to give everything to God, are you willing to be made willing?"* That remark led J. Wilbur Chapman to accept the call of God on his life. Chapman went on to become one of the most effective evangelists of his time. A volunteer by the name of Billy Sunday helped set up Chapman's crusades and learned to preach by watching him. Billy Sunday eventually took over Chapman's ministry, becoming one of the most effective evangelists of the 20th century. In the great arenas of the nation Billy Sunday's preaching turned thousands to Christ. Inspired by a 1924 Billy Sunday crusade in Charlotte, North Carolina, a committee of Christians committed themselves to reaching that city for Christ, they invited Mordecai Ham to hold a series of evangelistic meetings in 1932, and a lanky 16-year-old sat in the huge crowd one evening, spellbound by the message of the whitehaired preacher, who seemed to be shouting and waving his long finger at him. Night after night the youth attended, and finally went forward and gave his life to Christ. That teenager's name was Billy Graham, who has doubtlessly communicated the Gospel of Jesus Christ to more people than anyone else in the history of the world. Remember how this sequence of events started. A nobody named Kimball, concerned for one of his students, who was D.L. Moody, visited him at the shoe store where he worked. In doing that, Kimball changed the world, millions upon millions have been effected by his decision to go to that shoe store, and millions more will continue to feel the impact. Can anything like that happen today? And the idea is, we don't need to know all the details, we don't need to know, if God is putting something on our hearts and saying *'You go talk to that individual, go talk to them,'* because you and I, look, we have people that we work with, we have peers, and understand this, for Philip, this was somebody in a much higher social strata, this was a step up, this was going to an important individual. Maybe you feel like you can't go to your professor at your university or you can't go to your boss, or you can't go to your uncle, because he's a senator. None of that withheld Philip when he felt the prompting of the Spirit, he ran to this man, he didn't walk, he ran, it says, and when he got there, he heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, the Spirit said to him ***'Go near, join thyself to that chariot, and Philip, verse 30, ran there to him, and as he ran, he heard him read the prophet Isaiah,'*** and as Philip got close he says, ***'do you understand what you're reading?'*** Philip's thinking *'What a setup,'* you know, ***'go down into the desert,'*** you know, he left a city to reach a continent.

He hadn't known that when he was obedient to God, he left a city to reach a continent, the continent of Africa.

What A Set-Up!

And he shows up, this guy pulls up, riding in the back of the chariot, Philip runs to the chariot, he hears him reading Isaiah 53, verses 7 and 8, he thinks *'What a setup,'* he says to the guy ***'Do you have any idea what you're reading? Do you know what you're reading?'*** And the guy says to him, the eunuch says ***"How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."*** (verse 31) and there's a humility to that, he's willing to be guided, which then opened the door. Notice, ***"And he desired"*** notice ***"Philip that he would come up and sit with him."*** in his stretch limo. So Philip goes up and joins him, he turns off the stereo, he's got the wet bar going, you know, there's tinted glass, Philip goes up and gets in there with him and begins to minister to him, look what it says. ***"The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth."*** (verses 32-33) this is a translation of the Septuagint, King James says ***"he was cut off from the land of the living."*** Interesting, he runs, and he's reading ***'he was taken as a lamb to the slaughter, like a lamb before his'*** masculine in the Septuagint ***"shearer, so he opened not his mouth:"*** He's going to say ***'Who is he speaking of? I've just come from Jerusalem, I saw thousands of lambs slaughtered. Is this prophet speaking about himself or is he, he's speaking about a man whose like a lamb ready to be slaughtered, but who doesn't open his mouth.'*** He's going to say to Philip ***'whose he talking about? tell me.'*** and Philip's thinking ***'Boy, oh boy, can I tell ya.'*** Now, ***"he opened not his mouth"*** that's not speaking about the cross, because on the cross he did open his mouth, he said ***'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.'*** He said to John, ***'Behold thy mother, woman behold thy son.'*** He said to the thief on the cross next to him ***'I tell you today, you're going to be with me in paradise.'*** He said ***'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, my God, my God, what hast thou forsaken me,'*** that you and I never have to say.

He said ***'It is finished, paid in full.'*** He said ***'I thirst,'*** he said ***'Father, into thy hands do I commend my spirit,'*** he said seven things. Where he opened not his mouth is from the time he was taken by the Temple and Roman guards, he was beaten, we're told, he was blindfolded, he couldn't flinch, he couldn't duck, he was beaten. He was taken and spit upon, he was brought and finally scourged, of course there is where he opened not his mouth, scourging, a means of examination, as they would lay the scourge on, they would pull it off and it would pull off pieces of flesh, and if the person being scourged gave names of people who were involved, accessories in the crime with him, they would lighten up on the lash. If he refused to give that information, the lash was laid on heavier, and Josephus tells us of people who had been scourged that died of the scourging, they bled to death, their skeleton and bowels were exposed. Jesus opened not his mouth when they laid the scourge on him, because he'd have had to give our names. They laid the scourge on heavier and heavier, so that when they were done with him, and bringing him back, he's standing in front of Pilate, and they must have said *'We've never examined anyone like this before, he didn't even cry out, he said nothing.'* And Pilate pushes him into the open before the crowd again and says ***'Eta homo, behold the man.'*** What a place for this man to be reading, ***'he opened not his mouth, in his humiliation, his justice was taken away,'*** ***"and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth."*** ***"And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this?"*** he begs, ***"of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?"*** (verse 34) Now this is the ultimate setup, ***'Whose he talking about, could you please tell me what this is all about?'*** That's like Nicodemus saying to Jesus ***'How could a man be born again?'*** I mean, what a question to ask Jesus. That's like earlier in chapter 2 when the crowd says to Peter ***'What must we do to be saved?'*** It's like the Philippian jailor saying to Paul the apostle ***'What must I do to be saved?'*** that's when you have an open door. And again, isn't it funny, sometimes we just, we get caught off guard, because we witness to people, witness to people, and we try to wear them down, we use our heads and we use our intellect, and we're bringing out all our verses, and once in a while somebody says *'I need to be saved, could you tell me what to do?'* and we turn into babbling idiots, not knowing what to say, it so shocks you, this is such an open door, ***'is he speaking of himself or some other man, I beg you, I plead with you, can you tell me?'*** ***"Then Philip opened***

his mouth,” I bet he did, **“and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”** (verse 35) Notice, “at the scripture” the best way to do this. **“and he preached”** *evangeliso* in the Greek, **‘he preached the good news of Jesus Christ to him, he preached unto him Jesus.’**

*The Eunuch Is Baptized, And Then Philip Does A
Disappearing Act*

“And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (verse 36) this is a setup, water in the middle of the desert. So he began there and preached Christ to him, he must have told him, *‘Now we’re in the habit, when someone comes to Christ, they ask ‘Well what do I do then? What do I do then?’...and that’s where you stand publicly and are baptized, they didn’t have altar calls in the New Testament, you were baptized, you went down into the water publicly in front of family and friends, you entered into the death of Christ (symbolically) and came up symbolically from under the water in newness of life, you entered into his death and resurrection* [see <https://unityinchrist.com/baptism/What%20is%20Baptism.htm>]. And the Ethiopian eunuch is all ears, he’s listening to all of this. This is a man who is not to have a family, he’s not to have progeny, not children, not to have the kind of future that you and I hope for, but he was hungry after spiritual things, and the great religious institutions of the day had left him empty. And now he’s hearing something that can be his own. And it’s beyond anything that Judaism or paganism had ever offered him. And he says **‘Here’s water,’** *‘look, here we are in the middle of the desert, here’s water,’ ‘what doth hinder me from being baptized?’* Of course, that’s simply because he hasn’t gone through the baptismal classes, it’s a joke. **“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”** (verses 37-38) “so they went down” so it was in a pool. **“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”**

(verse 39) not because Philip was gone, ah, “caught away,” it’s from the Greek word “*carpadzo*” which is the Greek word, the Latin word is “*raptos*” where we get the word Rapture from, this is a form of that word that describes our experience when the Church will be raptured or caught away, it says here’s Philip “caught away” of the Spirit. If you can imagine, they come up out of the water, and he says ‘*Hey Philip, Phil, Phil, Phil,*’ Phil’s gone. He looks around and Philip’s gone. This is the origin, you know I got saved in 1972, some of you remember back in our day, there was always this story about people driving, they see a hitchhiker along the side of the road, you pull over and let him in, he gets in the back seat and starts to tell you about Jesus, and he says ‘*The Lord is coming soon,*’ and then you look in the rear view mirror and the guy’s gone! the disappearing hitchhiker. This is where it started. The Ethiopian eunuch started that story, he took it back to Ethiopia, and it just, like everything else, spread through the Church until this day, but it all started here. He comes up out of the water, and looks around, and Philip is gone. And it says he went on his way rejoicing. This was like the cherry on the top, ‘*What a remarkable day, meeting a guy in the middle of the desert, he comes running to my chariot, here he gets up, he gives me a Bible lesson, he tells me about Jesus, and leads me to the Lord. Did this really happen? The guy baptizes me, I walk up out of the water, the guy is gone! Was he real, or not real?*’ and it says he goes on his way rejoicing. And I wonder, and I have to believe, that he continued to read in Isaiah, because if he came to the 56th chapter of Isaiah, it says **“Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I *am* a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of the sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.”** (Isaiah 56, verses 3-5) Isaiah 56, the promise to the eunuchs, that Judaism and its law never offered. How remarkable, spoken through the evangelistic prophet, Isaiah. And I wonder if he read on and continued to read that. Philip is caught away at this point in time, and **“the eunuch saw him no more.”** I’m sure he saw him one day [or will see him one day after the resurrection to immortality], in front of the Throne. He’ll say ‘*What happened to you, anyway?*’

What Happened To Philip?

“But Philip was found at Azotus:” that’s Ashdod, one of the five Philistine cities, it’s twenty miles north of Gaza. **“and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.”** **(verse 40)** Now it doesn’t tell us, when the Spirit of God caught him up, picked him up, did he carry him 20 miles and drop him down there, or did he just take him a block away? We don’t know. But he’s found 20 miles away at Ashdod, it seems to indicate that was the landing pad, he’s found there at Ashdod, **“and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.”** Now, that would have taken him through Joppa, it would have taken to the cities up the coast, Philip, preaching in the cities until he comes to Caesarea. We don’t hear about Philip again, after this, he passes from our sight here in Caesarea, until we come to chapter 21. In **chapter 21**, Luke is writing, you don’t have to turn there, **verses 8 and 9** says **“And the next day”** Luke says “we” so he’s travelling with Paul at this time, **“we that were of Paul’s company departed, and we came to Caesarea, and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.”** “Philip the evangelist,” that’s how he’s known, twenty years later he’s still at Caesarea. **‘We came into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven, and we abode with him. The same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.’** What a testimony to the man and to his wife, their daughters were virgins, they were prophetesses, how remarkable. Listen, imagine this, here is Paul, the apostle now, twenty years after all this, he’s the one who was persecuting the Church, and because of his persecution Philip fled and went to Samaria in the first place. Now twenty years later, this man who has become a famous apostle comes to his home in Caesarea. What was it like when they saw each other for the first time, when Paul walked in and looked at Philip? Did Philip say *‘Saul of Tarsus, who’d have ever thought, you were really a pain in the neck.’* What was it like? Did Paul say *‘I’m so sorry, I didn’t know. You were in light, I was in darkness.’* What were their conversations like as they stayed those days together? How remarkable God’s Word is in his work in our lives. Listen, he may come to you and tell you to go and do something that doesn’t seem real logical, you have to make that decision. I would say generally, it’s not going to be your flesh or the

devil telling you to go somewhere to evangelize somebody. Sometimes that's stepping out of our comfort zone, sometimes it's stepping out of our logic, which is difficult for some of us to do, more difficult for some of us than others. Remember Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, said this, **"Trust in the LORD with all of your heart, and lean not to your own understanding."** and he had understanding, **"In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths."** Listen to it, three parts are your responsibility, and then God will be faithful to do his own part. **Number one, 'trust in the LORD with all of your heart,'** and we can say *'I do that, I do that.'* I hope we do, we're learning to do that, aren't we? it seems our heart is desperately wicked, and we're growing and knowing it, but he's given us a new heart. Trust in the LORD with all of your heart. Here's the very difficult part for some of us, **number 2, 'Lean not to your own understanding,'** because that's what I want to do all the time. I'm gonna lean on something in a circumstance where I'm not certain what's going on, I'm very comfortable leaning on my own understanding, trying to figure it out. Lean not to your own understanding. **Number 3, 'In all your ways acknowledge him,'** do these three things, then it says **"and he will direct your paths."** And indeed he will, he is faithful to his Word. Philip, leaving a revival, just no common sense, no logic to that, at the behest of God, no guarantee, **'Just go south,'** then what? It doesn't matter, just go. Now an angel tends to dislodge you, even for most of us here, I think if an angel appeared in your bedroom tonight and said *'Tomorrow I want you to go to city hall,'* you'd say *'Then what?'* and he said *'Just go, we'll talk about it then,'* *'Yes sir,'* an angel would tend to do that for most of us. But he goes. And it's for this one man (the eunuch). But it's not for the one man, it's for his continent, he's a man of great influence, he goes back to Ethiopia. How many of the Ethiopian Jews that trace their lineage back to Solomon were touched by the testimony of this man? I'm assuming as he goes on his way rejoicing, he is filled with the Holy Ghost. What was his testimony like when he gets back to Ethiopia, did Candace come to know Christ? Did the prince that was growing up come to know this Jewish Messiah? Did the court, did the synagogues? Evidently many did, I have a Codex from the Christian church that's a thousand years old in Ethiopia. Evidently many came through this man's testimony, because Philip was the one who was obedient. Look, one man's decision in a shoe store. My encouragement to you is, if the Lord is prodding you, look, it's not that you, we go through this think process *'Lord, is this you? Is it my flesh, is it the enemy?'*

by and large you can just be certain the enemy is not telling you to go share Christ with anybody. It's usually not our flesh either, it's the prompting of the Spirit. [unless you think the Lord is prompting you to witness to a beautiful babe so he can call her because you're interested in dating her, then, yes, by experience, I tell you it's your flesh.] I would encourage you, when that happens, look, the Bible seems to indicate, there is a fulness that will be gathered in. When that fulness is complete, the Rapture's gonna happen, and maybe it's somebody that works with you, and I have a selfish interest in this, because maybe you're gonna lead that last one to Christ before the Trumpet blows and we get outa here, so get to it, would you please. [Comment: There are various prophetic interpretations about the Rapture and/or timing for the first resurrection to immortality which takes place at the blowing of the 7th Trumpet mentioned in Revelation 11 and 16. We're coming into scary times. To read some studies dealing with those prophecies, see <https://unityinchrist.com/End%20time%20temple/End-Time%20TempleI.htm> and <https://unityinchrist.com/mathew/Matthew24-1-31.htm>]

Acts 9:1-5

“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks [goads].*”

The Calling Of Saul On The Road To Damascus

Who Is Saul of Tarsus?

“No chapter break. Luke then says **“And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,”** and no doubt we’re going to have to finish this next week. Saul of Tarsus, **“yet”** indicates he had been breathing out threatenings, “slaughter” is the word most often translated “murder,” **“against the disciples of the Lord, he went unto the high priest,”** now Luke is going to describe this man’s life to us in the Book of Acts. Again in chapter 8, verse 3, he said Saul of Tarsus made havock of the church. In Classical Greek it’s the description of a wild bore tearing up someone’s field or of an animal tearing apart the carcass of its prey. Over in verse 21 in chapter 9 here, when Saul becomes converted, and he goes to try to fellowship with the Christians, it says they’re freaked out, saying **‘Isn’t this the guy who came from Jerusalem with letters to destroy us,’** that’s another word that means “to maul.” Look, we have doctor Luke, led of the Spirit, writing this Book of Acts. He had spent years with Paul the apostle. He had asked him of his frame of mind in that day. Paul must have said **‘I was a beast,’** Paul tells us he was filled with madness. Doctor Luke decides after talking with Paul, being prompted of the Spirit, to describe Saul as an animal tearing at a carcass. This man was insane with madness, with threatenings, and Luke had no doubt treated many that had been mauled by wild animals, he was a physician. And he describes Paul’s behavior of hatred and anger and bitterness as one of mauling, tearing at the Church of Jesus Christ, and it says here **‘he is yet still, this is his mentality, he is breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and he goes to the high priest.’** Now the high priest is Caiaphas, and he will be high priest for at least seven more years after this. **‘And he asks letters,’ verse 2, ‘that he might go to Damascus,’** about 200 miles, a six to seven day journey, **“to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way,”** King James says “of this way,” it’s **“any of The Way,”** that’s what Christianity was called early on, The Way, **“whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.” (verse 2)** this young Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, the up-and-coming star of Judaism, Pharisee-ism. Raised in Tarsus, if you want to study the life of Paul the apostle, I strongly recommend that you get “The Life and Epistles of Paul the Apostle” by Conie Barren Hausen, which is in print right now, in paperback. But it will take you through Tarsus, his upbringing, it will take you

through his culture, they will take you through every city he goes to, what he saw as he entered the city, what he encountered, what the pantheon of their gods were, he will give you each of his epistles in the chronological order they were written in, from his translation from the Greek, a remarkable work. But he tells us of Tarsus being only second to Athens in regards to education in the Mediterranean world. Tarsus also had its own version of the Olympic Games, and no doubt Saul of Tarsus, from his writings, a competitor, he speaks of wrestling, he speaks of boxing, he speaks of running the race, these things, he had such a competitive nature because he was a young Jewish boy, and because they offered sacrifices to idols at those games, he was never allowed to participate. But he was steeped in the Hellenist culture, and in regards to education and influence he was a Greek. In regards to his blood, he was a Jew. In regards to his citizenship, he's a Roman. A very interesting man. He went to the School of the Book, in Judaism, in Israel, and around the Mediterranean world, young Jewish boys at five years old, began to go every day at the end of the day, afternoon, to sit with the rabbi, it was called the School of the Book, and from five to twelve they went through that process, and then they were Bar Mitzvah'd. [Comment: my neighborhood best friend (the only boy my age on the dead-end street I grew up on) was Jewish. I remember he was never available to play until late afternoon, because after his normal school he'd be in the local Jewish synagogue/temple on the other side of town, attending "Hebrew School." He'd not only be studying the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament), but he'd be learning to speak and write Hebrew.] I always think, what it must have been like in Nazareth for some poor rabbi to have young Yeshua coming in, the author of the Book, coming to the School of the Book, for some poor rabbi. What some of those arguments must have been like. But Saul of Tarsus, when it's time for him to be Bar Mitzvah'd his parents make a decision, they must have been godly at least for religious Jews, they decide *'We need to get him away from this Hellenist culture, we need to get him away from the world,'* and they send him to Jerusalem to The School of Gamaliel. The course of The School of Gamaliel went from the age of 13 to the age of 21. It was a very strict course, only the best were chosen, and Paul tells us in chapter 26 or 22, he was raised at the feet of Gamaliel. And I always think, what a difficult decision for any parent to take a 12-year-old or 13-year-old boy and send him to another part of the world. No airlines, he didn't go on El Al, he took a boat, they put him on a boat, he took a donkey, he ended up in Jerusalem, he came to The School

of Gamaliel with letters from Tarsus, and he ends up there in the School of Gamaliel until he's 21-years-old. Evidently by then, a fire is lit inside of him. By the time Stephen is stoned, no doubt he's in his early 30s. Some of the language in the Book of Acts, to a degree, indicates that he made a legal vote relative to the death of Stephen, which would have made him a member of the Sanhedrin. And a man (of the Sanhedrin) had to be at least 30-years-old and had to be married to be a member of the Sanhedrin. We don't know about his wife. We know that he got letters to go to Damascus, said *'Honey, I'll be back,'* and disappeared for at least three years. You know, *'I'm going to go and get a loaf of bread,'* and you don't see him for three years, I don't know if she waited for him. And when he came back he was talking about Jesus the Messiah. But he is an up-and-coming star, listen, Gamaliel, the greatest teacher of the day. In vogue, to go to his school and to study with Nicodemus, to study with Gamaliel. And Gamaliel had said earlier in this Book, look, to the Sanhedrin, ***'Be careful, because if this movement, this Christianity, if it's not of God it's gonna fail, we've seen this before. But if it is of God, you might be found to be fighting against God himself.'*** And he warned them, and it said ***'It seemed good to all of them,'*** except one. Because Saul of Tarsus at this point, was even willing in his pride and his anger to push aside his mentor of many years, by the time he was 13, Gamaliel, and to push his council aside, and to make it his life's work in hatred and anger to persecute the Church. He was not willing to accept the concept of a Messiah that was born in a carpenter's house, that did manual labour, at 30-years-old began to be an itinerant rabbi and was crucified and killed by the Romans. He could not embrace that. Because of his own nature he was looking for the Messiah that would take up his Throne in Jerusalem and rule the earth with a rod of iron, that would give every Jew the right sit beneath his vine and his fig tree, and would overthrow Roman tyranny, he was looking for that one, Psalm 2, to come. He can't stand the fact. What's happened of course, he watched Stephen, listened to his sermon, his face like an angel, he watched the way he died, it's engraved on his mind, he can't escape it, and he's fighting it, fighting it. And he gets letters, because when he started the persecution in Jerusalem, many of those Jews fled to Damascus, there was a huge Jewish community there. [And there continued to be a Jewish community there until Basher Assad and his father before him came to power. I don't know if there continues to be a functional Jewish synagogue there or not at this point in time, after those two started

ruling.] And Saul's thinking, *'These Jewish believers, these Messianic Jews now, they've headed to Damascus, because they're going to infect the Jewish community there.'* So he gets letters from Caiaphas to go, and then if he finds any, both men and women, he had no bias, he would take a woman, a wife, a grandma, an aunt, a daughter, a sister, as soon as he would take a man. And he tells us in his own testimony that he caused many to blaspheme the name of Jesus at the point of a sword, he said to fathers, *'You blaspheme the name of Jesus or I'm going to cut your daughter's throat, you blaspheme the name of Jesus or I'll cut your pregnant wife open, you blaspheme the name of Jesus or I'm going to put your son to death in front of your eyes.'* Luke says he was ravenous, he was like a beast. He was the greatest threat to the Church of Jesus Christ outside of the antichrist. Because at that point in time the Church was basically in Jerusalem and Damascus, it was spreading, but he had basically under his control and within he reach most of the Church of Jesus Christ [whose Biblical name was "the Church of God"]. And he's out to destroy it.

Saul's Encounter With The Lord Jesus Christ

It says, **"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven."** **(verse 3)** Chapter 26, verse 13 tells us it was brighter than the noonday sun. It outshone the noonday sun. If you've been in the Middle East, and you know what the noonday sun is like, try to imagine a light that is so bright that it darkens the noonday sun to the point that everybody collapses and falls down. Try to imagine the brilliance that's registered in an experience like that, so brilliant was this light it outshone the noonday sun, to the point that it was shocking, and he fell to the ground, **"And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"** **(verse 4)** [see chapter 22:6-10] In **chapter 26, verses 13-14** it tells us **"At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks [goads]."** And it is my conviction, this will always come with great pathos, like *'Simon,*

Simon,’ or like *‘Martha, Martha.’* I don’t believe this is a mean *‘SAUL!!! SAUL! you’re dead!’* I don’t believe there’s any of that. I think it’s **‘Saul, Saul,’** from an unimaginable light, **‘why persecutest thou me?’** And again, in our culture, understand any legislation that would take away our religious freedom to any degree, it’s not leveled against you and I, but against Jesus. Any antagonism against us or our faith is not aimed at us, it’s aimed at Jesus. [so long as our witness is gentle and loving, and not hate-mongering like the Westboro Baptist church, I might add. We don’t want to be found guilty of bringing offense to Jesus and his name by a bad or hateful witness.] Every man that Paul killed, he was trying to kill Jesus, every woman he put to death he was trying to kill Jesus, every family he drove out of their home he was trying to drive Jesus out of his life. **“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”** and the remarkable question **“Who art thou, Lord?”** in the next verse. Listen, the impression of the brilliance of this light which lay him on the ground, and the impression of the voice that spoke to him made him answer this personality and address him as “Lord.” **“And he said, Who art thou, Lord?”** and of course the answer that came levels his life. **“And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”** (verse 5) Imagine that, Saul of Tarsus, **‘Who are you, Lord?’** I think that’s the last thing he ever expected to hear **“I am Jesus”** a miraculous conversion. And again, every person in this room that’s born again has gone through a miraculous conversion. You know, the way it happens up front may be more dramatic in one life than the other, but the consequences of that conversion is as miraculous in one life as another. It’s becoming a new creation in Christ Jesus, it’s having eternity planted in our hearts, it’s all of a sudden our eternal destiny is changed and we have eternal life and we have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fades not away, it’s all miraculous. But for him it’s very dramatic, **‘Who are you, Lord?’** **‘I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, it’s hard for you to kick against the goads, isn’t it?’** And if you look in the next verse, we understand his response, because it says **‘And Saul, trembling and astonished said, Lord,’** now as far as I’m concerned he’s a convert at that point. When Saul of Tarsus calls Jesus of Nazareth Lord, he’s a believer. It says he’s on the ground trembling. His theological life has become a house of cards. His dedication, from 13-years-old onward, at the feet of Gamaliel and all that he had learned has just collapsed into dust. He realizes this light that’s shining from heaven is the same light that Stephen saw when he

said ***'I see the Son of man at the right hand of God Almighty.'*** All of a sudden he's realizing *'The one that I hated is really my Messiah, the one that I tried to destroy is really the King of Israel, the one that I tried to rid the earth of, the one I made people blaspheme his name is the Lord,'* and he lays there trembling, it says, astonished. Well we'll pick up there next time, it's a great place, let's leave Paul there shaking on the ground, he needs to shake for awhile anyhow, to think good and hard about what he's done. We'll just leave him there trembling. And when we come back, we'll let him pick himself up. I encourage you. What a remarkable story, probably the most famous conversion in Church history no doubt. But what a remarkable set of circumstances is set before us there. Ah, read ahead, my encouragement to you this evening, as the musicians come, look, I would say this, if the Spirit prompts you, that one person is important. By in large that's how Christianity has been spread through the centuries, one person at a time, a man in a chariot, a man where you work, a woman serving you in one way or another, doing something, a man serving you a hamburger, through one circumstance or another, one person at a time as the Lord prompts you to have the courage to open your mouth and share Christ with an individual, because you'll never know the ramifications, you'll never know. It makes perfect sense to God, it may not always make perfect sense to us. But that's what God has called us to do, to share our faith one person at a time. What incredible opportunities we have. We still have tremendous freedom in this country to do that. There are Christians that are being put to death in Iran today for doing that. What tremendous freedom we still have to do that. We should avail ourselves at every opportunity, and answer every man in regards to the hope that we have. Let's stand, let's pray...[transcript of a connective expository sermon on Acts 8:26-40 and Acts 9:1-5, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

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