

The  
**Acts**  
*of the Apostles*



JOINING GOD'S  
MISSION REQUIRES A  
WILLINGNESS  
TO FOLLOW HIS VOICE  
AND STUDY HIS WORD

ACTS 8:26-40

# INTRODUCTION

- After experiencing an intense time of ministry with the people of Samaria, Philip is called by God to leave the action and his team of fellow missionaries.
- Instead of staying in the city where God was clearly at work stirring the hearts of those in attendance, Philip sets out heading south on the main desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza.

# INTRODUCTION

- He could have allowed the surprise change in course to foster discouragement or doubt, but Philip's willingness to follow God's direction brings him straight into the path of yet another heart that needed to hear the Gospel.
- Philip's faithfulness to know and meditate on God's Word allows him to witness to an Ethiopian official in what can only be described as a divinely orchestrated meeting.

# INTRODUCTION

- God uses the Scripture stored up in Philip's heart to flow directly into a presentation of the Gospel in the way the Ethiopian needed to hear it.
- We see that, through our obedience, God's plan for salvation is accomplished, no matter how surprising the mission field may look.

THOSE ON MISSION  
FOLLOW HIS LEADING,  
HOWEVER UNEXPECTED  
IT MIGHT SEEM

ACTS 8:26-29

# CHANGE OF COURSE

- The passage starts out by highlighting Philip's surprising change in course.
- In the previous verse, Luke records the continued missionary activity of the other disciples as they remain among the Samaritans, preaching to them as they make their way back to Jerusalem.
- Rather than allowing Philip to stay where the fruitful action is, God gives Philip a direct message to "get up and go" on a desert road that leads to Gaza.

# CHANGE OF COURSE

- At this time of day, in a hot and dusty region, it was rare to encounter another traveler, but Philip is obedient to God's direction.
- In verse 27a, the writer emphasizes Philip's obedience by recording that his actions are exactly what God commanded: "So he got up and went."
- Philip could have rejected God's plans for what seemed to be a more worthwhile use of his time. But instead, he followed and obeyed.

# CHANGE OF COURSE

- It is interesting to note the similarities between Luke's record of God's leading Philip and the Old Testament narratives of God's leading His prophets.
- Like Elijah, Philip is "filled with the Spirit, working signs and wonders, proclaiming the word of God."
- Like the men of God who came before him, Philip is willing to follow the surprising voice of the Lord.

# ETHIOPIAN OFFICIAL

- Philip unexpectedly comes across an Ethiopian official from the court of a queen.
- The eunuch is reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah after spending time in Jerusalem to worship God.
- The details provided about this man's life make it clear that although he was a faithful student of the Hebrew Scriptures he was not a Jew but an African.

# ETHIOPIAN OFFICIAL

- This Ethiopian was a faithful student of the Hebrew Scriptures and faithfully adhered to patterns of Jewish worship.
- However, he was not a Jew but an African, from the land of Cush (present day Sudan).
- Although he was faithful, he was not welcomed as a convert to the Jewish faith. Why?
- Because he was a eunuch (Deuteronomy 23:1).

# ETHIOPIAN OFFICIAL

- God's instructions led Philip directly to a man who was very different in all ways from the townspeople he had just been ministering to hours earlier.
- This is a turning point in the spreading of the Gospel: extending an invitation of salvation to the Gentiles.
- This man was at the very fringe of those most likely to join the early church. The Spirit is still very active in guiding Philip's actions and sends him over to remain near the chariot (verse 29).

THOSE ON MISSION  
WITH GOD KNOW HIS  
WORD AND ARE  
EQUIPPED TO SHARE  
THE GOSPEL

ACTS 8:30-40

# READING ISAIAH

- Philip draws near to the chariot and hears the Hebrew Scriptures being read aloud (verse 30).
- He doesn't hesitate to offer more information about the prophecies the eunuch is studying.
- Having been willing thus far to follow the Lord's leading, Philip is now ready to step into the perfect opportunity God has given him to share the Gospel.

# READING ISAIAH

- In verse 31, the eunuch asks for help understanding whom the passage in Isaiah speaks of (verses 32–33).
- As Christians, it can be easy to look backward and claim that the obvious answer is Jesus, but to a spiritually blind man being awakened to new sight by the Holy Spirit, the answer is less clear.
- The Spirit has prepared his heart and now he seeks to know the truth (verse 34).

# READING ISAIAH

- Through all his sermons and time with the disciples, Jesus lifted the veil that obscured the Messianic message God had woven throughout hundreds of years of Scripture.
- In the end, not everyone could see the truth of who Jesus was, but those who did were blessed (Matthew 8:10, 1:33, 16:17, 27:54).

# READING ISAIAH

- In John 14:26, Jesus promises His disciples the Spirit's presence to bring greater clarity, understanding, and wisdom about all that He taught.
- It is the power of the Holy Spirit that lifts the veil so that people can truly see Jesus in God's Word (1 Corinthians 1:6–16).
- In verse 35, we see Philip ministering to the eunuch by that same power.

# READING ISAIAH

- We see that Philip is very familiar with the Old Testament because he immediately uses it as a jumping-off point for further Biblical teaching.
- He also knows the truth of who Jesus is because of what has been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.
- His mind and heart are already prepared to share with the eunuch even though the encounter was unplanned.

# READY TO ACCEPT JESUS

- The Ethiopian is clearly ready to accept Jesus as his Savior.
- Philip's teaching about the Bible and the Holy Spirit's work have prepared his heart to respond to the Gospel.
- One commentator finds the Ethiopian's statement about baptism remarkable, noting that "He takes the initiative at this point, signifying a real work of God in his heart" (verse 36).

# READY TO ACCEPT JESUS

- Philip would have shared with him much more than is written, for Luke only records the beginning and end of their conversation.
- The eunuch's mention of baptism shows that Philip was faithful to speak of everything Jesus had commanded His disciples to do when He commissioned them as missionaries to the world (Matthew 28:19–20).
- Philip then baptizes the Ethiopian (verse 38).

# REDIRECTED AGAIN

- The account ends with Philip's being directed again by the Holy Spirit to his next location.
- We see in this short passage in Acts that the direction and authority of God frames all Gospel encounters.
- Although God employs Philip's time and abilities, He is ultimately over all the events and lives in these verses.

# REDIRECTED AGAIN

- This is a comfort and a conviction to us. God is taking care of all the details, large and small; all we need to do is be faithful and willing.
- The work of salvation is His to accomplish and He has already prepared the way.
- We are simply invited to be the mouthpieces through which His message is spoken.

ASK KERBY:

WHAT ABOUT THOSE  
WHO HAVE NOT  
HEARD?

# INTRODUCTION

- What happens to those who have not heard about Jesus and therefore cannot choose or reject Him?
- The Bible does not give a complete answer to the question. But there are certain principles that are contained in the Bible; so, although we may not be totally dogmatic on this subject.
- There is sufficient information given so that we can gain a good perspective on it.

# GOD'S INTENT

- First, God never intended anyone to be out of fellowship with Him.
- Heaven was intended to be man's destination.
- God is holy and loving and wants everyone to repent (Exod. 34:6-7; Jonah 4:10-11; 2 Peter 3:9).
- Though He is a just and righteous God, He's also a loving God.

## 2 PETER 3:9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

# GOD'S NATURE

- Second, God's nature prevents Him from being unfair.
- The Bible teaches that God judges fairly (Gen. 18:25; Psalm 7:11, 9:18; 1 Peter 1:17).
- In His infinite justice, He will be much fairer than we, with our limited understanding of justice, could possibly be.

# 1 PETER 1:17-19

And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

# AWARENESS OF GOD

- We are not in total ignorance or spiritual darkness.
- The Bible clearly teaches that we have an awareness both of God and of eternity (Psalm 19:1-4; Eccl. 3:11; John 1:9; Acts 14:15-17; Romans 1:18-21, 2:15).
- It was the Roman sage Seneca who said, “God is near you, is with you. A sacred Spirit dwells within us, the Observer and Guardian of all our evil and all our good. There is no good man without God.”

# AWARENESS OF GOD

- However, this God-consciousness is not enough. We must have more information in order to be saved.
- The Gospel is in jeopardy at either extreme:
  - If God-consciousness is sufficient for salvation, then the Bible's revelation is unnecessary.
  - But if the Bible is the only way a person can be saved, then we are back to our initial question about those who haven't heard.

# OUR RESPONSE

- Fourth, God will provide the necessary information to those who seek Him.
- The Bible teaches that God “rewards those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).
- He will give anyone who earnestly seeks Him enough information to make a decision (1 Chron. 15:2; Psalm 9:10; Prov. 8:17; Jer. 29:13; Acts 8:30-31).

# ACTS 8:30-31

So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

# OUR RESPONSE

- God sent Peter to a Roman official named Cornelius to tell him about Jesus (Acts 10).
- It is also possible that God may work faith in a person's heart so that, like Job, he may say, "I know that my Redeemer lives," without knowing the identity of the Redeemer.

# OUR RESPONSE

- Fifth, the responsibility for a decision concerning this information belongs to each one of us.
- We are ultimately responsible for the course we choose. No one can make the decision for us.
- As C.W. Hale Amos wrote, “From what we know, respecting the terms of salvation, we are led irresistibly to the conclusion that no man can perish except by his own fault and deliberate choice.”

**HAVE NOT HEARD?**



# CONCLUSION

- This should give us all the more reason to make sure, we do what we can to share the Gospel with all people.
- If we are not completely sure that we are believers, we should make sure by a conscious decision.
- As C.S. Lewis said in *Mere Christianity*, “If you are worried about the people outside [of Christianity], the most unreasonable thing you can do is to remain outside yourself.”