

Truths Pertaining to the Gospel Ministry

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[0 : 00] Please turn to Acts 8 if you're not already there. So returning here, we continue to see the spreading of the gospel due to the persecution started by Saul in verse 1.

And we've seen that it moves from the center of its proclamation in Jerusalem, where the apostles are, to Samaria, where Philip, the servant who was chosen in Acts 6, along with Stephen, who was martyred in chapter 7.

And so we go to Samaria with Philip, and he preached the gospel to undesirable people. And after the Samaritans believed in the gospel, Peter and John came down and confirmed their inclusion in the church, and then returned to Jerusalem, while preaching in other cities in Samaria.

A huge shift in what they had known and practiced their entire lives. Jews who despised Samaritans had no dealings with them.

Now all of a sudden are preaching the good news of the gospel and seeing them come into the fold that is the church. Now the attention turns back to Philip in verse 26, whose faithfulness to the Great Commission continues to be put to the test.

[1 : 32] And as a Bible-believing, gospel-preaching church here in Shapley, Maine, these are very important verses to pay attention to as it relates to our participation in the gospel ministry.

I believe in this passage from verse 26 to the end, there are three truths to notice as Philip continues his ministry in the remainder of Acts 8.

So we're going to take it one at a time. Truth number one is that God provides the opportunity for the gospel to be shared.

God provides the opportunity for the gospel to be shared. Let's read verses 26 through 29. Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.

This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure.

[2 : 43] He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot. And he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the spirit said to Philip, Go over and join this chariot.

We see in this section that God moves Philip from an area of successful evangelism, a place where many have heard the gospel, have come to Christ, were baptized, and he's moved from that area of successful evangelism to a place that is literally referred to as a desert place.

In verse 26. A desert place. Now sometimes the desert place is where God will send someone to test them and refine them through difficulty of loneliness and hardship.

In the desert place, it's the desert place that God brought his people to after bringing them out of Egypt. In Deuteronomy 8.2 it says that he led them for 40 years in the wilderness.

The wilderness is, it's a desert. It's not full of trees and all that stuff. It's a desert. That he might humble them, testing them to know what was in their heart, whether they would keep his commandments or not.

[4 : 09] Elijah, after his victory over the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, fled to Horeb, the mountain of God, which is on the west side of the wilderness. It's on the west side of the desert itself being a desert place.

It is the desert place that God brought Jesus to after his baptism for 40 days, being tempted by the devil, Luke 4.2.

So the desert place happens to be a place where God does some of his best work and some of his most soul-searching work on people.

And that's where he's sending Philip, to the desert place. But he didn't just send him there as a test, as a refinement of making him more into the image of Christ, though that is part of it.

He sent him there in order to reach someone else for Christ. And the only person around is a treasurer from Ethiopia who's on their way back home after worshiping in Jerusalem.

[5 : 16] There's literally nothing else, nobody else, save one. Maybe a couple more, like servants, or you've got somebody driving the chariot. Only one.

Clearly this eunuch, as he's referred to, is committed to God and understanding his word. He's seemingly a Gentile, being from Ethiopia, though that's not guaranteed, could very well be a Jew. He's a high-ranking official of prominence. As I mentioned, he's a treasurer in Ethiopia. Now the term eunuch may not necessarily be a physical description as it is a term that's utilized to refer to an official in the court of a ruler.

We had this discussion a couple weeks ago when we were in the book of Daniel and talking about the term eunuch there. Yet God has been drawing to himself this individual, this one that Philip is going to.

And it's evidenced by the fact that he had gone to Jerusalem to worship God. So at some point in his life, this Ethiopian official had a respect for God, a love for God, or at least an interest of God that drew him to Jerusalem.

[6 : 39] And he understood that that worship took place for the people of God. And we see, we haven't got to it yet, but we see that he's reading the prophet Isaiah in the chariot.

So God is drawing this guy to himself. And now he's sending Philip to him. Consider this.

Philip was pushed out of Jerusalem because of the persecution. For the purpose of bringing the gospel to undesirable people in Samaria.

Now God is leading him to go to an undesirable place where there are not many people at all in order to bring the gospel to someone. I was thinking about this this week.

No guarantee in life that where God leads us to go is going to be a place that is full of desirable people or that is a desirable place to live.

[7 : 53] So wherever God leads you and guides you and places you, chances are, and it's not a guarantee, that there are going to be undesirable people.

Or it may be an undesirable place to live. But what we can be sure of is wherever God leads us, he'll provide an opportunity for us to impact others for the sake of the gospel.

If Philip had gone into Samaria with the mindset, I don't speak to Samaritans. These are not my people. We hate these people. I've hated these people my whole life.

Then they would have gone without hearing the gospel from Philip and he would not have been a faithful follower of Jesus. And now he's being told to go to this road in the desert.

Certainly undesirable place to be by yourself. But he's following God. So you never know where God's going to put you and for what purpose.

[9 : 03] I should say, you should know the purpose is going to be for his glory and the sake of the gospel if we have the right perspective. You never know where God's going to lead you, where you're going to go, where you're going to be.

But the purpose is for his glory. So God provides the opportunity for us to share the gospel. And he's doing that here with Philip.

Go to this desert place. In verses 30 through 35, we see that the word brings the conviction of the heart, of the individual.

The word brings the conviction of the individual. Continue reading verse 30. So I've got to have myself already, but we'll pick up. So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, do you understand what he's reading?

And he said, how can I unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this. Like a sheep, he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth.

[10 : 18] In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth. And the eunuch said to Philip, about whom I ask you, does the prophet say this?

About himself or about someone else? Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with this scripture, he told him the good news of Jesus.

For a Jewish individual to be considered a God-fearing man just because he went to Jerusalem to worship. That would have been enough. We know that that was enough for many Jewish people for hundreds of years in the Old Testament because in Isaiah chapter 1 and other passages of

scripture, God calls his people out to fill his courts with their offerings but their hearts being far from them.

For the Jewish people going through the ritual and the motion was enough. Yet we see here that the Ethiopian official is not merely a temple worshiper.

He's not just going to Jerusalem to worship and then going about his business reading budget reports or counting money in the chariot as he's going from Jerusalem back to Ethiopia.

[11:39] On the ride home, he's reading the word of God and he's seeking to understand it. He's in Isaiah 53. And that's the passage that's on the agenda for his spiritual diet and God sends Philip to be his personal chef for the day to help prepare this meal that is going to become the gospel message for the Ethiopian official.

And he admits to not understanding the passage. That's a big deal for somebody who's an official, somebody who's high ranking, is respected, to admit, you know, I don't really understand this.

I'll be honest with you. There are many times when I'm reading through scripture, sometimes when I'm preaching, getting ready to preach, I'll come to a passage I have absolutely no idea what this means or what to share.

I feel like it wasn't that long ago that I stood up here and said I have no idea what I was supposed to get out of this passage. But God led through the service. God led through the service. He knew what we needed.

But the official, he admits to not understanding and he invites Philip up into his chariot. I've got to commend this guy for taking a chance. He's in a desert place on a road.

[13:04] There's only him and then suddenly there's this guy, Philip, maybe a couple guards or whatever, but I mean, that's it. He says, yeah, come on up, sit next to me.

Philip's probably not, you know, dressed appropriately to be in the presence of such an official, but he invites him up.

God not only sent Philip to this desert place to share the gospel, but he was already preparing the heart of the one that he was going to share with. The opportunity to share the word and the preparation of the soil of the heart to receive the word is all God's work.

That is 100% God's work. The opportunity to share the word, the gospel, and the preparation to receive it. 100% his.

John 6, 44. Jesus says, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. God's got to do a work in the life of an individual to start drawing him to himself and to Jesus.

[14:10] And we cannot underestimate the drawing process in the life of an individual because we are all dead in our trespasses and sins and desperate for God to make us alive in Christ.

And while we are dead, Satan is blinding the minds of unbelievers from seeing the light of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 4. Thus we need God to draw us away from the darkness toward his marvelous light.

1 Peter 2, 9. The way God draws people out of darkness and light is found in the important tool that we have for evangelism.

And that's his word. Now he'll use circumstances in our lives to get our attention. Many times. We have trials and hardships all the time in our life.

There are people, I mentioned this girl, Braylon. You know, we've been praying for the last few weeks as we've heard about her leukemia and her treatment. Four years old. And it's unfortunate that she has leukemia, but this is a situation in her life that, you know, God is allowing these people, this family, to experience to be drawn to him for comfort and peace.

[15:26] people that we know personally who have gone through cancer or were on the brink of death and passing into eternity that God has used to draw him, draw them to himself.

But ultimately, you know, what is it that draws us and takes us out of darkness into light? It's the word of God. And speaking of the qualifications of an elder, Paul writes to Titus in Titus 1.9, hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and to rebuke those who contradict it.

That word rebuke is to bring it, you know, to convict somebody of their wrongdoing. This is the work of an elder. This is the work of a pastor in a church with the word of God, not with their own logic and reasoning.

The writer of Hebrews writes concerning the power of the word of God. In Hebrews 4.12, the word of God is living and active sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of

spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The word of God does this. This is our tool. It is the sword of the spirit in Ephesians 6.

[16:52] In Psalm 19, if you want to turn there with me real quick, we haven't quite got there with our, in our, but Psalm 19, verses 7 through 11, we see some characteristics of the word are laid out by the psalmist in Psalm 19, verses 7 through 11.

Speaking, the psalmist writes, the law of the Lord, perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever.

The rules of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

Moreover, by them is your servant warned, and in keeping them there is great reward. We see the very first thing mentioned in verse 7, the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

[18:11] We need the word of God to revive our souls. We need the word of God to draw us to Jesus and to save us. Clearly, the word of God is of utmost importance when it comes to drawing someone to the light of the gospel.

And it is through the word of God that the Holy Spirit can do his work of conducting. We're not going to do a study on the Holy Spirit right now. We can spend twice as long doing that easily.

But John 16, 8, Jesus is talking to his disciples. He comes, the comforter, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. When he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.

And each of those three things can be broken down. What does that mean? Convict the world of sin, convict the world of righteousness, convict the world of judgment. The fact is, the Holy Spirit's job is to convict the world where they're at.

And the way the world is convicted is through the word of God. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, what gives us conviction of sin is not the number of sins we have committed.

[19:19] It is not the number of sins that we have committed that brings conviction to an individual.

It is the sight of the holiness of God. The holiness of God is only seen face to face with it in His word. The more we're reading scripture, the more it is being read to us or we're hearing it or we're reading it to ourselves or as this Ethiopian eunuch was doing sitting in his chariot, reading it out loud.

That's kind of what people do sometimes when they're reading. Especially if they're alone, I do it. If I'm reading, if I'm here by myself in the office or I'm at home by myself, no one else is around, I'll read out loud.

And sometimes I'll read out loud when they are around and they'll be like, what? Like, no, no, God's speaking to me, I'm not talking to you. But that's it.

You know, we've got to be in the word and come face to face and as we're reading scripture and we're reading the word of God and we're seeing how He has worked through the course of human history to ultimately bring Jesus into the picture and to give us the gospel message which is Jesus' sinless life, selfless sacrifice and being raised again from the dead for the forgiveness of sin and the redemption of our soul from hell until heaven.

[20:38] And we get that through the word and as we're doing that, as we're reading the word, we're exposed to the holiness of God. It gives us a reason why Jesus had to die. Why did He have to live a sinless life?

What does that mean? Now, what does His death on the cross mean? Now, we take communion, the broken body, the shed blood. So what? What does that mean? Why is it important? Well, it's all very important because you've got to understand the holiness of God and the unholiness of sin and how we have offended and how He has offered forgiveness.

And Philip used the Isaiah 53 passage as a launching point to share about the good news of Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. The word, the word of God brings conviction.

It is the word that we must be speaking. It is the word we must be sharing. And this is the thing, though, when it comes to talking to other people and we say, oh, well, I'm nervous to share the gospel.

I don't feel comfortable. It's socially awkward, whatever. Well, here's something that may be shocking or not. Do you know that you could be sharing the word of God and the truth from Scripture without sitting in front of somebody with an open Bible, reading it, and having them read

it?

[22 : 00] And I'm not talking about just your life. I mean, yes, your life should reflect Christ-likeness. But even with the things you speak and the words you say, the intent that you have in what you're saying and why you're saying it to glorify God and to point people to Jesus.

Now, when you're speaking and you're talking and you've got the word of God coming out of your mouth, it doesn't always have to be accompanied with chapter and verse. How weird would that be if like as we were speaking sentences to people, having a conversation and like the word of God kind of comes out of our mouth and then we stop and say, oh, Ephesians 2.3.

Like what? Like they'll think you're a crazy person. They already think you are if you're a Christian. You don't need to give them cause for you to talk to them too. But it's just the manner in which we speak and what we say.

Now, the word of God being hidden in our heart is going to come forth from our mouth and honor Him. So the Lord God provides the opportunity for us to share the gospel.

The word of God is what brings conviction to an individual. And finally, verses 36 through 40, we see that people are responsible to respond.

[23 : 25] People are responsible to respond. Let's go ahead and pick up verse 36. As they were going along and as they were going along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, see, here is water.

What prevents me from being baptized? Uh-oh, I'm missing verse 37. We'll get to that in a second. Verse 38. And he commanded the chariot to stop and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus and as he passed through, he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Poor Philip. He just can't sit and rejoice with the people who are coming to Christ and being baptized. It's like in Samaria, all these people are baptized, come to Christ.

He can't be there for the party and the celebration. They can't cut the cake. He's like, boom, I'm sending you to a desert place. Meets the only guy there on the road, shares the gospel. He gets saved. He says, hey, what prevents me?

[24 : 37] No, come on. He baptizes him, comes up out of the water and then he's gone. Philip doesn't even see him dry out and he's moved on somewhere else.

But he was a faithful preacher of the word and the Lord used him and he eventually settled in Caesarea and we see, I think it's about 20 years or so later when Paul visits him in Acts 19 or 20. We'll get there eventually. We'll see Philip again. But this is it for a little while. But we see here that people are responsible to respond to the gospel.

See, after hearing the gospel, it's clear the Ethiopian eunuch believed by his desire to be baptized as a follower of Christ. That's what baptism's about, by the way. It's about our identification with Jesus and the teachings and the commitment to be a follower of Jesus.

There's no saving value in baptism. None. Zero. Because if you needed baptism to be saved, what happened to the thief on the cross?

[25 : 40] then Jesus is a liar. But baptism's not needed for salvation, but it's a fruit of salvation. It's not working of your commitment to Jesus.

And so it's your public proclamation. And that's why I've never understood really why churches have baptismals. No, they're not hot tubs.

No, they're not pools. No, we've got one behind the curtain there. Why are we doing that? I mean, we're allowing people to make a public proclamation, but it's only a proclamation to other believers. But if you went to, say, Old Orchard Beach, Moussum Beach, whatever, like, and you go there and you're baptized, you're now making a public proclamation of your faith and commitment to follow Christ, not only before believers, but unbelievers.

And when people are baptized, you share your testimony, you talk about your commitment, you talk about your belief in Jesus. And that's a way to give a testimony, a witness, for the sake of the gospel.

[26 : 48] Now, I mean, Philip was the only one. Maybe there's, like I said, maybe there are a couple others. Maybe there's a little caravan. I don't know. But the eunuch, the Ethiopian official here, he was eager.

He was like, I'm ready to be baptized and make my commitment and anyone who passes by or may be with us or whatever, let's do it. And I mean, we don't know. Maybe at this point they're coming into a town. Oh, water.

Let's go do it. Let's go ruin the water supply with our dirt. But the fact is, he was excited and he clearly believed in Jesus. Now, as you know, as I mentioned, there is no verse 37 in the ESV. And this just has to do with translation issues. You come across this from time to time in versions of Scripture where you may have a section left out or whatnot that may be in another section. has nothing to do with whether one is the Word of God than the other. But it has to do with the manuscripts that were utilized in the translation of the text.

[27 : 52] So I'll just tell you that the earliest manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, particularly of Acts 8, verse 30, what we call 37, the earliest manuscripts don't have that section.

And I'll read it for you if you don't have it in your version of the Scriptures. Verse 37 reads, And 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. Now, that's New American Standard that I took that from. Basically, all it means is that the earliest manuscripts didn't contain it. The translators of the English Standard Version decided that they didn't want to include it. And I think they actually have, they have, yeah, down, my version has a sub-note 3.

Some manuscripts add all or most to verse 37 and it tells you what it says. It's not wrong to be there. It's not wrong to be out of there. But the fact is that the biggest takeaway is that the Ethiopian official believed in Jesus and the gospel.

[28 : 55] And he did not ignore the conviction from the word, but he respected in faith Christ as Savior. And as the Holy Spirit convicts the world of their sin, and the judgment to come and the righteousness that is in Christ, it is up to each individual to believe or not in Christ.

It is up to each individual to believe or not in Christ. And speaking of the conviction or the faith that an individual feels, it is either godly leading to repentance or worldly not leading to repentance. We'll take that from 2 Corinthians 7, verses 9 and 10. As it is, Paul writing, I rejoice not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief so that you suffered no loss through us.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. Or worldly grief produces a, not a repentance leading to salvation. salvation. It's the difference between being convicted and repenting of the life that you're living and the offense that you are to God and then, and, or, I should say, being, feeling a little bad about what you've done.

[30 : 18] There's more to it, but that's the general. And there's a universal call by God to all people to repent and follow Jesus. Acts 17, 31, Paul preaching, says, the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

God is commanded that all people everywhere repent, that they turn and follow Jesus for salvation. And we are the instruments that God uses to share this message to the world. So whether God has put you in a booming metropolis or a, like, Shapley, Maine, or a desert place like Newfield, wherever, whether it's a booming metropolis or a desert place, God has put us to be faithful, to look for opportunities that God provides to share the gospel, to share the word when appropriate in the situation.

It's not an awkward thing like you just kind of bring it in like out of nowhere, you know, it's just like you start talking to somebody. This is, this is one thing I've struggled with with open air evangelism techniques and training.

It's like, oh, you go and you just kind of start a conversation, you're talking to somebody and then out of nowhere, you know, punch them in the face like with the gospel. Now, there are appropriate situations and there are inappropriate situations in which to bring up the word of God.

[32 : 08] You have to be discerning, prayerful, that God would lead. And, you know, their need to respond to the gospel.

As you share it, you need to remind them, God is calling you to repent and it's your decision ultimately, right? I mean, my job, your job is to be faithful to the truth of scripture and to share the gospel.

It is God's work through the Holy Spirit to convict the world of their sin and of righteousness, of judgment. and it is the, you know, the way to draw people to save them.

As John MacArthur says, the kingdom of God advances one soul at a time. So, one conversation, one individual. Not everyone has the opportunity to speak to large groups of people about Jesus. So, don't overlook that one. one person by being discontent with your situation. Philip went from a city in Samaria to a desert place and he could have just said, woe is me, why am I here?

[33 : 20] There is nothing. Literally. There goes the only car around here. Bye. You know, he could have settled on that. Woe is me, but he didn't. He was, he was sensitive to the leading of God to lead him to that one chariot to share the gospel, to baptize that one that he was off other places eventually to Caesarea.

So, be faithful wherever you are to however many that God brings in your path and pray. And as it relates to this, this second week in a row I've done this.

Actually, three weeks in a row that I've put something in. I encourage you to read this at home, the middle of your bulletin. Five steps for sharing the gospel with your neighbors. And by the way, it's not like one of those, okay, first you do this and then you do this.

Five aspects as it relates to sharing the gospel. Number one is pray. You need to be praying. Are you praying for your neighbors? I don't even know their name. Go find it.

Go find out what their name is and then pray for them. That's where it starts. Let's pray. Father, I thank you for your word. Thank you for the example that Philip is for us.

[34 : 35] I thank you, Lord, that you took him from one situation to another. One that had many people come into Christ in a place to rejoice and be thankful. To one place where there's one individual who you were drawing to yourself and Lord, I thank you that Philip was faithful to share the truth of your word and the gospel with this one.

And Lord, I pray that whether it's one or twenty or a thousand, Lord, however many you put in our path and our way, help us to be faithful. Lord, help us look for the opportunities that you are providing to share the gospel.

Lord, help us to be bold and unashamed to share the truth of your word which is what brings conviction. And Lord, help us not to become discouraged or distraught, Lord, when people reject you because we understand that each individual must make a choice.

And Lord, if they reject you, help us to pray even more fervently for them and to continue to love them and continue to show and share the love of Jesus. And Lord, if they accept you and they trust you, Lord, they follow you in their lives, help us to rejoice with them and to continue on in the great commission work that you've called us to.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.