

Philip

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[0 : 0 0] Apart from the Apostle Paul, no evangelist in the New Testament moved about so widely preaching the gospel as Philip.

He was one of the first to reach out beyond Jerusalem and to preach the gospel to Greek-speaking Jews. I suppose we could liken him to a royal ambassador, taking the gospel to all sorts of prominent people, visiting many countries, meeting different people, traveling by various methods. I suppose if Philip were alive today, he might be likened to Billy Graham, a man who met presidents and queens and popes, a man who loved God more than anybody or anything else. Indeed, he was more concerned about what God thought about him than what the man in the street thought about him. And we also have one other evangelist who's just recently gone home with the Lord, Donald Cormack. You might know him. Donald's funeral is this Friday, and he's a lovely man. And we were just reminding about that this evening earlier on. A great man of God, a humble man, a man full of the Holy Spirit. And we give God thanks for men such as that in our generation. And we give God thanks for men such as that in the early church.

We want to consider this evening Philip and his ministry as found in Acts of the Apostles. We have first understanding of Philip in that first reading that we had this evening in Acts chapter 6. The circumstances of the situation. There were grumblings over the distribution of food among the widows of the Aramaic community. And because of that, the need arose to appoint certain people to this task. And you'll notice that Luke writes that they were to choose and appoint people who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. And you might say, for the giving out of food? Yes.

Everything we do has to come by the appointment of the Holy Spirit who moves us and selects us and chooses us and trains us. And that early church wanted to have the right people in position to do that task. However, I'm sure they did much more than serving food or serving tables.

The first task Philip is called to do was minister to widows. And yet God did much more with his life.

[4 : 1 0] And even in the church today, there are ministries to be performed for those who maybe are less fortunate than we are.

But we need our support and we have to make ourselves available as we've been singing to God, that he may use us in the various ministries of the church.

Is there anybody you can think of? Is there anybody you can think of? Any people you can think of in the church who need support? Anybody whom you could minister to?

Anybody whom you are making yourself available to God to go and minister to them? Then may God lead you tonight to those people and may you be able to bring to them comfort and hope in their situations.

And as we move on in the story of Acts of the Apostles into chapter 8, we see that the persecution led by Saul of Tarsus must have hindered and stopped the church from growing.

[5 : 3 4] They were scattered. Saul, that mean a man, hater of Christians, went from house to house, putting men and women in prison.

And we read that many of them had to move elsewhere. They were scattered, including Philip, who preached the word of God in Samaria.

And therefore we see in God's timing and God's purpose and God's plan that when one door closes, another door opens. Philip might have felt restrained, restricted in what was happening, but God moved him to other parts of the country that he may use his skills and his abilities to bless the church.

And as he preached, and as he shared God's word, those who were preached to and preached at listened attentively to what was being said.

He is a man who had a burden for those people who were not yet Christians, who hadn't come to faith. He was concerned about their eternal destiny.

[7 : 05] And he wanted to make sure that what he said would make an impression on their life. Would bring them to faith and help them to understand that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

And he can be Lord of their lives too. And we read too in this passage that as he preached, as he testified, as he shared, he was able to deliver evil spirits.

And he healed many people with the power of the Holy Spirit invested in him. You know, there are many people today who feel that those gifts were only for the early church.

I don't think that's true. I think and I believe that there are those in our society today whom God has given the gifts of healing.

Of enabling those whose lives have been captivated by wrong deeds can be delivered and they can find wholeness and health in Christ.

[8 : 34] and we read too that in this scattering, in this preaching, in this delivering of spirits, in this healing, that there was great joy in that city.

Wouldn't it be fantastic to know that as we share our faith, as this church proclaims Christ Jesus as Lord, that there be great rejoicing in this community because some, if not many, come to know faith in Christ.

And what about our area? An area which so desperately needs to hear the gospel. An area where so many people require to know deliverance from situations from situations which are holding them captive and discover the freedom that only Christ can bring.

You only have to take a walk through our streets today to see how many people are captivated. along Prince's Street there are many who are captivated by addiction.

Salvation Army works in Leith area and we go out every second two nights in every week with our motorhome as volunteers to make sure that those girls who are captivated by sex are protected and they're cared for.

[10 : 32] Some of those girls have to go out because their partner demands they go out that they get money to pay for their addiction.

we live in a very disturbed world captivated by the wrong things and each individual person needing to be freed from what captivates them.

And as we see Philip being involved in those situations of healing and deliverance and great joy being brought to the city God moves him on and we have one of the greatest and most exciting conversion stories in scripture and one of the few individual conversions recorded.

Has God ever spoken to you? God sent him to the road. Has God ever spoken to you and asked you to do something for him?

I remember many years ago when I was ministering Stenhouse there was a man in hospital driving through the grass market and God suddenly spoke to me and said I want you to go and speak to Peter Barber was his name.

[12 : 07] That was the father of the Peter Barber who was the general secretary of the Baptist Union. And I said to myself alright he knows the Lord. He's a very sound and staunch man.

A very well drilled man in scripture. But you know there's sometimes God sends us to someone not just because they need salvation but because they've come at the end are coming to the end of life and they need comfort and joy and I punished myself from that day that I failed to go and see that man and he died the next day.

We need to understand that now when God speaks we need to answer we need to respond. but here's Philip sent to this man.

We know certain things about Philip's character and some of us three of us anyway in this church were at a well Graham training session on Friday night and I didn't know the guy was going to speak in this so I'm not going to regurgitate what he said.

but it was very interesting confirmation for me in a sense that it was the right thing that I should share this evening. The first thing is this that Philip was open to God's leading.

[13 : 48] Go south to the road the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. God spoke and Philip listened.

A most unlikely place to find an opportunity to preach. But he went.

He was obedient and he followed God's words. So Philip started off started out.

He was open to God's voice and he met an Ethiopian an important official to the queen of the Ethiopians.

This man had been to worship he was coming back from worship in his chariot and he was reading scripture and it tells us something that maybe there are people who come to our church and they read scripture but they don't know the author of scripture.

[15 : 10] We need to be alert that when people might ask us a question following a sermon what does this mean? They've read scripture but they haven't understood what God had been saying to them.

He was reading from the prophet Isaiah and the other next thing we see about Philip he was eager to serve. As God spoke Philip listened Philip responded go to the chariot and stay near it.

Now how many of us in all honesty would have been able to have run? I couldn't have done it not by myself anyway but he went and he ran to that chariot and he got up on it and he saw this man reading scripture and he said to him do you understand what you're reading?

How can I understand unless someone explains it to me? Philip was in the right place at the right time to respond to that man's question.

You might have remembered that a few weeks ago George Innes from the Gideons was here in the morning service preaching and sharing examples for their ministry.

[16 : 50] People who offer scripture into nursing homes schools armed forces prisons and they have opportunity too.

We went to one last year to Lethem Park down Leithway and in giving these scriptures to the staff who had requested them we were asked the question do you have morning worship a time of devotion here?

No we don't. Would you like us to come and do that? I'll need to speak to the manager first. So we let them do that and about ten months later we've now got an opportunity an invitation to go and share and the activities coordinator said to me do communion too?

Anything you want. Well within reason. Yes. and so I've got an opportunity to go there and share in that home as other Gideons will have that opportunity too.

But he was open to God's word. He was alert. He was sensitive and he did what God asked him to do. He was the right place at the right time and that's the important part of this at the right time and at the right place.

[18 : 28] God giving us opportunity in various environments to share his word.

Philip, as we've said, had a desire for clarity. Do you understand what you're reading? What an opening gambit do you understand what you're reading?

He wanted to be certain that the official understood what he had been reading. And that man, Billy Graham, whom many of us have heard, if not in person, on TV, or on film, on news casts, was very blunt with the gospel.

And he wanted to make sure that those who heard every word he spoke understood what was being said. And as he was spoken of as the man for the moment, so Philip was the man for his moment.

moment, and you and I are the men and women for our moments, our journeys, our destinations, our travels.

[20 : 08] We don't know who we're going to meet, and it's important that we understand ourselves, God's word. that if we find somebody reading, or interested, who ask us a question, what did you do yesterday?

How many effort was it? I was at church. You're giving them a gambit, an opening gambit. What did you do there? What would you say?

you give people, they give us the opportunity. I remember when I used to work, well, not when I used to work, way back at the beginning when I worked in a company called Sir William Ireland Company, I was asked in a training school by some of the guys, what do you do at the weekend?

I said, I went to church, did you? I said, yes. Was it good? I said, yes. What did you do?

I told them what I did. I didn't make it up. I told them what I did and how we're able to know Christ, have a relationship with him.

[21 : 38] They didn't ask me that again, by the way, but at least they asked me that at once. That's enough to be able to say something to them and let the Holy Spirit work away in their lives.

Because you and I are the only Bible some people will read.

and as Philip went to Gaza, an important part of the city, this man, just before he got there anyway, in the chariot, what stopped me from being baptized?

nothing. There's some water. Let's go and do it. Okay, let's do it. And we can baptize anyone who has water.

You don't have to come to a church to do that. You can go to the seaside. You can fill your bath up, or their bath up, where God gives you the opportunity you must grasp it and seize it, and do what he asks you to do.

[23 : 20] An important Palestinian city was Gaza, and God used him to speak into that man's life.

God and then he went on to, we see in chapter 21, he went to Azotus, or Ashdod, continually sharing his faith, gossiping the gospel, and that's something that evangelists talked to us about, gossiping the gospel.

Now, in Scotland, we're good at gossiping, aren't we? But how many of us are good at gossiping the gospel? Just be natural, and share what you know, that God may use those words to speak into lives of the unsaved.

And we then begin to see that Philip is taken out of sight for something like 18 years. But I'm sure that during that time, his fervency had not receded.

Philip was someone who persevered, was faithful, and had great humility. And someone has once said that humility as soon as you think you've got it, you lose it.

[25 : 07] We need to be open to God and give ourselves to God that he may use us from Astos to Caesarea, one of the most cosmopolitan areas of that time.

preaching through several cities, busy coastal cities. But what's important is this, that where God sent him, he preached.

He preached. And as I said this morning, you can't be, you can't feel restricted in God's work, in God's world.

God underscores the importance of one, the one sheep, the one coin, the one son. And it may be you're the very person to speak to that one person in your office, your place work, your college, your school, one person to speak in the supermarket, one person who can speak in your street, your club.

You are important. Remember that. You are significant to God. I am only one.

[26 : 51] but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something.

And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do.

so if we hold on to that verse that we can't do everything, but we can do something, like Philip, where we go, God goes with us.

He never leaves us alone, but he empowers us by his Holy Spirit when we make ourselves available to him. and when we make ourselves available, we are pleasantly surprised how God can use us, can transform us, and help us to transform others.

So whom you meet this week, know that God's a purpose in you meeting them. Whom you speak this week, know that God's a purpose in what you're going to say to them.

[28 : 16] Don't say the wrong thing, but point them to Christ. Let them see it in your life, the glory of God.

And may God bless you. tonight and always. Father God, thank you for those men and women who have been used as your servants down through the years.

The Phillips of this world, the Billy Grahams of this world, the Donald Cormacks of this world. We all have a ministry.

Maybe not so high profile as some of those men, women, or women, but you can take us when we lay ourselves before you and say, Lord, I want to make myself available.

And you'll take us, transform us, inspire us, fill us with your Holy Spirit to do your work. And God, you'll receive the glory.

[29 : 23] may that be true in this place, in this week. Amen. Amen.