

The Ethiopian Eunuch

Our next sermon series will be a study of New Testament books from Galatians to 2 Thessalonians. We will study how these books explain the power of God's grace in transforming the lives of people in all nations. To guide our prayer, we are going to look at a story in Acts 8 about a man struggling to understand the gospel as explained in book of Isaiah in the Old Testament. We will see how God provided for this man's salvation all along his journey and contemplate how that relates to us.

We set aside this time at the beginning of each sermon series as a way to reflect on God's goodness and ask for his fullness by way of His word and prayer. Fasting is a physical way of expressing that spiritual need and can take the form of abstaining from eating or some other activity in order to create extra time and mental space for God to fill. As always, if you are new to or nervous about fasting, see our guide on fasting here: <http://intown.org/worship/prayer>.

We can start by going to our Father in prayer, asking Him to be present with us as we study today and throughout the next few weeks of our sermon series. Ask for Him to open the scriptures to you, as he did the Ethiopian, to show you the power of His gospel.

Next, read Acts 8:26-39 (printed on the back). Notice the details. If you would like, Deuteronomy 23:1, Isaiah 53 (quoted in the Acts 8 passage) and Isaiah 56:1-5 provide some context to understand how the eunuch would have been trying to understand what he was reading. In short, he would have been restricted from worshipping with God's people by the Law of God (Deut 23:1) but would have been reading about a prophesied Messiah (Isaiah 53) who would open the doors to all, including eunuchs that are mentioned specifically (Isaiah 56:1-5). The eunuch was likely hopeful but confused by a promise that he did not yet understand.

Here are some suggestions and questions to guide your prayer that are based on the themes we will be covering throughout this series. You might want to continue to use these throughout the next six weeks. Many relate to what the eunuch would have been reading, learning and rejoicing about in his study of Isaiah and in Philip's explanation of Isaiah in the light of the Gospel of Jesus.

From Galatians 1:11-12, 3:6-11, 5:13-16 – these verses point to the unity that Philip and the eunuch were able to enjoy because the Gospel is not exclusive to one people group.

- We can give thanks that the Gospel came from Jesus, not from a mere man or nation.
- We can claim God's promise that "All nations shall be blessed" through the same faith of Abraham. The Gospel has the power and the means for our salvation.
- Ask God how can you use your blessing and Christian liberty of the Gospel to bless others?

From Ephesians 3:1-17 – this passage points to God's plan to reveal his Gospel through the book of Isaiah, written hundreds of years before Jesus and before the New Testament was revealed.

- We can praise God for His plan to reveal the Gospel from the beginning of time and to include all of humanity, across time and nations, in His promises.
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From Philippians 1:27-28a – the eunuch had accomplishments, power and wealth and yet he was given a yearning for something greater in Jesus. In spite of his status, he had humility to ask for and accept teaching from someone very different from himself. Philip had the courage and care to share the Gospel with him.

- How do you see the worth of Jesus when compared to your own achievements, your reputation or your circumstances? How can you find repentance in the ways you put other things before Jesus?

- Give thanks for Jesus' example of humility in serving us, enabling us to grow in humility ourselves.

From Colossians 2:1-10 – the eunuch, by virtue of his status, probably had access to numerous ideologies and advisers that sought to influence him, but God protected him and sent his Word and his servant, Philip to provide him with truth.

- We can rejoice in the “riches of the full assurance of understanding” and “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” that we have in the Gospel.
- Do you find yourself tempted to believe other’s “persuasive words” that are contrary or additional to the Gospel? Are you aware of those who seek to “cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit”? Pray for God’s protection against such ideas.

From 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 – the Holy Spirit was present, guiding Philip to the eunuch’s location, guiding his speech (implied from other scripture) and later, whisking Philip away.

- The Gospel comes not only in Word, but with the power of the Holy Spirit and by the Holy Spirit’s power, we can accept the Gospel with joy!
- We often address the Father and Jesus in prayer. Do you pray to the Holy Spirit? We can worship Him as he works to transform our lives and the lives of all the nations.

From 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 – God knew that the eunuch was looking for truth and needed help. He sent a teacher to provide what the eunuch needed.

- We can be thankful and hopeful in God’s promise to sustain all His people through hardships, trials and persecutions.
- Pray for those around you that need the salvation and rescue of the Gospel.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch – Acts 8:26-39

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” ³⁰ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹ And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² 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.

³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴ And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ 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?” ³⁷ And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ 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.