

God's Word on the Move: Gaza to Caesarea

Acts 8:26-40

1

Do you ever wonder what God is doing in your life? Or is that just me?

And sometimes, as you see events happening in your life, do ever try to argue God out of those things - you of course having a better plan? Or is that just me?

In the late 1800's a woman by the name of Mary Brown wrote these words which became a popular hymn:

*It may not be on the mountain's height,
Or over the stormy sea;
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me.
But if by a still, small voice He calls
To paths I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in Thine,
"I'll go where You want me to go."*

I wonder how honest we would be with God if we sang those words tonight.

Acts 8

²⁶ *Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.*

Let's hold on right there. We need to look at this for a moment and not go too far, too fast. **2a**

We looked at this a bit last week. Philip had been in Jerusalem, the heart of Judaism, the birthplace of Christianity and the Church herself. He had the opportunity to hang out with the Apostles, the guys who had walked with Jesus. He was an active part of what God was doing within His Church. All of this was seem to be so good and so right. But

then... a bad thing happened... persecution struck the Church. **3a** The Body of Believers was scattered everywhere and Philip found himself in Samaria.

But, once again,
what seemed to be a bad deal,
God turned around for good.

As Philip was faithful to “*preach Christ to them*” (8:5), great things were happening in Samaria. **4** Many were getting saved and delivered. What an awesome place to stay and see God’s hand at work.

But now we get down to verse 26 where we find “*the angel of the Lord*” telling Philip,

“Hey Phil, uh, *God’s got **another plan** for you.*”

Can’t you just hear Philip now, “*But wait, I’m still working on this plan! I don’t want things to change!*” But then we realize the voice we hear... sounds an awful lot like our own voice.

Isn’t that a lot like us? We don’t want change. We don’t want to mix things up. We’ve just started to get settled into the status quo... even a good status quo... and God says,

“*Oh, I’m not finished yet! Oh, and by the way, this other plan... it really doesn’t sound too appealing to start with, but put your trust in Me and it will all work out!*”

Then Luke helps us to understand the reasoning. **5** You see, Samaria is beautiful hill country, a wonderful place to live. It was primarily a calm, rural setting; a farming and cattle grazing kind of country. **6a** Now Luke tells us about the place that Philip is

heading, **7a** “*This is desert.*”

Some of your versions say, “*This is a desert place.*” Still others say, “*This is a deserted place.*” **8** I think we can all agree that it just wasn’t a desirable place, in and of itself.

But I am also reminded of the words of a friend many years ago:

Even Paradise is Hell
if God isn't there.

And when God is there, even a desert place
becomes a place of bountiful harvest.

9²⁷ *So he (Philip) arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,*²⁸ *was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.*²⁹ *Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."*

Now there's a few things we need to understand about this **new man that now enters the scene**. First of all his position. He served Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians.

"Ethiopia" here refers not to modern-day Ethiopia but to ancient Nubia, the region from Aswan in southern Egypt (*reaching down into the area of the*) Sudan. **Candace** was a title given to the queen-mother, as Pharaoh was used of the king of Egypt. Governmental power rested in the hands of Candace, for the royal son, worshiped as an offspring of the **sun**, was above such mundane activities as ruling over a nation. Rulership was therefore vested with the queen-mother.¹

Then, in addition to his place of authority:

1. He was not from Israel – He was Ethiopian
2. He was a eunuch – either born that way or made that way by man
3. Because he was a Eunuch, he could never become a proselyte to Judaism. He would have been known as "a God-Fearer" or a "Proselyte of the Gate"²
4. Yet he still made the over 200 mile journey to *come to Jerusalem to worship*

It's interesting, but I feel we can see this individual **even in the world today**:

- She might be religious, but because of her past **she feels rejected** by God and the Church;
- He might read the scriptures, but **he's confused by what he reads** and frustrated because **he can't comprehend it**;
- There's a **sincerity in their search**, but they've never come to a saving faith in Christ.

¹ Stanley D. Toussaint, "[Acts](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 374.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 437.

Not only do we see these folks in the world, I feel that there are **many within the walls of the Church** who are in the same situation – seeking and earnest in their desire, but because there are so many churches today that do not teach the Word of God; who seldom proclaim the fullness of Truth; these people have **a presence of religion**, but they do not know the Savior.

And for this man (*this eunuch from Ethiopia*), I think we can see that God has been working on this man's heart, possibly for some time. And now God has set-up a Divine appointment. Do you see how **this wasn't Philip's idea**

- To be in a desert place....,
 - On a desert road....,
 - Somewhere between Jerusalem and Gaza.

This speaks so clearly to you and me: we should **NEVER be afraid of where God has us at the moment**. Many of you have been in that situation, and some of you are there even today:

It's a place where it's so dark that you can feel it...

It's so quiet that it is deafening...

Fear is trying to wrap its cold fingers around your heart, to squeeze out all hope...

But Beloved, that's when we **need to trust Him the most**. Realizing that in the darkness and the quiet, He is standing guard over us, preparing us and strengthening us, even setting up Divine appointments.

²⁹ *...the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and **overtake** this chariot."* Okay, **now that in and of itself is exciting**. All this eunuch had was a few horses carrying him, but Philip, Philip has the Holy Spirit! And **in THAT power**, he was told to ***overtake this chariot.*** ³⁰ *So Philip **ran**...*

We need to see very clearly here, even with the enabling power and the direction from the Holy Spirit, Philip had to do his part...

Do you have some things in your life that you feel are impossible or at the least highly improbable? **If God calls you to it, God will enable you to do it.** But you need to be willing to step out, step up... or as in Philip's case **run to it.**

*The Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and **overtake** this chariot..."*

*³⁰ So Philip **ran** to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² The place in the Scripture which he read was this:*

"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. ³³ In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth."

This man was desiring to draw closer to God. He wasn't satisfied with a formal connection... he wasn't satisfied with being a God fearer... I believe he wanted to know God. And as he searched the Scriptures, he had honest questions. God never tires of our honest questions...

The man was reading out of Isaiah 53, verses 7-8 in particular. And as he read, he was wondering exactly what the passage meant...

³⁴ So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

So Philip begins to have a study of the Word of God going from this passage and probably through the whole section of what we know of as Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53 is known as the Suffering Servant chapter. Here Isaiah, some 700 years before the birth of Christ writes out a detailed account of the Sufferings of Christ. And actually, this passage along with Psalm 22 gives us the greatest detailed account of the sufferings and the crucifixion of Jesus: Isaiah written 700 years before His birth and Psalm 22, written about 300 years prior to that – about 1000 B.C.

Let's take a moment and look at those two passages. We don't have time to digest all that is written in them, but I want you to see a portion of what I believe Philip could have very easily used to share the message of Christ with this man.

Let's look first at Isaiah 53

Now let's take a **quick look at Psalm 22**. We don't know for sure that Philip used this passage, but it is has great correlation with Isaiah 53

³⁶ Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" ³⁷ Then 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." ³⁸ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Somewhere along the line, Philip spoke about Baptism and as they traveled they came upon a body of water. This man had already determined he wanted to follow Jesus and now here's water to help him testify about his belief and faith in Jesus: *"See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"*

So, Philip first questioned him. He wanted to know that the man understood the commitment he was making, *"If you believe with all your heart, you may."*

The response is a sincere and direct declaration of the man's faith: *"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* He doesn't go into the whole theology of what that means... but, because Philip had been the one to share the Word with him, Philip was able to see the reality of this man's heart.

³⁸ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Baptism on November 11th are you interested? Have you made a commitment of your life to Jesus Christ as your Savior? *What hinders you from being baptized?*

If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who was sacrificed for your sin, and raised again, seated at the right hand of God Almighty. *"If you believe with all your heart...*

³⁹ Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so 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.

10 Azotus is located on the Mediterranean coastline about 20 miles north of Gaza, about 20 miles south of Joppa which is near modern day Tel Aviv. Philip continued preaching as he went north along the coastline all the way to Caesarea, **11** a total journey of about 60 miles along the coastline.

God's man on the move.

Twenty years later, **12** we find Philip living in Caesarea and still serving God as an evangelist (Acts 21:8ff). Luke tells us he also had four daughters who had the gift of Prophecy. What a heritage for the man who was willing to do the small things for God.

*There's surely somewhere a lowly place
In earth's harvest fields so wide
Where I may labor thro' life's short day
For Jesus, the Crucified;
So, trusting my all to Thy tender care,
And knowing Thou lovest me,
I'll do Thy will with a heart sincere,
I'll be what You want me to be*