

Being A Witness In Every Circumstance (Acts 8:25-40)

I. Witnessing On The Way Home (25)

A. The Apostles' Preaching and Teaching was Done in Samaria

B. The Apostles Journey Back To Jerusalem

1. They take every opportunity to Preach on the way
2. They pass through Samaritan villages on the way and preached in them
 - a. Notice that the task of being a witness is never complete
 - b. We are to be a witness wherever we are and whatever we are doing

II. Witnessing By Divine Appointment (26-38)

A. Philip Providentially Encounters an Ethiopian (26-29)

1. Philip is Led South on The Road To Gaza (26)

- a. Philip is given a divine task – He is led by the Spirit
- b. Philip may have wondered why in the world he was being led down this deserted road to Gaza
 - i. God had planned a divine appointment for Philip
 - ii. Philip wasn't given any information – just a command
 - iii. Philip obeyed without question

2. An Ethiopian Eunuch Was Coming From Jerusalem (27-28)

a. The Man is an Ethiopian

- i. This means he was from the kingdom of Nubia, which was in Africa south of Egypt. They were much darker people than Egyptians and Palestinians
- ii. He was in charge of the treasury of Queen Candace in Ethiopia. He was very very wealthy
 - Candace was the title of Ethiopian queens, not her name
 - Just like Pharaoh in Egypt
- iii. Because he was a Gentile convert to Judaism, he would not have been allowed into the inner court – he would be considered unclean

b. The Man is a Eunuch

- i. This means he had been castrated. Many eunuchs could achieve high court offices in ancient times. They were sometimes put in charge of harems, or raising children.
- ii. Deuteronomy 23:1 forbids castrated men from entering the sanctuary and coming into God's presence
- iii. Being a Gentile and a Eunuch would have doubly disqualified this man from coming into God's

presence. Luke probably uses this episode to show that Isaiah 56:3-8 is fulfilled which lifts the ban of Deuteronomy 23:1

- c. He is a Convert To Judaism
 - i. He had been visiting Jerusalem in order to worship and bring sacrifice to God
 - ii. He would have to have remained in the court of the Gentiles because he was unclean
 - d. He is Reading a Copy of Isaiah
 - i. He probably bought the scroll while in Jerusalem
 - ii. He was reading the prophet and probably had taken the deserted road in order to have privacy and quiet to read
 - iii. He was actively seeking to know more about God
 - 3. Philip is Led to Join the Ethiopian's Chariot (29)
 - a. Philip "just so happened" to run into the Ethiopian's chariot and God instructs him to join himself to the chariot
 - b. The chariot was probably moving slow enough for Philip to walk along side
 - c. Reading was characteristically done out loud in ancient times – so Philip could hear what the Ethiopian was reading
 - 4. Philip's Meeting with the Ethiopian was Divinely Orchestrated
- B. Philip Has A Divine Opportunity (30-33)
- 1. Philip Asks The Ethiopian If He Understands (30)
 - a. Philip recognizes that he has been given an opportunity to witness to the gospel
 - b. Philip uses the circumstances to speak to him about Jesus
 - c. The Eunuch understands that he needs help in understanding the Scripture
 - i. He of course understands the words and what they mean
 - ii. He doesn't understand the concept that the Scripture is trying to convey
 - iii. He doesn't understand who the prophet is talking about
 - 2. Philip is Given the Opportunity to Explain (31-32)
 - a. Eunuch is reading Isaiah 53:7-8
 - i. Chapter 53 would have caught his attention when it earlier said that the eunuch would not longer be considered a dry tree (i.e. unclean)
 - ii. He would have desired to understand these things as they applied to him and how God could accept him

- b. Isaiah 53 – the context of the chapter is the idea of the suffering servant who redeems God's people
 - i. The Eunuch doesn't understand who the suffering servant is
 - ii. The Eunuch wonders if it is the prophet Isaiah himself or the nation of Israel as a whole – or some other person
 - iii. Jewish people still ask this question today
 - Isaiah speaks of God's servant in his book as being rulers, prophets, Isaiah himself, and the nation – so the Eunuch is understandably confused

C. Philip Converts The Ethiopian (34-38)

1. Philip Explains the Gospel to Him (34-35)

- a. Philip explains that these prophecies are speaking of Jesus as the fulfillment of the suffering servant
- b. His life, death, and resurrection fulfilled the cleansing for those who's sin keeps them from God
- c. Philip starts here and explains the entire Gospel to the Eunuch

2. Philip Baptizes the Eunuch (36-38)

- a. The Eunuch desires to follow his profession of faith with obedience
- b. No doubt Philip explained every element of the gospel of salvation
- c. The Eunuch desires to be baptized into Jesus' name and enter into the family of God – no longer unclean, no longer unaccepted.
- d. NOTE: Verse 37 either does not appear or is bracketed in many of the modern translations. The verse does appear in the majority of greek manuscripts and is quoted by Irenaeus who wrote in the 2nd century. But the verse is absent in many early manuscripts (P45, P47, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus) – Erasmus (who published the first greek new testament) used a 12th century manuscript for acts and Paul, and it did not contain the verse. But he copied it into his Greek New Testament from a marginal note found in a 13th century manuscript. The first Greek manuscript in which the verse appears is E (Laudianus – a 6th century manuscript.)
 - i. This in no way lessens the Bible's accuracy or trustworthiness. If it bothers you, you should go back and listen to the Sunday school lesson about how we know we could trust the Bible

- ii. The fact that we have this information and know these things gives us more confidence that no person or group of people ever made changes to the Bible without us knowing about it.
- iii. As previously stated, the verse is quoted by Iranaeus in the 2nd century, so it is attested very early.

III. Witnessing Wherever God Leads (39-40)

- A. Philip is Caught Away By the Lord (39a)
 - 1. The Spirit continues to direct Philip's activities
 - 2. Philip suddenly disappears from view and is taken to another location where the Spirit will have him preach and teach
 - a. This shows God's continuing direction over his people
 - b. God providentially provides opportunities for His people to witness to the gospel
- B. The Eunuch Continues Rejoicing (39b)
 - 1. The Eunuch continues on his travels rejoicing in his new found salvation
 - 2. Iraneaus and Eusibius (early church fathers) say that this Eunuch was the first missionary to Ethiopia and that he went home and became an effective witness for Christ
- C. Philip Continues Preaching and Teaching (40)
 - 1. Philip ends up in an ancient Philistine city – Azotus, which was known in early times as Ashdod, north of Gaza
 - 2. Philip did not rest in his success in ministry and witness. He continued on his mission and preached his way down to Caesarea.

God always provides his people with opportunity for witness. Every day, there are people who need to hear the gospel. God providentially puts people in our path and uses his gospel to transform their lives. However, we also see that the disciples preached and witnessed wherever they were. They witnessed on their way home. They witnessed on their way to new places. Whether they were supernaturally guided to witness to certain people or not, they witnessed wherever they found themselves, and so should we.