

11/1/15

Acts 8:25-40

God Does The Saving

Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans. 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. 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." So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are 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.
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 about Jesus. 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?" 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.

(Pastor Prays)

The Book of Acts tells the story of the church and the spread of the Gospel. The book begins with the resurrected Lord speaking to the gathered disciples. Jesus tells the believers in Acts 1:8: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to*

the end of the earth.” But it was not until several years later, when the persecution started in Acts 8, that the church started fulfilling God’s call.

In Chapter 8 we are re-introduced to a Christian man named Philip. By Chapter 8:25 Philip has been to Samaria and crossed those racial and ethnic barriers, and now God was going to use him in an unusual way, I think in part to teach us a lesson about how evangelism and salvation work. How much do we play into people being saved? What if you want to share Christ but are not sure what to say? And what do we believe about the process of being saved? Or becoming a Christian? We need clarity.

Let’s say it like this:

Saving People is God’s work – Sharing the Gospel is Ours

Let me explain:

Salvation is Orchestrated by God (v. 25)

Sometimes what God calls you to do will not make sense. Philip was having an outstanding ministry in Samaria. He was wildly popular, well received and v. 8 says, “*So there was much joy in that city.*” In v. 12, people were believing and being baptized. And then, out of nowhere, the Bible tells us in v. 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.*

God calls him to leave a successful evangelistic movement and go to a place that seems completely inappropriate for that kind of work. In that day and time, there were two roads from Jerusalem to Gaza. This one in v. 26 that went through the desert was seldom used. God called Philip to go to the desert on a deserted road that nobody ever used. That just didn’t make sense. Well, while God was speaking to Philip in one area, he was doing something else in the desert. Take a look at v. 27.

God always has a plan. The Ethiopian Eunuch. What do we know about him? He was a Court Official in charge of the treasure for the Queen. He was like the Minister of Finance or Secretary of the Treasury. He was educated and trusted. What else do we know? In v. 27 we find out he was a God fearer, although not a Jew. He believed there was a God but he was searching. Also, he was a eunuch, so although he might fear God, he couldn’t go into the temple. Deuteronomy. V. 28 tells us something else. He was reading (probably out loud) Isaiah 53.

Now with that understanding, take a step back and you can see God is sovereignly orchestrating the events, bringing them together so that the Ethiopian might become a believer. Philip and the Ethiopian's meeting was not a chance encounter. It was not a product of human ingenuity. It was God’s sovereign hand bringing them together for the Ethiopian to hear the Gospel and be saved. If you are a Christian, God orchestrated the events of your life for you to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Even Jesus said in John 6:44, *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.* The circumstances that lead to the Ethiopian coming to Christ were specifically arranged by God so that he might be saved.

Never forget that in the process of evangelism and salvation, it is God who is in control of all things. We can have the confidence, assurance and freedom to know that God is making it happen. Salvation is orchestrated by God.

Salvation is Explained by Man

Notice when you read v. 26 & 27 together that Philip immediately responds: *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.*

Philip didn't ask questions; he just did what God called him to do. He went down to this deserted road where nobody would be. Listen, God might call you to do something that will take you out of the loop and away from the action. Philip was obedient and not just that. Notice that Philip was also bold. V. 27 says the Ethiopian was traveling back from worship. V. 28 tells us he was reading Isaiah. Now from v. 29 & 30: *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?"*

Do you see Philip imposing himself, pressing the issue, asking the questions? Philip is taking the risk, going one more step. If God is sovereign, He could've used any means to save the Ethiopian – an angel, Isaiah, a vision. But God had chosen to use people. I came to Christ because someone told me how. You came to Christ because someone shared the Gospel. God orchestrates salvation but He uses man to make it happen.

St. Francis of Assisi is reported to have said, "Preach the Gospel at all times, and use words if necessary." That's a cute saying, but the fact is, you can't preach the Gospel by being a good example. There comes a point when a verbal explanation is necessary. It wasn't enough for Philip to walk beside the chariot with a Christian attitude, to just smile and be nice. He had to get up in the chariot and verbally share the Gospel.

You know what this means – *you* are our evangelism program at HGBC. The events of your life are orchestrated by God so that He brings people into your life so that you can be used by Him to share the Gospel. In your neighborhood, at school, to your team, when it comes time to speak to someone about Christ, you don't need to fear. Remember, God does the saving. You do the sharing.

When you take a step back from this passage, you see God at work. V. 26, God speaks to Philip. V. 27, the Ethiopian is under conviction. V. 29, the Spirit tells Philip to go up into the chariot, all of this to show us the results are not dependent on us but powered by God. Saving people is God's work, sharing with people is ours.

1. Salvation is Orchestrated by God
2. Salvation is Explained by Man

Salvation is Based on the Word

Let's go all the way back to V. 25 and read what John and Peter were doing as they traveled: *Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.*

Then when you read v. 32-35:

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.

In v. 32 the Ethiopian is reading the passage in Isaiah that points to the substitutionary death of Christ. V. 35 says that Philip opened his mouth and beginning from this scripture he preached Jesus to him.

What's amazing is that Luke tells us a similar story about the two disciples on the Emmaus Road after the resurrection when Jesus joined them on the road. Luke 24:27 says about Jesus himself: *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

This passage is going to drive our philosophy for evangelism and church growth. Let me tell you what I mean. I think there are so many props and gimmicks (manipulation) in the pulpits today because we have lost confidence in the power of the Gospel.

Romans 1:16 says: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* Philip didn't get up into the chariot and do a balloon trick. He didn't get up into the chariot and tell the Ethiopian how God would bless him financially or heal his body or make him happy. Philip took the Word of God and explained Jesus to him. Saving people is God's work, sharing is ours.

1. Orchestrated by God
2. Executed by Man
3. Based on God's Word

Salvation is Centered on Christ

Notice what Philip does in v. 35. *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.* All of Philip's teaching from the Bible went back to Jesus. The saving power of God is wrapped up in Jesus Christ. Our salvation begins and ends with Jesus Christ:

- Repentance from our sin
- Faith in Christ's atoning death on the cross
- Forgiveness of sins
- Lordship of Christ in your life
- Sanctification. As you age, you are growing as a Christian
- Glorification. When you die, you spend eternity in Heaven

We must remember that the determining factor for your relationship with God is not based on what *you* have done but on what *He* has done and *your* faith in his death on the cross. That is how all of this is applied. V. 36 shows the Ethiopian believed and desired baptism as a symbol of his new faith. The story gives us the structure of salvation. Saving people is God's work and sharing with people is ours.

1. Salvation is Orchestrated by God
2. Salvation is Executed by Man
3. Salvation is Based on God's Word
4. Salvation is Centered on Christ

One more point –

Salvation is Celebrated with Joy

In V. 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.*

Philip is taken away to another assignment, but look at the Eunuch. He went on his way rejoicing.

Sometimes we forget that the sole purpose of the Gospel is not the forgiveness of sin. The purpose of the Gospel is for man to be restored into fellowship with God. Forgiveness gets everything out of the way so that joy might come.

You were designed to experience the joy of God that can only be found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a joy that goes beyond the thin shrill of fleeting happiness, joy that is founded on the rock of Christ, joy that walks you through every single event of life so that no matter what is going on, you have fellowship with God through Jesus his son. And because of that, you can face anything. That joy is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

(Pastor Prays)

