

Lessons from the experience of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Quality: Very good)

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[0 : 00] I'd rather judge that those that were here this morning would expect me to go on in the first and second verses of the twelfth chapter in Romans again tonight.

But friends, I'd left home with two subjects on my mind. I dealt with one this morning, and with the Lord's help I want to deal with one this evening in hope that there was a reason for this duplication of the truth and that the Lord will be glorified thereby.

This evening I'm going to ask your attention to the eighth chapter in the Acts of the Apostles and I'm going to address my remarks largely from around the 35th verse.

Verse 35 Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus.

I hope if you really followed what I've tried to be saying to you in the ministry last Lord's Day and this morning, you will realize that my burden is to preach Jesus.

[1 : 34] And that is the root cause of me turning to this particular verse this evening because it was laid so heavily upon my mind.

A subject that I expect most of us are fairly well acquainted with as it is a chapter that deals with many aspects of the Christian faith in the experience of a servant of God, Philip, and in the experience of a most unlikely person that obviously was the chosen of God that time began who was brought by a strange way into a strange place to be blessed through the instrumentality of a strange wilderness wanderer who in the equipment of a sovereign God were each ready to join together and to find comfort and joy and peace in the subject of Jesus.

And my friends, it will be a wonderful thing this evening if you and I go away from this place in some measure within our own hearts in that joy and peace of believing.

Nothing else in the whole world can uplift the soul more than believing faith in God, Father, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Well now this evening I'll just go on to the context for a little while and then come more particularly to think upon the 35th verse.

[3 : 31] the situation of the servant of the Lord Philip.

Well he had been a faithful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ beyond question and a strange thing and a strange thing overtook him.

I say a strange thing because to a man useful as he'd been in the service of God it must have been an unusual experience suddenly to be confronted by an angelic command from the throne of heaven that he should go into the desert that he should be there in a position and condition to deliver a heavenly message to a very strange man with so much alien naturally speaking to Philip himself but nevertheless there is in the gospel that which brings every objection one to another into nothingness.

My friends when we look at the conclusion of the matter we must acknowledge that Philip and the eunuch were brethren in the Lord all those other difficulties and separating influences were lost in the fact that Philip was used of God to lead the Ethiopian into the truth and the Ethiopian found in the desert what he never found anywhere else beside and he'd been to the place which was notorious for the faith of God and the knowledge of his word in the Old Testament scripture yet we look at Jerusalem and we realise that it was the city in the world at that particular time wherein the truth of God was practised in some measure but acknowledged to a great measure because those in high places in the

Jewish tradition were essentially people who acknowledged the scriptures and sought as it were in many ways not by the right spirit necessarily but by a spirit to be obedient to that which was commanded well now let us look yes at Philip and coming into the desert by divine command and my friends it was a fruitful mission wasn't it it was a fruitful mission strange dispensation of God that he should be sent into a far off and difficult situation but nevertheless it was ordained by the most high God and my friends how perfect are God's ways oh we can only marvel at the consequence to this divine leading which brought that minister in face to face with the situation of the returning eunuch but yes this man to whom he was sent was an

[7 : 39] Ethiopian eunuch Philip a Jew Philip a Jew the Ethiopian a Gentile they had that distinction which in those days was far more separating that it is in our present situation nationally and internationally nevertheless here he is a man of wealth now Philip didn't look to have I was going to say as he wandered into the desert as we would think seemingly wilderness wanderer he wouldn't be adorned in a very impressive way and manner he would look like a Bedouin desert wanderer there he was wandering through the desert when this man comes along returning from

Jerusalem Jerusalem and the entourage that was all around him gave the impression of a very honourable and a very high positioned man the soldiers the chariot and all that was there to speak of special regard and special protection he was a man of such dignity that it was essential that he should be in defence by any means applicable there he is going but what about his heart what about his heart he was heavy hearted he'd been to Jerusalem expecting there to have some solace communicated or imparted to his spiritually exercised soul and he knew what it was to be disappointed he knew what it was for his expectations to be dashed my friend are you all are you in any way acquainted with that to as it were expect circumstantially that everything would operate constructively but it doesn't it it doesn't why my ways are not your ways neither are my thoughts your thoughts says the most high

God God has his own ways of working to glorify his own great name and my friends he took Philip and he brought this Ethiopian eunuch into contact together to fulfill a most wonderful and gracious experience on both sides now just think of the eunuch he was the chancellor of the exchequer if you like to Queen Candace of the Ethiopians he obviously would be a man of considerable wealth and as I've already hinted the entourage that was all about him would give to anyone an impression that he was a very high ranking person but he had got an aching void in his soul and he had been to Jerusalem in hope that there he would find medicine that would strengthen him and help him and comfort him but no the form of religion was inadequate and my friends some of us have learned that the form of religion is inadequate we can go among the people of

God we can go to a place of worship we can as it were consider that the place of worship we attend is the place of worship in the area and all the attributes associating they leave us cold they leave us in a very desolate far off and discouraged position sometimes it is for the goodness of the soul and the glory of God that we can go to a service and expect something really positive and it doesn't prove to be the Lord's time it doesn't appear to be the Lord's way so that we go home discouraged and usually that discouragement is associated with manifold temptations by the enemy the devil comes in like a flood and says look you're not among the elect so all your expectations are valueless the

Lord Jesus Christ had not your name on his breast when he went to Calvary's tree therefore you've no place in his great salvation you've no place in his wonderful work among the children of men you're outside of the secret and the fact that you are where you are and going where you are going that affords no ground for solid hope and your hopes sink don't they in terrible discouragement and you've got the very threshold of despair and now I think this man with all his guillotine all his entourage and all his grandeur my friends he got inside an aching void he got inside a wound that he carried from Ethiopia to

[14 : 22] Jerusalem and he hadn't found any comfort there and he was going back to Ethiopia nigh on despair that the faith which God had given to him that caused him to seek the blessing was not real faith but it did ultimately meet beyond expectation didn't it because I never would believe that going back from Jerusalem to Ethiopia he carried in his heart an expectation that he'd be a baptized believer in the cause of Jesus Christ oh no oh no well now we must see the hand of God so wonderfully bringing Philip with his knowledge of the truth not a great knowledge maybe but sufficient to have an answer to a situation that obtained when those two extremes were brought together it's a wonderful thing when we think of the situation the Ethiopian eunuch in the middle of that those soldiers with all the defense that was so physically strong that the

Lord should say now go and join yourself to this show go and join you it would be like having a command to go to certain deaths surely but Philip had faith and he believed where God had given faith God can protect and make a way where there appears to be no way and so he keeps God's commandment I was going to say he more or less lays his life upon the line doesn't he wonders if this is the end of me but my friends no it wasn't the end of him it was for the affirmation or confirmation of his precious soul in the things of grace and of godliness and of all the things it's a wonderful thing concerning the unit that he was reading his Bible he hadn't given that up he'd given up a lot of

Jerusalem but he hadn't given up reading the Bible have you got that characteristic is your soul hungry that whatever you lack you can't give up reading the Bible it's God's word and you keep hoping in and hungering and hungering and hoping that God will give you some food from his word to strengthen and encourage you in the things of God well he was reading a most appropriate scripture wasn't he that speaks of the infinite condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords he's reading but he's not reading of him in a record of his self-interest in that sense it's as he is engaged in suffering for the deliverance or the salvation and redemption of his people and the word which he was reading when the interpretation was given to him through

Philip was absolutely suitable to reveal the truth of the gospel that is to be made poor enough to realise the wealth of God's giving to save a soul well now what was he reading the place in the scripture which he read was this he was led as a sheep to the slaughter and like a lamb dumb before his shearers so opened he not his mouth in his humiliation his judgment was taken away and who shall declare his generation for his life is taken from the earth Calvary Calvary Calvary wonderful prophetic scripture to spotlight for us as it were the substitutionary sacrifice of the son of

God God and my friends why was Christ humiliated for the exaltation of his people for the exaltation of his people and through Christ's deep humiliation they are the most exalted creatures even even higher in exhortation ultimately than the angels and archangels in the glorious presence of the most high God oh that's a wonderful scripture too that seems to touch upon the same theme that his humiliation was the secret of the high exaltation of the people whom he loves well now of course this reading excited in the heart of the eunuch a question and the eunuch answered

[20 : 56] Philip and said I pray thee of whom speakest the prophet this of himself or some of some other man fancy a dignitary from Ethiopia asking a wilderness wanderer what the scripture meant you know my friends when our souls my mind flies this evening to a remark of my old grandfather my brother here will gladly remember the idea of saying he said on one occasion to my father George he said a hungry soul doesn't mind eating off a cracked plate and you know there's a lot in that poor ministers simple humble ignorant men according to the classification of the world but if the

Lord provides a meal of his goodness and his mercy and his grace and his love and his promises my friends they don't mind eating it doesn't matter who the minister is it didn't matter that Philip was a poor wilderness wanderer there's a hungry soul that had an appetite and he wanted it satisfied and so he puts the question to Philip and Philip gives him the answer but I like the expression I hope I'm not running on too long this evening but I like the expression where the eunuch asks the question the eunuch can't speak is the prophet this of himself or of some other man now he seems there in his ignorance to put his finger right on the subject of the suretyship of Christ not a prophet but some other man greater than a prophet and my friends to be saved we need somebody greater than a prophet you can put all the prophets of the

Old Testament in a bundle and they couldn't give us salvation but it's the man Christ Jesus that saves you'll have to come off all human agencies and you'll have to look singly to Christ to be saved some other man what a blessed title as it were associates his name shall be called Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins the man Christ Jesus formed of a woman made under the law who grew up through the course of childhood manhood to those 33 years of fulfillment when at length all his work under the sun had to be sealed as it were with his own heart's blood for without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins a fountain open for sin and for uncleanness we have before us in the cross of our

Lord at Calvary well now then Philip opened his mouth oh he got the key he got he got in his own soul a theme that set him on fire then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus and preached unto him Jesus you know that poor man he was a prisoner in more ways than one in that sense there he was in the midst of those soldiers being taken back to Ethiopia disappointed nigh on despair in despair but yet clinging to the Bible oh he seems he appears to be a prisoner doesn't he to disappointment a prisoner to discouragement a prisoner to things working alien to his expectations but

Philip has the key Philip has the key he preached unto him Jesus and my friends that's the key that opens the door of heaven that's the key that opens the door of heaven if you and I are to get to heaven when we die we shall realize that Jesus Christ is the key to let us in there's no other there's no other and he preached unto him Jesus now I'll just finish the history and then I'll come back to this theme for a few minutes and as they went on their way it doesn't say and he went on his way Philip it doesn't say and he went on his way the eunuch they went on their way there was a unity there was a oneness the answer to the great question of the eunuch had been supplied and Philip was the honoured servant of

[27 : 28] God to deliver this message to as it were cause the scales to fall from his eyes to open his heart as it were to receive the gospel in its perfect suitability to comfort him and send him on his way rejoicing he preached unto him Jesus they went on their way the Lord still had something to unfold in his will and in his purpose and preaching unto him Jesus it must be absolutely certain that Philip included believers baptism in his exposition of that precious truth what does baptism indicate to us death and resurrection death and resurrection that poor man was returning from Jerusalem to

Ethiopia all feeling as it were the cold hand of death upon his spirit where would he find an answer to his need in the whole universe if it wasn't to be located in Jerusalem but it wasn't to be located in Jerusalem Jerusalem hadn't the answer in that sense which Philip was possessed of because God had prepared his soul to declare the liberating truth of Jesus Jesus the sinner's friend well now I'll just touch upon this they went on their way they came to a certain water a certain water a water in the desert God had provided him

God had provided him God knew just where they would meet and he knew just where they would be and what would be necessary as it were for the profession of this Ethiopian unit to be made public a certain water I might say this and I want to say it in all humility and thankfulness I was preaching in Swapesee pulpit one week night concerned because my wife was not a member there were certain things that seemed to separate us one from the other that things took place within the church that I couldn't in all honesty and sincerity tell my wife about I felt under restraint by my commitment and connection with the church it worried me and distressed me and I was begging of the

Lord to come and allow as it were things to occur that would liberate my wife from her disobedient condition and position the Lord led my mind that evening and they came to a certain water and I felt absolutely as I stood there in the pulpit that there was an appointed place to which we would come that would be the will of God that she would be baptized do you know I waited ten years ten years I went one Wednesday night down to Ebenezer Old Hill and it was laid on my mind to preach as for me and my house we will serve the

Lord I didn't know anything about I don't know what I said hardly when I went home I opened the garage door and I drove the car in my wife still sat in the passenger seat and I said come on my dear she said Harold I've got something to talk to you about she said as for me and my house we will serve the Lord she said do you feel you could mention my name to the deacons ten years and it was my privilege to take my dear wife through the waters of baptism at Ebenezer Old Hill where she could be free and I could be free to talk about the confidences and other matters affecting the inside of the church if you'll understand what I'm trying to say oh my friends it's a wonderful thing there's a certain water have you come to that certain water as the

[33 : 09] Lord brought you face to face with his will and his commandment and you've gotten you can't you can't go the wrong way you feel so under the influence of his love that to keep his commandments to do his bidding is your delight your delight and what comparatively does our submission to the water of baptism appear to be when we think of what Christ went through for us what a little thing he asks of us to do for him if you love me keep my commandments he says what I've said sometimes when my heart has overflowed with love to the Lord for his grace and his goodness if I had to be baptized once every seven days I would be I would be that's not the profession of a fool that's a profession of a man who under

God's grace and I don't live in that spirit all the time God forbid I should give that impression but I thought I could for his sake I could submit as many times as his will revealed should require love for for now for now Philip they came to a certain water the eunuch said not Philip eunuch said see here is water and I believe that certain water and the exercise of love in the eunuch's heart under the ministry of Philip brought a very strong impulse an impulse of heavenly love and desire to keep the commandments of the Lord in the heart of the eunuch his feet were made like hind's feet and he ran over the hills of difficulty and any other consequence of his obedience to the command he left with his

Lord and did what he now knew to be associated with Christian discipleship well now I'm not going to dwell upon that too long he commanded the chariot to stand still and they went down both into the water both Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him and when they came up out of the water the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip the Lord doesn't allow his people to have idols from all your idols will I cleanse you we can see in that circumstance how easily a man of like passions with us could have thought too much of Philip the Lord wouldn't allow the eunuch to make an idol of Philip he caught away

Philip he caught away Philip and the eunuch carried on but he carried on without Philip but not without the Lord not without the Lord because the Lord had done great things for him the Lord had brought him out of prison spiritually considered and he set him free free to run in the way of his commandments as he so graciously condescendingly and sufficiently enlarged his heart we read the Lord caught away Philip that the eunuch saw him no more he saw him no more on earth he saw him no more on earth but I wonder what heaven holds for us concerning those whom we've loved for Jesus sake oh what a wonderful abode of love unity and harmony is in the prospect of heaven for Jesus sake and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing oh he got something to be pleased about and my friends that wasn't just a soup superficiality of human pleasure that was in the deep recesses of his soul he was a happy man he was a happy man he could look the future in the face with all that may develop in the will of God for him and he could still rejoice rejoice in the

Lord always and I say again rejoice there's nothing to fear if the Lord is your God there's nothing to fear his grace will be sufficient his strength will be equal to your day the promises of God that are yea and amen are yours all is yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's what I might term the wonderful inexhaustible and incomprehensible truth of God and his great love in loving his people secures the people of God against any and every eventuality that may arise against them here upon the earth say ye to the righteous it shall be well with him say to the wicked it shall be ill with him which side of the line are you on are you on the

[39 : 34] Lord's side are you on the Lord's side is your heart disposed in thankfulness to him for his grace and his goodness hitherto are you willing as it were even to suffer if his will for his sake well now let me just come and I must hasten then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus now this is really the sum and substance of gospel preaching isn't it Jesus Jesus yes the various aspects of divine truth that as it were find their focus in this great wonderful example of the love of

God even before the world was made exercise toward the salvation of his people their names before they ever had a name on earth their names as it were recorded in the Lamb's book of life and the responsibility to perfect their salvation was by the Father given into the hands of the Son and Jesus was the only one qualified to bring the love of God into perfect satisfaction nothing missing nothing missing nothing could be added because it's perfect the perfect love and purpose of God this people have I formed for myself they shall show forth my praise and in that sense as we look at the rejoicing of the eunuch as he went on his way he was in harmony with heaven wasn't he rejoicing on the same theme his name shall be called

Jesus there's none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved it's Jesus first and last and all in all and Philip a humble bedouin wanderer equipped sanctified by the spirit taught of God to focus the attention of this man on this thing this man could look as it were ahead when the subject of baptism was brought to him upon death buried with him by baptism into death no hope in self decay the prospect but not the end resurrection resurrection beautiful thought is it not that when all the enemies of the

Lord's people have done their utmost to bring them to ruin the Lord almighty has ordained that they shall be saved and they will be saved to perfection and forever the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin the righteousness of Christ clothes a naked sinner with a garment that is suitable to the praise and the occupation of a throne in paradise in the very presence of God Jesus is the way to God Jesus is the way to bliss in this way the father's trot down from Adam's day to this well now my friends

I hope a little of the spirit will be found in our hearts that spirit that occasioned the poor sad and sorrowing union unit to consider the privilege of obedience of discipleship in following the Lord Jesus Christ through the significant ordinance of death and resurrection in believers baptism that will be as it were sealed with the divine will and purpose of God dead to all hope in yourself alive and forever lasting in the person and work of the saviour of sinners oh then shall we see his face and never never sin from the rivers of his grace drink endless pleasures in crown him crown him crown him crown him

[45 : 38] Lord of all Amen Amen