

# Phillip & The Ethiopian Eunuch

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 15 October 2023

Preacher: Robert France

[ 0 : 00 ] The Book of Acts, it's very challenging and a very wide-ranging book, it covers so many topics and it tells the story of the growth and the development of the early church and it's just packed with amazing stories from these far off days.

You can see it on page after page. We read of men and women coming to a saving knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through the witness and the testimony of others.

We read in the book many of the now familiar names who are associated with the Gospel, the spread of the Gospel, both to Jew and Gentile in the early days and we thank Almighty God for that, that we've got this record in the Book of Acts of all and what on in the early church there.

Now we read earlier on from verse 26 to verse 40 of this chapter, chapter 8, but before we go on we focus on that particular section that we read. We'll have a brief look at what went on before, just now we have an introduction and I'll lead up to where we are.

We look at the last few verses of chapter 7 and into chapter 8 in order to see what's going on as I said in the lead up to our reading. So at the very end there of chapter 7 the word records for us the stunning of Stephen.

[ 1 : 16 ] Stephen was a man who was full of the Spirit and he was a man who would speak out for Jesus regardless of what situation he was found in and that preceding chapter Peter, Peter Pthalob, sorry, Stephen, sorry I'm going to mix up my names.

Stephen had been making a speech to the Jews and he was defending his faith and defending the Lord Jesus Christ and he angered them so much that we read at the end of the chapter there that these were stoning Stephen.

In the stone Stephen and falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, Lord do not hold this sin against him and he fell asleep.

Stephen passed away and there we have a record of Stephen, the first martyr in the early church, in the Christian church. In that tragic event there the stoning of Stephen, it seemed to have acted as a trigger for what followed in and through the rest of chapter 8 because to read there at the beginning of chapter 8 a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem which resulted in the believers being scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, all that is except the apostles.

A man F.F. Bruce in his commentary on the book of Acts he suggested that it may have been the Hellenist Jews, the Greek speaking Jews who formed the main target of the attack and even intends it was mostly they that scattered and eventually the church in Jerusalem was consisted of Israeli Jews, Israelite Jews.

[ 2 : 49 ] The persecutors having witnessed this spreading and scattering of the church they may have well have been rejoicing and they might have been celebrating, they might have been thinking well that's the end of them, that's it we've got rid of them.

We've got rid of all these Jesus followers, we'll not see them again but how wrong they were. Because we see what happened there instead of the church disappearing it grew and it grew exponentially and the reason for that growth we find there in verse 4 it says that the persecutors who scattered, the church that scattered went about preaching the word.

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Now that doesn't mean that they all, all of a sudden became preachers of the Gospel but what it does mean is that as they went on their way they were sharing their Gospel and their faith.

The way I said they were yarning the Gospel, whatever they went, whoever they came into contact with when they went from place to place they shared the good news of the Gospel, of her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and it bore fruit because as they shared that Gospel of Jesus Christ the Spirit was applying it to the hearts and souls of people with whom they came into contact because God's Spirit in these days in the book of Acts and the days of the Acts was working mightily in that area and souls had been saved.

Right earlier on in the book of Acts of thousands coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus and what an encouragement that must have been for the apostles on these days and here we see in chapter 8 and the early verses the beginning of a promise made by Jesus from chapter 1 and verse 8 where he said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

[ 4 : 53 ] So this was beginning to happen. The word was beginning to spread out from Jerusalem and that persecution was the very start of it. And then in verse 5 to 8 we read of one called Philip who was actively involved in the work which was going on up there in Samaria.

He had moved up to Samaria and it says that people were being cured of a variety of ailments both physical and spiritually but more importantly Christ was being proclaimed to them.

They were hearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was being proclaimed to them and as a result of this and the accompanying signs many were being saved.

Now this is not because of the Apostle Philip. This was not the Apostle Philip as we know from the Gospels.

This is rather he was a Greek speaking Jew and you can see that in chapter 6 and verse 5 one who was full of his spirit and wisdom. He was one of the seven who were chosen as a deacon there to assist in the church in Jerusalem with the administration of the daily affairs that had been a dispute and an argument and they were saying that the Hellenists were getting, they weren't getting the same share as the Jewish people.

[ 6 : 10 ] So they appointed these deacons and Philip was one of these deacons and he was helping with that administration of the daily affairs just like Stephen but like Stephen Philip was more than just an assistant helping with physical needs.

He was an evangelist and if you were to look ahead to chapter 21 and verse 8 you would see that there. It says Philip the evangelist. He was an evangelist he would doubt and he preached and he spoke the word.

Philip was described as some as being the forerunner of the Apostle Paul in that he took the Gospel to a Gentile to the Ethiopian Enoch and we're going to have a look now at that encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian Enoch.

So we pick up at the beginning of verse 26 and the first thing that we read there is an angel of the Lord speaking to this man Philip. And we read there in the scripture now the 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.

These were very precise instructions that Philip received from that angel and we see that Philip responded immediately. Now the road from Jerusalem to Gaza was roughly 60 miles long and thereafter after Gaza continued down through Egypt and into Africa where this Enoch came from.

[ 7 : 42 ] And we can assume we can assume also this was a relatively busy busy road going all the way from Jerusalem to Africa. It would have been used quite extensively as a trade route.

Caravans coming and going would have been on that road as well. But why did the Lord move Philip? Why did he move him on when he was so well used in some area?

Could he not have just sent the angel straight down that road to the Ethiopian Enoch and the angel could have convinced him and baptized him?

We might ask that question. Why did Philip out of a workers prospering and move him away? Why did he not just send the angel there? Well the answer is this, the Lord bestowed the office of ministry upon men and not upon angels.

The Lord makes use of the men he calls. He makes use of the men he calls and so he honors their position or calling and he blesses their work accordingly.

[ 8 : 46 ] He bestows upon them the preachers of the gospel, that ministry. And not only on the preachers of the gospel but on every believer. He bestows on them the ministry of sharing the gospel of the good news of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And the question that begs us are we sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to her friends, to her neighbour and to those around us.

And you know it's not the easiest thing to do. Some of them is very difficult to stand up and to speak to and to witness to someone. But you know what, when you do the Lord will help you and he will give you a word to share.

So Philip was called to this particular work and as we see he rose and went. He grew up and he went. He left a place full of blessing and he headed into a barren wilderness.

Not knowing what lay ahead of him. But you know that didn't deter him. Because if Philip had any misgivings or questions or even doubts as to what God had called him to, there's no record of it.

[ 9 : 53 ] He just simply went in faith. He just simply went in faith. He went on his way and we don't know how long Philip had been on the road. It would have been a while ago when we read of someone else entering the scene.

An Ethiopian, you know, one who was returning to his homeland. And you know there's a few things that we can maybe say about this man just to get to know him a little. And in the first instance we're told he had been a visitor to Jerusalem.

This man had come all the way from Africa right up along that road and he had gone to Jerusalem. So he was a long way from the soul of the Ethiopian which was a way down in the southern part of the Egypt into the Sudan.

And as we read, the purpose of his visit to Jerusalem was in fact to worship God. So we can assume by this man's commitment and his willingness to undertake such a long journey and the reason for it that he was a proselyte.

He was a convert to Judaism. He was a convert to Judaism. But the scholars rule out the possibility of a fact that he was in fact a Jew who had moved down to Ethiopia and had risen to opposition of power.

[ 11 : 08 ] So we know by that that he was a Gentile. He said he wasn't a Jew who had moved down there. So we can take it as that man was a Gentile.

And also been an Ethiopian, this man would most likely have been a black man. He would have been a colored man. My Bible dictionary tells me the name Ethiopia actually means burnt faces.

Burnt faces. And further news were also told that he was a court official of Candace, the Queen of the Ethiopians. He was in charge of all her treasure.

So he was a man of authority. He was a man of position and trust because he had charge of all the treasury of Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia.

He had been responsible for the distribution of funds. Whatever they were needed, whatever they required, this man would have been responsible to make sure that that funds reached whatever they were required.

[ 12 : 09 ] Now the term or the word yunoch is an English form of the Greek word, which means bedkeeper. A bedkeeper. And a yunoch was originally a person, a man obviously. He was in charge of the bed chamber of a harim or in a palace of a wealthy person.

And it was the practice in these regions at that time that this person, this bedkeeper, was emasculated. He was the brightest virility in order to ensure there would be no chance of involvement with any of his charges.

Now some of these yunochs, they were elevated to high positions. So they were elevated to positions of authority, positions of trust. Some even became confidential advisors to the royal masters or mistresses, as was the case with this man here.

Now since this man was travelling along in his chariot, we see that he was occupied by doing something, something amazing. He was sitting on his chariot and he was reading scripture.

He wasn't sitting on his chariot looking around him to see what was happening in the desert or to see how they were passing on the road, but this man was sitting in his chariot and he was reading the scripture.

[ 13 : 20 ] Now back in these days, the days of the yunoch, the scriptures would be somewhat different what we have. They didn't have the New Testament in these days, of course, and the scriptures would have been written out in parchment and they would have been rolled up as a scroll.

So this man would have obviously taken this scroll out and he would have laid it out and he would have began reading the scripture. Of course, like I said, it was the Old Testament scripture and the portion that he was reading was from the book of Isaiah and it's a portion that's well known to us today and indeed it's a portion that's much loved by us today because it's a portion that so graphically describes to us the suffering servant, the one of whom we now know as being our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It was written so many years prior to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and yet as I said it so accurately describes what the Lord Jesus Christ went through for each and every one of us.

This man was sitting there and he was engaged in this reading and as he was reading at the same time the Spirit of the Lord was speaking to Philip and it told Philip go over and join this chariot and Philip being ever open and being receptive to the Spirit, he hear and he obeys.

He hears and he obeys. He runs and he catches up with this chariot and you know it wouldn't have been too difficult because I read that the chariot that was used there at that time and at that day was most likely drawn by Oksin and Oksin would have just turned along at a date pace so Philip would have been able to run alongside it and to catch up with the chariot and as he came close to the chariot he heard this you know ring aloud and that was a practice in these days.

[ 15 : 15 ] They would open the straws and they would begin to read and they wouldn't sit like us reading a book but they would sit and they would read it out aloud. They would read out the script aloud and when Philip drew near he realised what this man was reading and he asked the question of the man.

He said do you understand what you are reading and he said do you? How can I unless someone guides me? He couldn't understand it. He needed someone to guide him and there the Lord had sent Philip that day to be there at that moment so he would be able to go and guide that man and open the word to him and what we see next we see the eunuch inviting Philip to come up and to sit with him.

Come and sit with me. Come and sit with me and of course Philip gladly accepted that invitation because by now I am quite sure that Philip would have realised that this was the very reason that he had been taken from Sumeria all the way down to that warden Gaza.

It was to witness to this high official and you know it's a great thing what that man did there. He invited Philip to come up into his chariot and to help him to understand the scripture.

This man was a high official but he didn't think himself above asking someone to help him to understand the scripture for all his authority and his position.

[ 16 : 49 ] He was neither afraid to admit to his lack of understanding nor was he above asking for help and you know that we too would do well to follow his example.

If we ever struggle with God's word and most of us do there are none of us who can understand everything written in God's word. There are some things that are a mystery to us so instead of us making note that we understand and struggling to grasp with it we shouldn't be above asking either a minister, an elder, a Christian who has been longer on the road than we are and seeking to be enlightened and you know that that person if you ask it and if they don't know they would ask someone else and they would find the answer for us.

So we shouldn't make out that we know everything about the scripture when we don't and we should have the grace and the humility to come and to ask someone, a fellow believer and learn from them.

And not only that but we should also take a leaf out of Philip's book and be like him and seek to help others if and when we are able in their understanding of scripture.

So as we're saying Philip invited his invitation to join him and then we're told that the actual place that the Unichor's Redeem was this like a sheep that was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent so he opens not his mouth.

[ 18 : 25 ] In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth and that's Isaiah 53 verses 7 and 8.

And you know how the Unichor had the New Testament scriptures as we have he would have been directed to the relevant passages there and he would have found the fulfillment of that prophecy but of course it wasn't so as I said it hadn't yet been written but he did have Philip.

The Lord had sent Philip in order to enlighten him. And then in Bershpua the Unichor addresses Philip and he asks, about whom I ask you to say this prophecy about himself or someone else?

You know he was curious as he was reading this and he perhaps felt that the prophet Isaiah wasn't actually talking about himself but someone else but he didn't know who it could be so now through Philip he had the opportunity to find out and you know Philip was only too happy to tell him and to share the good news.

Verse 35 tells us, then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with this scripture he told him the good news of Jesus.

[ 19 : 43 ] Philip would have told him you know you are on the right track seeking the Jewish God. You are on the right track reading the scripture and he would also explain to him how the Old Testament scriptures pointed ahead to the Lord Jesus Christ in so many ways.

He would have explained the sufferings of Jesus. He would have explained the significance of these words as a sheep before a cheerer, a silent and so on. You may even have recounted the trial before Pilate when Pilate asked Jesus as recorded for us in Mark 15, 4 and 5, have you no answer to make?

See how many charges they bring against you but Jesus made no further answer so that Pilate was amazed. Pilate was amazed that Jesus didn't answer but chose to say silent.

As a sheep before a cheerer is silent so was Jesus. He spoke not a word.

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. He was humiliated and where was the justice? Nowhere to be seen.

[ 20 : 59 ] Nowhere to be seen. His life was taken up from the earth and in the cruelest possible fashion. But why? But why? I'll tell you why.

For me and for you. That's why Jesus suffered and died there on Calvary's cross. He went through that suffering so sinners could be saved so we could be forgiven originally. But do you know what?

We must earnestly seek Him. We must not just sit back and say well if I'm going to be saved I'll be saved. We have a part to play.

We must earnestly seek Him. Do you know what it says in Matthew 7? That's easy to remember. Matthew 7, 7.

Ask and it shall be given to you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will be opened unto you.

[ 22 : 08 ] These are the words of Jesus. He gives us a directive. So are we asking? Are we seeking?

Are we knocking? Be assured if we are He will respond. He will respond.

Jesus man has noticed as we noted having been to Jerusalem to worship as presumably a convert to Judaism.

He would have worshipped with the Jews and he would have no doubt at some time or other heard of Jesus but in the wrong light. He would have heard of Him in the wrong light.

The Jews would have told him he was an impostor. They would have told him he's a blasphemer. He's a Sabbath breaker. He's wrong in this. He's wrong in that. And they would have said that his disciples stole his body in order to make people think that he had risen from the dead.

[ 23 : 12 ] And he would have the soldiers not paid great money to tell that lie. And that lie has done so much damage from that day even until now.

And he wouldn't have heard anything but the truth about Jesus. And you know the sad truth is we don't have to go far in this world today to find people who will do the same thing.

They will ridicule the truth of the gospel. They will ridicule our Lord Jesus Christ. They will do anything they can to turn people away from faith.

Would that they would realize the peril that they are in and that one day they will have to answer for it. And we pray that before that day they would turn away from the error of their ways.

That the Lord would speak to them and show them how wrong they are. Show them the truth of Jesus Christ, the risen Savior of mankind before it's too late.

[ 24 : 21 ] So here on the road to Gaza this eunuch was given the opportunity to hear the true gospel preach to him by one who was filled with the Holy Spirit and with understanding and one who was being mightily used by the Lord at that time.

And you know what the Spirit spoke through Philip's preaching and he applied the word to the eunuch's heart. Now we don't know how long Philip spoke for, we don't know how many questions he was asked during that journey but we do know that he spoke with him for quite a while and we do know that that as well had the desired effect.

The eunuch's heart was warmed up and his mind was opened and he accepted the truth. His heart was warmed towards the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, his mind was opened and he accepted the truth.

He had come from darkness into light, he was now a new creature in Christ. And what do you see? He immediately wants to make a profession of his faith.

Verse 36 says, he said to Philip, See here is water. What prevents me from being baptized?

[ 25 : 45 ] You know Philip would have explained to him about believers baptism. He would have explained what happened when someone came to faith in Christ. He would have told him as much as he possibly could about the way or about the believers.

And this man when he heard of it baptism, that he was wanting to partake of it immediately. This man didn't feel in any way that he wasn't good enough to make a profession.

He didn't feel he had to wait a few years until he grew in grace and knowledge before he made a profession. This man didn't feel in any way unworthy of making a profession.

This man was saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and he wanted there and then to make that procession of professional faith.

So the carriage was commanded to stand still and both Philip and the eunuch went down to the water and there he was baptized. He was baptized into the faith.

[ 26 : 54 ] A new believer baptized into the faith and you know what a witness that would have been there on that occasion. Because the eunuch would not have been travelling alone.

Remember he was a high ranking official, a representative of Queen Candace and he would have had a caravan with him. He would have had loads of people. He would have all sorts of servants.

He would have had a caravan of people with all the stuff that they would need to carry for such a long journey. And when he was being baptized there in that water by the side of the road, his servants and the earth travelling with him would have been looking on and had been watching and they would have been learning.

And you know that there would have been a change coming over that man as he was baptized and as he professed faith. He was a new creature in Christ.

He had a new heart. They had seen the baptism, they knew that their master had now become a follower on the Lord Jesus and then they would have been wandering themselves. And you know that still happens to this day.

[ 28 : 01 ] You may be get someone close to you or someone is converted. Then their neighbours will see a great change in them and then they begin to wonder. Some of them might even say it and we hear it quite often.

Oh how come him and not me? How come him and not me? And that's what happens when you see someone called faith. People take notice and people see a change.

And this man as he travelled on from that moment on I'm quite sure he would have been witnessing to his servants. He would have been witnessing to him. He would have been rejoicing.

He would have been so happy in his new found faith and they would have been witness to by their master. I'm pretty certain of that. And then something amazing happens in the next verse.

We see Philip was taken. And you know that shouldn't surprise us because God is almighty and nothing but nothing is impossible with him.

[ 28 : 59 ] We might read that the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away and the Unuch did not see him again. So you say oh how could that happen? How could that happen?

Because God is God. That is God who is in charge of the universe. God is the God who created all things. God is the God who can do all things.

And the Scripture says the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away and the Unuch did not see him again. We have to accept that in faith. We have to accept that that's what's happened because it's recorded for us in Scripture.

And what do we see about the Unuch? Philip was taken away, yes. But he went on his way rejoicing. He went on his way rejoicing.

That was just an incredible incident there that happened at the end. And William MacDonald in his Believer's Bible commentary comments on Philip's miraculous removal as follows.

[ 29 : 59 ] He said this suggests more than mere guidance to another location. More than guidance. After it speaks of miraculous and sudden removal.

Philip was there one minute. Then he was gone. His purpose was that the Unuch would not have become occupied with the human instrument of his conversion, but with the Lord himself.

The Unuch went on his way rejoicing. He said there is a joy that comes from obedience to the Lord that surpasses all other pleasurable emotions.

Read that again. There is a joy that comes from obedience to the Lord that surpasses all other pleasurable emotions.

The best thing that can happen to a man, woman, boy, or girl. The thing that gives most joy, salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 31 : 10 ] So Philip was gone. He was called to another work as we see in the closing verse there. The Unuch continued his journey a different man from the one who started.

Soon to return home and doubtless to witness there to the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and who knows what his witness and testimony would have achieved in his homeland.

Even in the highest courts of power in his homeland, only eternity will reveal that to us. And this is the last mention of the Unuch and scripture.

We see or hear no more of him. But what an erty leaves us on. He went on his way rejoicing.

He had gone to Israel to worship God. Now he returned home rejoicing with the gospel of Jesus Christ. A great change had taken place in his heart and soul.

[ 32 : 09 ] He would no longer return to Jerusalem for the same reason that he had for this trip. He wouldn't go back to Jerusalem to worship God as a Jew.

He would now worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. He would worship God now in spirit and in truth from a joyful heart.

And also in this story because of Philip's willingness to be used of God, the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ was now going all the way down into the continent of Africa.



Isn't God amazing? He is amazing. He is amazing. So what about you here tonight? What about me? Are we rejoicing in the Lord?

Do we delight in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do we know the way of salvation? And are we willing to tell others of it and of what Jesus has done for us?

[ 33 : 12 ] I hope we are. I hope we all are from the youngest to the oldest. But if not, why not? If not, why not?

In the light of what Jesus has done for us, He gave His all and the least we can do is testify to others of what He's done for us.

Only you can answer that. Only you can answer if you share in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's many ways to share it. There's many ways to share the gospel.

You can speak to someone. You can testify to someone. Even through your silent witness, people can see Christ in you. How often do we hear someone make the comment, you might be the only Bible someone will read.

So if you're born again by God's grace, the light of the Lord shine through you. This account that we looked at tonight, it shows us the importance of the obedience to God's call.

[ 34 : 20 ] The importance of sharing the gospel. But it also shows us the lengths of which God goes to in order to bring even one sinner to faith.

Even one sinner to faith. He took Philip away from the many into the wilderness in order to save that one person.

Each and every one of us is precious to the Lord. Each and every one of us is precious to the Lord.

And are we not told in Luke 15 and 10, just so I tell you there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Each and every individual person is precious to God and he wants none to be lost. He wants none to be lost. And this account further points to the fact that salvation is for all.

[ 35 : 20 ] Regardless of race, color, creed, position, language, doesn't matter.

Everyone is precious to God. Every single one. And unless you think the gospel is not for you, just let me remind you here tonight what the scripture says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

All, no exceptions, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And all of us need saving. But praise his name.

For there's a portion of scripture that we all know. I assume we all know. And it tells us, for God so loved the world, that he gave his only son.

That whosoever, whosoever, hold on to that word, whosoever believes in him, should not perish but have eternal life.

[ 36 : 32 ] What a verse. What a message. What a God. And I pray that everyone present here tonight, even those watching online, would either know him or come to know him.

And that each one of us would go on our way through life's journey rejoicing in our salvation. Amen.