

Sermon Transcript from 20th July 2025 – Spirit Filled Christian

Reference: Acts 8:26-40 (Philip and the Ethiopian)

Speaker – Geoff Baines

Sermon TLDR

Geoff draws a parallel between **the biblical account of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch** and modern-day Christian outreach, emphasising the importance of **obedience to God's sometimes illogical directives**. They highlight how Philip was divinely led from a thriving ministry to a desert road to encounter one individual, demonstrating that God values and uses **one-on-one interactions for significant impact**. The narrative of the eunuch, who was seeking understanding but needed guidance, serves to illustrate the Christian's role: to **urgently and simply guide others to the truth of Jesus** from scripture, rather than engaging in complex debates or judgment. The speaker concludes by challenging listeners to be willing to **be sent by God, even to a single person**, as this singular connection could have far-reaching, even national, consequences.

Link to the Start of the Sermon (on YouTube)

<https://youtu.be/pnBmKMpfAL4?t=3544>

Sermon Transcript

It's really great to be back here and I'd like to invite you all to if you haven't already open your Bibles or spark up your device however it is you read the Bible or if you have it memorized feel free to consult that as well.

So we've been going on a bit of a countrywide tour. Last week we were in Yorkshire. It's a lot colder up there and I think we brought the bad weather down with us because it rained up there too and it was really sunny until we got here apparently and now it's raining here as well. Before that we visited a church in Spain [where] we went to Spain for a few weeks before we were here to visit my mother and father-in-law. And this is a picture of my mother and father-in-law. That's this was actually just before we left. You can see the airport in the background.

So I have to say although you know famously there are lots of jokes about men not getting on with their mother-in-law, I really admire my mother and my father-in-law. Lazero, Lazarus is on the left. That's my father-in-law and Lloyd just one in. And up until 25 years ago, they used to pastor two or three different churches in Guatemala.

And as I said earlier, non-Catholic Christianity was really growing at that time. Every week they had new families in their church, and my mother-in-law complains about that time because my father-in-law was more out of the church visiting people out of the house rather visiting people than he was in the house. Then they together with their children including my wife Cesia received a calling from God to plant a church in Spain.

Fast forward to now 25 years later, they're pastoring a church in a small town in Spain [] which meets in a function room in the basement of a restaurant and has an average attendance of 12 people. [The town] has a population of about 80,000 people. So, there's a lot of people there, but no one's coming to that

church. And it's not just their church. It's nothing personal to them. They are nice people, I promise. The other church in [the town] only has about 20 people as well.

Well, they went from a place that was spiritually thriving, growing every week, huge congregations, and went to Spain where they started with just their family. And after 20 years, they've only managed to get a dozen or so people.

So, let's look at what happened to Phillip, if we look a little bit, I don't want to get too boring or too grammatical, but where is Philip before he goes to this desert road? What is he doing in that place?

If you have a good memory, I think it was Tony who preached last week. Who can tell me what where was Philip before this story starts? Samaria. Fantastic. Yeah. Well done, Wendell. He was in Samaria.

It starts with the word and this passage, "and the angel of the Lord said to Philip". So if there's an "and" [at the beginning of a sentence] that means there's something before he was in Samaria. Verses 6 to 8 of Acts 8 say that crowds came to see Philip to pay attention to what he said that there was great joy because the lame could walk because people were healed.

Verse 12 says that men and women were baptized in numbers because they heard the good news. People are converting on mass to Christianity.

And then an angel of the Lord appears and says to Philip, "Arise and go." This isn't Philip's idea. If you were if you were to ask Philip at the time, if you could travel back in time somehow, he'd probably say, "My plate's pretty full here. I've got enough to do. People are being converted. People are hearing the good news."

But God commands Philip to go from this spiritually fruitful place to a literal desert. God's will isn't always logical from our perspective.

Are we willing to obey God's will even when the destination looks a bit like a desert?

But Philip didn't argue he didn't hesitate so what does Philip go do he just goes his reaction was simple obedience he arose and he went and on the way, he meets someone he meets an Ethiopian eunuch. And what can we learn about this eunuch? Well, the fact that he was a eunuch shouldn't pass us by. It gives us further proof that he's important. If he is a eunuch, it means that he was allowed to be close to the queen. That's why he was made a eunuch.

It says that he'd gone to Jerusalem to worship. So, he knew the scriptures. He knew the Old Testament. He knew that Jerusalem was the place where you go to worship the God of Israel. We also know that he's quite well off and that he's quite an intelligent man. But as we will see, even though he was intelligent, he hadn't fully grasped the message, what the prophet was trying to say.

He's reading the book of Isaiah. He's actively looking for God. He's trying to figure out who the God is in this passage. As I mentioned, I teach Isaiah sometimes. It's very doubtful that he had the whole book of Isaiah. We have scrolls that have the whole book of Isaiah on them, and they're about 9m long. So, he didn't have the whole book of Isaiah. He probably had a couple of chapters there that he was reading through.

And he was coming back from Jerusalem, sitting in his chariots. He read Isaiah the prophet. This man who it says was Ethiopian. He's not from a Jewish nation was looking for God. He's not just religious. It's not that he went did his Sunday duty and then came back. He's actually reading the Bible.

And to be honest, that's better than a lot of us sometimes, isn't it? But there we go. He doesn't understand what he's reading. Romans 10:17 teaches us faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word about Christ and we believe that.

But sometimes there are tricky passages in the Bible. Sometimes we need someone to come alongside us and to say, "Do you want a hand with this one?"

With technology that's even better. Go to YouTube and you can say, "What does this mean?" Or you can Google it or you can if you're old fashioned like me, go to a library and get a Bible commentary out, but I'm quite a dinosaur in that.

We need trusted people who have studied the word of God and who can spend time explaining it to us. And maybe I'm going a bit too far, but that's where all of us come in. If we've maybe we haven't even grown up in church, but if we've heard a few messages about God, if we read our Bible, if we're diligent in reading a bit around the passage, all of us can explain Bible passages to our friends, to our family, to our neighbours. We have the tools.

So, the spirit says to Philip, "Go near. Go to that chariot. Stay near it." And what's Philip's reaction? Is it give me a couple of minutes, I'll just wait, see if someone invites me. Or is it, oh, I'll wait for them to get a little bit closer. Philip runs. I really like the image of this. A lot of the time when we think of um the apostles or the characters in the Bible, we imagine an older gentleman who couldn't possibly run. We imagine someone who's a way too dignified for that. May maybe they do a brisk walk but run. No, look at this. Philip says the spirit says to Philip, "Go." Philip runs. That's urgency. That's obedience.

Imagine if one day uh you sense God prompting you to talk to someone. What do you think your reaction might be? Would you ignore it? I mean, probably we wouldn't ignore it because, you know, this is God after all. We can't exactly ignore God. Maybe we'd try and negotiate with God. Maybe we'd say something like, "When I finish my coffee, I'll go and talk to that person." Or maybe if we're on the bus, well, if we get off at the same stop, then I'll talk to them. If they're still here in 5 minutes, I'll go and strike up a conversation. Or possibly we'd wait for an invitation. Maybe if we sit there looking at that person long enough, they'd say, "Have you got something to say?"

Philip here shows us what to do. We can't wait for an invitation. We can't wait for 5 minutes or finish our coffee. Go put the coffee in a mug to go and go and talk to them. and he hears the eunuch reading. He's paying attention to what's going on. Back in those days, even the most intelligent people would still read what they were had in front of them out loud.

Philip hears what's going on. Here's what the eunuch is reading and says to him, "Do you understand what you're reading?" And the eunuch replies, "I think he's probably been struggling this for a with this for a while. struggling to figure it out. He replies a bit frustratedly and says, "How can I understand it except that someone can guide me unless someone can explain it to me?"

So he says to Philip, "Come and sit with me." Just the fact that this unit can read tells us a lot. Back in those days, only one or two percent of the population would actually be able to read what's in front of them. The rest of the population would just listen to other people reading the word of God to them.

So this eunuch is obviously studied. The he the fact that he's in charge of the queen's treasury shows us that he's someone intelligent as well and also shows us that he's someone who's well off. The fact that he owns a scroll that has the word of Isaiah on it means that he's quite a rich person.

But his responses is it's interesting. Of course I don't understand what's going on here. I need someone to help me. He's hungry to find out more. He wants to understand, but he needs someone to help him along the way. This is one of the big things that we get wrong quite a lot. I think as Christians nowadays, our main role isn't to judge other people or condemn other people, tell them where they're getting their lives wrong. or debate the finer little points of scripture.

Our main role should be to follow Philip in this example to guide others to understand the truth about Christ to guide not to shout not to condemn or judge guide. And we don't need a degree. We don't need qualifications to do this. We just need a willing heart. and a listening ear.

So the eunuch reads to Philip. This is the scripture that I've been reading. This is what I'm struggling with. He was led like a sheep to the slaughter and as a lamb before it sheers is silent. He did not open his mouth. In his humiliation, he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.

The eunuch here is reading from Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 53:1-10 is uh one of the songs. It's called the songs of the suffering servant. Try saying that quickly.

It's some prophecy for what Jesus was going to go through. So, what we have here is um I like to call them not coincidences but "God-incidences". Philip goes close to this eunuch and suddenly the eunuch happens to be reading about Jesus. The eunuch just doesn't know he's reading about Jesus yet. He's been reading this text from the point of view of someone who understands Judaism, but he can't figure out its meaning because he's missing the main piece of the puzzle in the middle, the Jesus-shaped piece of the puzzle.

So, the eunuch asks the golden question to Philip in verse 34. Who is this about?

Actually, this is a really big question. It's one that Bible scholars are still debating today.

Obviously, from a, you know, post Jesus perspective, we can say yes, this is about Jesus, definitely. But who was the prophet talking about at the time? The two big theories are that Isaiah 53 was either about Isaiah himself or about someone in Isaiah's community.

And then later on we understand it to be about Jesus. So, the eunuch had obviously studied all of these different perspectives. The eunuch's basically an academic of the time. The eunuch is asking Philip which of these big theories do you follow?

Philip could have responded with some old testament scholarship.

He could have sat down and said well Rabbi so and so says this and Rabbi so and so says that.

He could have gone in to a really academic debate.

But Philip doesn't sweat the small stuff. He doesn't get tempted to go down that route. He focuses on the main thing. He brings it back to Jesus.

In verse 35, it says to us, Philip began with that very passage and told him the good news about Jesus. All scripture, even the long boring lists of names in the Old Testament, as I tell my students, can point to God and points to his redeeming plan through Jesus.

This passage was a really convenient one for Philip because it was a prophecy that pointed to Jesus, but Philip used it as a launching pad to preach the whole story. And what was the result? The eunuch believed. He received the truth and is ready to obey. And just like Philip, he has urgency. He doesn't wait.

There's Yeah, it's fantastic. As they travelled along the road, verse 36, he says to Philip, "Look, here's some water. Why can't I be baptised?" He doesn't wait for a for a special baptism.

Paul as they're going along the road, he says, "Look, there's a pond here. Let's do this." And it's not, he doesn't say, "Please, may I?" or "Can I?" But, "What's stopping me? Let's do it."

This isn't a question from someone who's a little bit dubious or some or someone who just doesn't know what's going on. This is someone who has heard and fully believes.

In some versions, um they add verse 37 in some versions of the Bible. Nowadays there isn't. If you want to know why, we can chat about that at the Toby Calvary [at lunch], but it's a good addition. Philip asks him, "If you believe with all your heart, you may be baptized." And the eunuch responds, I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God. The eunuch had already got all of the intellectual understanding. We can see that he understood the academic way side of things.

He could comprehend what was going on, but there wasn't that heart decision from him.

Now, in verse 37, he believes with all his heart. So, of course, the eunuch is baptised. And how is he baptised? Well, he's baptised the proper way. It's not a sprinkling, it's a dunking. They go into the water and the eunuch is baptised.

And the next part isn't so normal.

As soon as the baptism is over, Philip is zapped away and the eunuch saw him no more. And the eunuch rejoices, not because Philip's gone, *[omitted]* it's because Philip's no longer important.

Philip was never anything more than a guide to the eunuch.

Now that Philip has taken him to the destination, which was Christ, the eunuch doesn't need Philip anymore. And for Philip, well, the work doesn't stop. He appeared somewhere else far away.

And what does the Bible tell us? He appears somewhere else and continued preaching the gospel in all the towns. Doesn't take a break, does he? This guy, I'd need to have a sit down for a bit after that. But no, he went he went for one person down to the desert, but there are still many more to reach.

When we went up to Yorkshire, we drove up, but then we went on a couple of trains while we were there. And while we were there, it was a like touristy train, so you know, you just went along to the end of the road to the end of the, I was going to say road tracks and then you came back. Sophia loved it. She actually sat still, which was a miracle. But when we got to the end, it was this tiny little station, Low Moor or something, something to do with the moors. But it was a tiny little station. And there was just one person stood there that got on. And I thought, what a waste of time. We're just going for that one person. Waste of time, waste of fuel. *[omitted]*. All the pollution we were doing just for that one person.

But what if when we went for that one person, they had something that could change a nation?

A lot of biblical Historians believe that this Ethiopian eunuch took the message that he received from Philip about Jesus and took Christianity down into that end of Africa. Because of one person, the destiny of a whole nation was changed.

We should never underestimate the value of that one person that we might talk to because God definitely doesn't.

So, what can we take away from this? God still speaks. Are we listening?

He directed Philip to go to the Ethiopian eunuch and he can direct us today as long as we're listening. We need to obey even if we don't think it makes sense.

Sometimes we may feel God pushing us to do something and we might think that's not a great idea and it might not seem like a good idea at the time.

But God often leads us to places where miracles can happen.

People are hungry for the message. Are we willing to guide them? Not waiting for people to come through the door but going out to people and guiding. Not condemning, not judging, but guiding. Keep it about Jesus.

We're not here to debate the finer points with people. If we get into arguments, it's not going to convince anyone. Guide and be patient and talk about Jesus.

And don't delay obeying.

The example of the eunuch. The eunuch believed, straight away, was baptised, straight away was rejoicing. Be urgent with what we're doing.

So, this week, um, I'd like to challenge you. It's a big challenge.

So I'm sorry. I'm not going to make you do too much homework, but just pray this prayer from time to time.

[Geoff closes with a prayer]

Lord, here I am.

Send me.

It's challenging because we don't know where God's going to send us to or who God's going to send us to talk to.

It might be a co-worker or a neighbour or someone at a coffee shop.

Or God forbid it, he might send us to talk to someone on the tube.

But God's still sending his people.

Let's run to them and be urgent.

Amen.