

The Faith That DOES Save

Scripture: Acts 8:25-40

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Take your bible, if you will please, and turn to the eighth chapter of Acts beginning about verse 25. And we're talking about Philip and his encounter with an Ethiopian eunuch. We've entitled the message "The Faith That Does Save". Whenever the bible has narrative scripture, whenever it is as opposed to theology in Romans, narrative and historical we want to look into the history of it and the narrative of it and see where the principles are that can become spiritual principles. And so we take a narrative passage like this and try to milk it dry of all the potential spiritual principles that are in it. And I might say that I have found so many here that I have long ago this week given up on the possibility of contributing all of them to one message which I know makes your heart glad. But anyway, that's how it is.

We'll endeavor to pick some of them and you see what the Spirit of God teaches you. You know, you don't want to become so bottle-fed that you can't allow the Spirit of God to teach you even as we go through this passage. Just don't get off on such a tangent that you don't listen. We don't allow that. Acts chapter 8 verse 25 to 40 gives us the next step in the movement of the church. You'll remember that the church was formed on the day of Pentecost as God called out a group of men and women to form a body of believers that could carry the message of Jesus Christ to the world. Jesus gave orders to that early church that it should begin in Jerusalem then it should spread and would spread to Samaria and Judea and you'll remember that it spread as a result of persecution. The church fell under persecution led by the apostle Paul who at this time wasn't Paul but Saul persecuting the Christians. It scattered them, they bore the gospel to Judea and Samaria. The early part of chapter 8 we remember that Philip had begun to preach with other believers all over Samaria. Verse 4 of chapter 8 says, "They went scattered abroad everywhere preaching the Word". And the next verse says, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them". Then, at that point Judea had been really exposed to the gospel and so had Samaria. Philip continued to preach. Many were saved. Miracles were done. The gospel had taken step two in the phases that Jesus laid out in Acts 1 verse 8.

Step three, then, was to go to the uttermost part of the earth. And that we see initially in our verses beginning at verse 25. As Philip is used to bring the gospel to the first Gentile and the church reaches out.

Now backing up just by way of review, last time we learned also that whenever the gospel is preached you can always calculate there will be two results. There will always be the true and the false, you see. You can just count on it. That's always how it's going to be, the wheat and the tares, the faithful and the phony all the way down the line. The good soil and the poor soil. And so we saw that as Philip preached in Samaria he came across some stony ground, he came across some tares one by name of Simon. Simon was a sorcerer or a magician. We saw last time that Simon had the faith that does not save. It says in verse 13 of chapter 8, he believed and he was baptized and he continued with Philip and it all sounds good. But it wasn't saving faith and Peter exposed him right to the face in verse 21 he said, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee". Now some people might assume that Simon was just a wandering Christian. He is not a wandering Christian he cannot be for no Christian no time needs to plead forgiveness. That's a set fact. That's a positional truth taken care of at the moment of salvation. The conditional forgiveness offered in verse 22 is proof positive that this man was never a believer.

And so Peter exposes him and he says in 23, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness (or the bile of bitterness) and in the bond of iniquity". You belong to sin. And he was exposed on the spot. Now Peter had not only come up there to expose people like Simon which he did so aptly but Peter had also come from Jerusalem when Jerusalem Christians heard that Philip was seeing these great results in Samaria. They wanted to send a couple of the apostles Peter and John namely, to check the work out to help Philip and also to confer the Holy Spirit, so there would be a tie-in between the Samaritan church and the Jerusalem church in terms of the Holy Spirit, so there would be one body. So they came and they did that and we went into it last time and now it was time for them to return to Jerusalem, I love this, verse 25 just kind of ends off this little encounter with Simon as Peter and John go back, it says: "And they when they had testified and preached the Word of the Lord returned to Jerusalem and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans". The fantastic thing about these early Christians is that there is constantly this thing connected with them. They were always preaching. They went everywhere preaching. Peter preached and when he was done preaching he went preaching. He preached when he was there, he preached when he went somewhere else. They were just like a whole lot of little preaching machines set loose everywhere. Wherever you stuck them you got a sermon which is great. It was never of question of what do I do it was only a question of where do I do it. They always knew what to do. The Spirit of God had filled them and when you're filled with the Spirit you speak the Word with what?

Boldness, Acts 4:31 and that's what they kept doing no matter where you put them they did it. And so Peter and John after they had done what they came to do, preached and then they took off and preached some more to the village of the Samaritans. And we can believe that great things happened as they went. And so Samaria received the gospel.

And now it's time for another step, the step to the uttermost part of the earth and it occurs as Philip meets a man from Africa, an Ethiopian eunuch. Now in this encounter with the Ethiopian we see some great things.

But before we get into it let me just draw a thought out that hit me as I looked at this. You know, for a long time the plan of God has obviously been to reach the world with the saving truth all the way through the Old Testament and God always designed at the beginning in the Old Testament for all of this communication to come through Israel. Remember Israel was not a reservoir Israel was a channel. God didn't expect to dump everything on Israel and then just sort of pet them and stroke them and say - You're My favorite everybody else can just, you know, hide somewhere it's really you that I'm enjoying. That wasn't it at all, but a lot of people think that's how God was related to Israel. He only saw Israel as a vehicle to reach the world but Israel kept up clogging up the channel. Israel never really did its job. You can imagine what must have gone on in heaven this day when finally the fresh channel was cut known as the church and they finally stepped out and reached the first Gentile. I don't know what went on in heaven but I'm sure something broke loose. And in the Old Testament Israel was supposed to reach the Gentiles but they got trapped on two extremes. The one was a real separatistic nationalism where they didn't want Gentiles horning in on their God. They liked the fact that God was their God and they weren't too sure they wanted any Gentiles having anything to do with Him at all. That's a very common thing today, incidentally, one of the leaders of Judaism recently said that there are 14 million Jews in the world and we don't want anymore. We are not about to proselytize and we're really angry with Christians for doing the thing that we don't do. They don't want anymore. They didn't want any more then for the most part. Remember God said to Jonah, I want you to go and preach to the Ninevites, they were Gentiles and Jonah didn't want to do it in fact he got on a ship and went the wrong direction and you know the story he took a short trip on a long fish and finally wound up being vomited up. Somebody said, "Anything as nauseating as Jonah would cause a fish to vomit. Anyway, he vomited Jonah up on the shore and finally he got the message and went to Nineveh. He preached and the whole city repented and Jonah went out on the side of the city and said Kill me, God, if there's anything I can't stand its Gentile belief. Now that's how up-tight they were about opening up the message of God to the Gentiles. But you have the other extreme; if it wasn't that separatistic nationalism then it was such a mixture that they corrupted their own faith. They then brought Baal in and they all started worshipping Baal. They couldn't seem to find the happy medium being there with the message without getting corrupted by the people they were trying to reach. So it was either shut your mouth or get lost in organism. There wasn't any happy medium. And so it must have been a glorious day in heaven when finally dear old Philip went down there where the Spirit told him to go and reached that first Gentile and Eusebius the historian says, "This man, this Ethiopian, according to the tradition of the Abyssinian church became the founder of the church of Jesus Christ in Africa. And what seemed like an insignificant little move opened up and opened up a dimension of the church and the gospel of Jesus Christ to the continent of Africa in the form of the Abyssinian church, the historic church of Africa. And so it was a great experience and it must have been a great

day in heaven when it all came to pass. God had so long desired the gospel to go to the Gentiles.

Now we see with this man the faith that saves. This is one of those messages that just kind of leaps off the page at you with spiritual principles that apply in so many different cases. But there are three basic things that I want you to see under this concept of the faith that saves.

Number-one, the faith that saves must have the proper preparation. Two-the proper presentation and three, then will come the proper personal response. If the preparation is right the presentation is right you get the right response. Now first of all let's look at the preparation. If it is to be real saving faith, I mean, if a person puts his faith in Jesus Christ and God and all of this is to really be legitimate, if it's a real new birth, if it's real salvation, if it really happens the preparation has to be right. Let's look at verse 26. "And an angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip saying, Arise and go toward the south", now go down to verse 29, "Then the Spirit said unto Philip Go near and join thyself to this chariot". Now just pulling those two thoughts out of there we see the first factor in the proper preparation, the sovereign work of whom? Of the Holy Spirit. You see, salvation begins with the Spirit of God. Salvation is God's work it is not man's work. The initiative is in the grace of God, it is in God's will. Nobody deserves salvation. Nobody earns it. Nobody of his own accord finds it or discovers it. God dispenses it according to His grace and sovereign will in the framework of grace. In I Cor. 2:14 we read a familiar verse, "But the natural man", now we mean man in his natural sinfulness, man apart from God, man in rebellion, man dead in sin, man without spiritual capacity. Just man in his naturalness. "Receive not the things of the Spirit of God they are foolishness unto him." They just don't make sense at all. Remember over in I Cor. chapter 1 the apostle Paul says that when you try to preach Christ crucified to the Gentiles it's foolishness and to the Jew it's a stumbling block of foolishness. And so the natural man in his own naturalness cannot understand God. It's all foolish. "Neither can he know because these things are spiritually discerned." And he is spiritually dead. So to begin with man cannot approach God because of his own naturalness he is incapacitated. II Cor. 4 adds a second which is a double blindness. II Cor. 4:3, "If our gospel be hidden it is hidden to them that are lost in whom the God of this age", who's that? Satan. "Has blinded the minds of them who believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them." So you see they're blinded by their naturalness and they're blinded by Satan himself. So men exist in double blindness They couldn't see salvation at all because they're incapacitated therefore the initiation of salvation is not the work of man it's the work of the Spirit of God who breaks through the barriers. You see, in John 14 these same truths as Jesus says to His disciples, When I go away I'm going to send a comforter unto you, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive. T can't see Him neither do they know Him. You see, the whole thing of salvation is locked out of the naturalness of man. Now keep this in mind, one of the most important things that you need to remember in terms of the ministry of the Spirit of God and salvation is this, - All that the Spirit is and all that the Spirit does is wholly outside the observation of the unsaved. Have you got that? All that the Spirit says and does is outside the observation of the unsaved in their naturalness. And with such limitations it is not only unreasonable but it is obviously unscriptural to suppose that some individual unaided by the divine initiation of the Holy Spirit could ever come to

Christ on the basis of saving faith. Couldn't be done. In Ephesians 2:1 it says, man is dead in sin. Dead men don't respond to anything. John 6:44 Jesus simply said this, "No man cometh unto Me unless the Father", what? "Draw him." You see, it must be God's initiating act to break the barrier that is put there by naturalness and Satan himself. The Holy Spirit can move in and when the Holy Spirit shatters the barrier then all that was mystery becomes light. And that's the glorious work of the Spirit.

Now the Spirit begins to work in this case with the Ethiopian by just getting Philip going the right direction. It doesn't say anything about what the Spirit has already done in the heart of the Ethiopian but He's done His work there too. But now He's working on Philip and this just gives us a general view of the fact that salvation is really initiated in the work of the Spirit. The orders are very specific too. It's kind of interesting it's almost like Elijah and Elisha, verse 26 let's look at it. "And an angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip", now some say the term angel which can also be translated messenger means really the Holy Spirit although it's not used as such other places it's probably best to think of it just as an angel sent by the Spirit of God, but anyway, "The angel of the Lord spoke unto Phil the Spirit of God moves in and speaks. We find also down in verse 29 that the Spirit of God speaks again. But the Spirit anyway says, "Arise and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza which is desert", or which is a desert road, desert area. Now Gaza was a city of the Philistines. It had been originally built as a fortress. And right through the middle of old Gaza ran the road that ran from Jerusalem to Egypt Gaza was approximately 50 miles southwest of Jerusalem and the road went through Bethlehem, Hebron and through Gaza and into Egypt. So it was a very much traveled road. And there were other roads going east that intersected it. So it was a very important road. Gaza about 36 B.C. had been destroyed totally and a new city had been built some west toward the sea but the old road still ran through the ruins of Gaza. And so the Spirit of God says to Philip, Now you go down to this old fortress in that old area down there, the desert road I have something I want you to do. And it's interesting that He doesn't even tell him, He just says, Arise and go toward the south the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza which is desert. He told him where to go, He didn't tell him what to do but I told you earlier why. They knew what to do. Right? They always did the same thing. They got up in the morning and started preaching. So He didn't need to say Go and preach, Philip He just said, Go, Philip, you know what to do when you get there just do what you always do. It's amazing how many times Christians need to be reminded to what we're supposed to do. Verse 29, have you ever, let me, before I say that, have you ever come away from a conversation saying, Boy, I should of witnessed to that person? It's an afterthought which is kind of a nice way of saying, - Ah, I think I might have forgotten - when you know in your heart you didn't forget at all. You know yourself better than that you really didn't have the boldness to do it, I mean, that's how I am. Let's be honest. Anyway, he knew what to do he didn't have to be told. Verse 29

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot". Now I don't know how many chariots went by but God pointed out this chariot and said, That's the one, Philip, go join it. Now watch, you'll see that God uses human instruments but we only participate He initiates.

God had designed the conversion of this unit as God designs the conversion of every man who is ever saved. And so the salvation of one sinner is worthy of the attention of God. And when a sinner is converted, any sinner any time it is because of a direct purpose, a dire plan and a direct strategy in the mind of God. It is no accident. God is not sitting up in heaven saying, I hope those folks come to salvation, I hope they get saved. God is doing it. So the faith that does save, then, begin with the right preparation and that begins with the sovereign work of the Spirit. The Spirit does His work. He sets everything in motion so you have the sovereign work of the Spirit.

Number two in preparation the submissive will of Philip. The Spirit does the work but He needs a tool. I like that, don't you? He initiates we participate. I was in Rome and I'm a lover of art believe it or not and I love sculpture, good sculpture. And I went, of course, from one fountain to the next, you know, to see the great works of Raphael and Michelangelo and Bernini and others in Italy and I'll never forget, we went into the church, my wife and I and those that were with us to see Michelangelo's great Moses the one that somebody took a hammer to recently. And we went up to this great statue and it's just breathtaking to imagine the creativity and the genius of a man who could make Moses look like he's about to stand up and you just marvel at it. And then I begin to think and I thought continually, he probably created that masterpiece with a little wooden mallet and some funny looking little pieces of metal. Some really inconsequential tool. And you know, I could take the same tools that Michelangelo used and make a mess but he made a masterpiece. You see.

You're a tool, you're a tool and that's all you are. Don't ever confuse yourself with the artist. The Spirit is the artist. He's the craftsman. You're only the tool but you are a tool. It's nice to be a tool, isn't it? And so we participate and so you've got to have a willing Philip. Watch this, and he was really willing, the Spirit always uses human instruments, always. But there's a qualification to be used and that's holiness. We find that in II Timothy 2:20 and if you really want to be used listen to this. In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also wood and earth and some to honor and some to dishonor. In other words, in your china cabinets and in your cupboards at home you have some nice dishes and some pretty crummy ones, got some old plastic scratched ones and then you've got your nice china, see. So when the good company comes you don't put out the plastic scratched ones, right? That have been on the stove and they've warped and all those things, you just - well, in terms of what God wants to do they're all different instruments. And when God wants His best work done He pulls out His best china, verse 21; "If a man therefore purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honor sanctified and fit for the Master's use prepared for every work." You want to be God's good china you stay pure, you purge yourself from sin. So God uses holy tools, holy instruments to do His finest work. Can you imagine Michelangelo chipping away at Moses if at the end of his little tool there was a big crack, he would never be able to use that tool because it would have to be perfectly shaped. And isn't it interesting also that the artist probably shaped his own tool? So the Holy Spirit shapes us. All right, so He needed an available tool and he found one, verse 27 - I like this, here's Philip: "And he arose and went", it doesn't say he fasted and prayed for three weeks

he just went. It doesn't say he argued with God and said, Now Look, God, I've got a proposition for You, we've got quite a thing going up here in Samaria, publicity's out, I've got a press interview tomorrow, a big revival going on, now You must have somebody on Your team who's going from Jerusalem to Egypt who could hit that guy on the way down. Ah, that's a long trip and once I get there I've got to come back and that's a good 125 miles, Lord, and I've got to walk and that's desert and I mean, there's lots of other instruments. But Philip was the right shape. God knew it, God wanted him and Philip didn't argue he arose and went. I like that because that's humility. I mean, he was in the limelight in Samaria. He was in the limelight. There was a mass of people coming to Jesus Christ but he was going to go down, not really knowing probably at this point what he was going to do and wind up talking to one man.

To drop everything and head for the desert seems absurd. At a time in Philip's life when everything was strategic. But God not only calls men unto salvation He calls the instrument He uses to bring them to salvation. So verse 29, jump down there for a minute, "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near join thyself to this chariot", watch, "And Philip", what's the next word?

"Ran" Isn't that terrific? Have you ever thought what you'd do? It's such a strange chariot, that's a big wheel. I don't know that guy. That guy's some kind of big - look at that caravan. I just can't go running up there and say, - Hey, have you heard the four spiritual laws? I mean, that's a little out of context. Right? That man doesn't know me I don't know him, I'm not going to intrude on his privacy and invade his personal life. I just can't do that. No. God said, Go - and Philip ran. I like that. I like that. But you know, boldness belongs to Spirit-filled people. Acts 4:31 we already read, what does it say? "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke with", what? "Boldness" They were just going everywhere preaching and it was just another opportunity to preach. He was doing it anyway he just ran over and continued. Boy, the servant who can say I do always the will of Him who sent me is a happy servant. The Lord used Peter to reach Cornelius, Paul to reach the jailer, Paul to reach those in Caesar's household. He's used you to reach people, me to reach people. He uses us. So the sovereign work of the Spirit also needs the submissive will of a man or a woman of a young person, that's part of the plan. And Philip was submissive. He didn't argue, he didn't hassle with God he just went and he ran to get there. I mean, if we'd attack the will of God with that kind of vigor we'd see something happen in this world.

Look at the third thing. There are some other necessary preparations.

Not only the sovereign work of the Spirit, the submissive will of a man but the searching worship of the Ethiopian. I mean, something had to be going on in his heart or he would have just flicked Philip off and Philip would have said, - Thanks a lot, Lord, for this long trip for nothing. Something was going on in his heart. He was searching for the true God, verse 27; "And he arose and went and behold a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure and had come to Jerusalem to worship was returning and sitting in his

chariot reading Isaiah the prophet." Now notice this man first of all was searching for God. That's evident. He was from Ethiopia. Now let me just give you a little footnote on Ethiopia. Ethiopia we know of today as a small country. Ethiopia in that day was all of Africa south of Egypt. It was a massive kingdom. It was everywhere from the Red Sea to the great desert to the west of Africa and from Egypt clear to the south as far as things went was under the control of Ethiopia. The king of Ethiopia, in fact, was designed, thought of as a god. In fact, he was said to be the son of the sun S-u-n. And as such he was too sacred to take care of the menial, secular functions of royalty so the king did nothing but sit around and have everybody worship him in Ethiopia and the queen mother ruled in the secular functions of the kingdom. And the king mother title was Candace that is not her name that is a title like pharaoh is a title or king is a title or ?

Ptolemy or czar or anything is a title of a whole group of individuals. So this queen mother who ruled the country really was in charge though behind the scenes was her son who was seen as some kind of a god. Well this man worked for the queen. He was a eunuch of great authority. Now that means exactly what it says. We lose the ability to understand the meaning of words in English because we over adjectived everything but he was a man of great authority, supreme authority in a kingdom as vast as the majority of the continent of Africa. He was some kind of an individual. Not only that he was in charge of all of the treasure. Which means he kept the purse-strings for the queen. He was trusted, respected and honored. The bible also says that he was a eunuch. Now a eunuch is a designation of a man who has been castrated or emasculated, has his male organs removed and they did this to the individuals they had serving in the harem for obvious reasons.

Eunuchs also, very often, rose to other places of prominence in the kingdom. And if they were a good man and had a great measure of ability they would rise to places such as this man did to become even the queen's own chamberlain or treasurer. And so he had risen to this. You might put a footnote down in your notes and look up Deuteronomy 23:1 some time and get God's view of this particular pagan practice. God was against it. Deut. 23 and He threatened Israel with it and if they ever had done it they would be cut off from certain fellowship with Him. So, God didn't look highly on it neither did the Jews because it was also a rite of pagan priests. Very often certain pagan priests went through this particular operation in order to assign themselves to their own pagan gods. It was a part of idolatry.

Now this man with all of this background was an empty man. He had honor prestige, unlimited wealth. He had everything he wanted at his fingertips but he wasn't satisfied. He was searching for God. Do you know how far it was for him to make this trip? At least 1200 miles. At least twelve-hundred miles. Now when you walk twelve-hundred miles that's a long, long trip and all desert. Now you say, - Well, he had a chariot. Yes, but the chariots in those days were not like chariots today. Most of the chariots - and it's the very word that is used here that refers to those little seats that you use to sit in and it was on poles carried by men who walked. That's the kind of chariot this may have well been. Now when you're willing to go twelve-hundred miles sitting in a box like that carried by some men you're after

something. There's no question about it. This man was hungry for God and that's step number three in preparation. He had a searching heart.

And that's the kind of heart God honors, you see. God meets the searching heart. That's the right kind of preparation. Now it may be that he was one of two things, first of all a proselyte. In Judaism there were some Gentiles who attached themselves to Judaism. They really went through all the rigmarole to literally becoming a Jew even often to the extent of being circumcised even years after the prescribed time, of course, which was the 8th day after birth. They would even go through that very often but there were Jews who joined Israel, took all of the vows or whatever was involved in Judaism and became Jews in terms of proselytes. There were others, however, who really didn't do all of that but they attended Jewish synagogues and they read Jewish scriptures and they were called - quote- "God's fearers", Cornelius was such a one. God-fearer. And it may have been that this one was one as well. That he had been searching into Judaism, that his heart had led him to the true God. And isn't it interesting how God can do this? We read about Romans chapter 1 that God plants within a man a consciousness that He exists. That man is without excuse. Here's a man, took the light that he had and pursued more light and what happened? God met him and gave him the light that he looked for. People say, - What about the heathen? I believe that the heathen lives up to the light God has given him and as a searching heart God will give him the light that he needs to come to Jesus Christ. I believe that. And this is an illustration of it right here. So the man went to Jerusalem. If I know anything about what he found there he was empty when he came out. He found ceremonialism. He found ritualism. He found cold formality. He found all that but he never found anything to fix up the gnawing hunger in his heart. So he went back from Jerusalem with nothing more than when he had come. But he was seeking and that's all God asks. He had responded to the Spirit of God's touch in his heart because even the natural man doesn't seek does he? Romans 3, "No man seeks after God". The Spirit of God had already sprung a leak in his naturalness so that there was enough light coming through that he could begin to search for the light and move toward it. And so he began to make the move. And, believe me, God will meet the searching heart, I believe that. Be he heathen or be he educated.

II Chronicles 19:3, "There are good things found in thee", says God, "in that thou hast taken away the idols out of the land and have prepared thy heart to seek God". II Chronicles 30; "The Lord God pardons everybody who prepares his heart to seek God". Did you hear that? The Lord God pardons everyone who prepares his heart to seek God. That's II Chronicles 30:18 and 19. Two verses later it says this of Hezekiah: "To seek his God, Ah, he did it with all of his heart and he prospered". Psalm 119:2: "Blessed are they who seek Him with the whole heart". And then I love this one, Hosea 10:3; "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord". If you really pursue Him He'll be found. Jeremiah 29:13, you know this one, "And you shall seek Me and find Me when you shall seek Me with", what? "All your heart." John 7:17, Jesus looked at the Jews and He said this, classic statement: "If any man really wills to do His will he shall know of the doctrine". If you really want to know God's will you can know it. If you're really hungry God satisfies the hungry heart. You say, - Simon was

hungry and his faith didn't save. Simon was hungry, you knew what he was hungry for? Self-glory not God and he lost God. This man sought God.

So the preparation is right; sovereign work of the Spirit, submissive will of Philip and a searching worship of the Ethiopian. One more ingredient, oh this is good. The scriptural word of Isaiah. You've got to throw the scripture into this whole thing. Somewhere you've got to have the information that brings it all together and he had it in his hand.

When he had been in Jerusalem he had undoubtedly paid a good price for a scroll of Isaiah 53, those things didn't come cheap. He probably had the whole book of Isaiah and the Spirit of God just made sure he got to Isaiah chapter 53. From the time that he left Jerusalem to the time he got where he was down there by Gaza about sixty miles he could have probably read that far. And there he was, the right moment right in the right place reading Isaiah 53 which is the whole presentation of the death of Messiah and salvation through His sacrificial atonement. It's right there. Philip is there. Everything comes together. That's no accident. That's the Spirit of God superintending everything. All the pieces are together and the final piece in preparation was the revelation of the word in his hand. Listen, if a man really wants to know the truth of God he needs to open the bible and God will reveal it to him if he's got a searching heart. The story of the two lawyers, you've probably heard it many times, one named Littleton and the other named West. Littleton and West decided to write two books. One declaring that Jesus was not the Son of God the other one blasting the apostle Paul as a fraud. They both wrote their books. One proclaiming to the world that Jesus is the Son of God the other vindicating everything that Paul ever claimed. They both received Christ in the process. If a man really searches to know God he'll know Him if he searches with all his heart. Jesus said, I love this, in John 5:39, He says to the Jews, "Search the scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life and they are they which". what?

"Testify of Me." And then in verse 46 He says, "You if you really believed Moses you'd accept Me because he wrote of Me". Search the scriptures.

There's a great illustration of this, I think it's Acts 17, yea - verse 11, just listen I'll read it. "Now the people who got saved at Berea, it says, were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind." You see, they were searching. They were read and when the Word came it was a marriage, you see, it just came together because their minds were ready, the soil was ready when the seed hit - bang it just was fertile and everything took place. "They received the Word with all readiness of mind even they searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so." They were honest, objective searching. What happened?

"Therefore, many of them", I love it, "believed." See? When they searched it out they saw it was true. All right, there's the preparation. This guy is ready, he is ripe, you see? The sovereign work of the Spirit - done. The submissive will of Philip - done. The searching worship of the Ethiopian done. The

scriptural word of Isaiah - in hand. There's the preparation.

Now if this guy doesn't get saved there is something wrong with the presentation. 'Cause the preparation's all right.

Let's look at the presentation and see about it. Verse 29, here comes the presentation. And it's based on three things. We'll get to that in a minute. Verse 29, "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot". No doubt he had a large company with him there on that desert road and so Philip could join up, you know, it would be kind of a natural thing if you were going alone on the road to just kind of join up with the guy. And so Philip just kind of slid in there and then, I like this Philip ran there - ran there to him and heard him read the prophet Isaiah".

They read out loud. The Orientals still do very often. He was reading out loud, "Read aloud the prophet Isaiah and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?" Boy, what a terrific opening. Are you getting the message, friend Boldness, he just moves right in there. The eunuch was ready. Verse 31, "And he said, how can I except some man should guide me? And he besought Philip that he would come up and sit with him". Which, if you think about it, must have been a pain in the neck to the guys carrying the thing, literally. But anyway, Philip jumped up in the seat with him. But can you imagine how prepared - I mean, have you ever gone up to somebody and said prepared to present Christ and immediately your first reaction is - Boy, they're not going to buy this at all. You know? I mean, they're going to be cold.

Philip runs up and says, - Do you understand what you're reading? He says, No, I need a bible teacher is there one around? Well, it just so happens -Well, come on up let's - you know. It's fantastic how sometimes God prepares I shared with you a few weeks ago about meeting Jim on the airplane and sharing Christ with him. And I was a minister and trying to figure it out, he asked me what I did and I said I'm a minister and he said do you know how a person can have a personal relationship with Christ? You know, and I thought gee, we're a couple of hours away from that. So he kids me now about the fact that I couldn't use all my seminary training on him because the Spirit of God had already prepared the soil but that happens all the time.

I remember I was with Lennie one time, we were in college and Dave Hocking -we were up doing some street witnessing. In fact, I had just concluded a sermon on the street corner at the bus depot which is a terrible way to start but that's where I began to preach. Anyway, nobody ever listens in all that smoke and stuff. But anyway, buses going by. Praise the Lord. But I finished the sermon on the street corner and so I thought - This isn't the way to do it I think I'll just go find people on an individual basis.

I got that far on my strategy, you know. So Dave and I went up by this dance hall, we figured there would be some likely prospects up there hanging around Saturday night, you know, there was all

kinds of stuff going on. So we went up there and two guys came down the street, I'll never forget it because Dave said - I think I'll talk to the guy on the left you take the guy on the right. And they were kind of small, you know I think they thought we were going to mug them, you know, on the spot. Anyway, I said - Excuse me could I talk to you a minute? He says - Well - yeah, you know. So I said stand over here, we were in a little store front thing and I said I just want to talk to you about Jesus Christ. I'll never forget it, he said - You do? And I said, Yeah, I just want to explain how you can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And I took about four or five minutes and I presented it to him and I said - I got my courage up and I said - Would you like to receive Christ? And he looked at me and said - You know, I think I will. My reaction was - You would? You know. I mean, is it this easy?

Right? And right there we knelt in the street and the guy opened his heart and received Jesus Christ. I mean, there are times, you know, when God puts you in a place and it's ready. The Spirit's done His preparation. And then if there's no personal response it's because the presentation isn't right.

So when something doesn't happen and you've presented Christ, check those two things. Maybe you had a good presentation but the Spirit of God hasn't done the preparation. Either one. So anyway, this guy was ready. He says, - Yeah if you can find me a bible teacher. How often do you run into a bible teacher in the middle of the desert? Here he was. It must have been exciting as Philip jumped up into the chariot and they began to talk.

And then we see the three keys to the effective presentation. One -constructed on scripture. He said I need to have you guide me. It's the same word used in John 16:13 for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as He teaches the Word to us. I need somebody to teach. Don't you love a humble teachable attitude? You know what the bible says in Psalm 25:9, it says:

"The meek shall He teach His ways". Ah, it's hard to teach proud people.

It's so easy to teach people who are so ready and so meek and humble and teachable. This guy was ready. And so Philip's just going to base this thing on the word and it just so happened that this fellow was reading by the guidance of the Spirit of God, the right chapter of Isaiah. Verse 32, "The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter", he's talking about the Messiah going to die, "And like a lamb dumb before his shearer He opened not His mouth". Remember Jesus on His trial said nothing. "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away." What it means was that justice was removed. He never had the benefit of justice. No one declared His case. No one was His defense. And it says, "Who shall declare His generation?" Why, He didn't live long enough to leave an imprint on history, who's ever going to remember those thirty three years? His life was so brief whose ever going to stand up and announce about His life? "For His life is taken from the earth." So he read this, you know, in Isaiah, chapter is 53: verses 7 and 8, the great 53rd chapter of Isaiah which presents Christ death. And he says, I don't understand this, verse 34, "The eunuch said,

I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man?" I read this but I don't have the key to unlock it. Who's he talking about? What's he saying here? Well, you know, the Jews had referred this to them? The Jews today still say that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is the nation Israel. But they don't fit, for two reasons: number one, they didn't suffer in silence and number two, they didn't bear our iniquities and carry our stripes and heal us. Others say it was Isaiah, other Jewish people have said it was Isaiah. No. Isaiah didn't do that either. Some say it was Jeremiah, he was despised and rejected but that's all. He didn't bear sin. The great Jewish scholars all through the years have always said it's Messiah, has to be Messiah. And so Philip took his opportunity and he taught him the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. Look at verse 35, "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same", what? "Scripture." All effective evangelism, beloved, is done at the scripture. You got it? Now watch this not only the scripture but the what scripture? The same scripture. There's two things that hit me here. I think it's good when you witness to people to take them through a whole passage as opposed so often of jumping from verse to verse out of context. Teach them a passage. Use John 3, Ephesians Isaiah 53, whatever and use that as a basis. That's not always necessary but I think that's a good way but better than that what it's saying here is Philip started at the same scripture that this man was reading. What does that mean? That means you start where they are. See? How many times have we gotten into a situation and imposed ourselves on the situation? Philip oh, he could just glide in there so beautifully. He says, - Oh, your problem is Isaiah 53, let me explain that to you and away he went. You see, that's why there's never any end to the study of the word of God. You say, but I know the plan of salvation, my little pattern is Romans 3:23, Romans 3:23, John 3:16 and John 1:10, 12 jumping and you've got your little thing. Yeah, that's real good. What do you do if you get a Jehovah's witness who starting in John 1:1? Oh, I don't know about John 1:1 but I can sure help you on Romans 3:23. That doesn't do him any good. We need to be so knowledgeable in the Word of God that we can pick it up wherever anybody is.

Paul said to Timothy, "Timothy, you know a lot but you don't know enough, study to show yourself", what? "Approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be", what? "Ashamed." You know, sometimes I've been ashamed because there have been times in the past years of my life when I've approached somebody who had a scriptural problem who I could have witnessed to had I been able to pick it up at the point where they were reading it and explain it to them. Philip just glides into the situation, he says - Oh, Isaiah 53 I'll explain it verse by verse. Oh, that's what real evangelism is. This guy wasn't a pulpit-pounding revivalist with flashing ties and a publicity campaign this guy was a guy who knew the bible and he could pick a man where he was on a one on one basis and communicate from that point the gospel.

That's root evangelism. He could speak to the mass but he could also communicate one on one where any man was. He was the complete evangelist.

So often, you know, we've got all these churchy cliches, cut and dried methods and we can't really hit the guy where he is, you know, like the kid said to the pastor one time - You keep telling me Christ is

the answer but what's the question? And that's right. I mean, a lot of times we're answering the questions that nobody's asking and sometimes we don't even know the question. We need to meet people where they are. Now I'm sure that Philip had a basic method that he kind of leaned on in presenting Christ, we all do, but he chucked it here and picked the guy up right where he was and that's the beauty of his evangelism. If you're going to get a Jehovah's Witness and you're going to share Jesus Christ with him start where he is. If he's in John 1:1 you ought to know John 1:1 and you ought to be able to explain how that proves Jesus' deity. You ought to be able to pick him up at that point. So Philip was ready with Isaiah 53, that's great. And so he sat down there in that little ole chariot and he just worked through that passage with this eunuch.

You know, this ability is classically illustrated in Jesus. Jesus met the woman at the well and she was talking about water. Where did He start?

Water. He met Nicodemus. He started where Nicodemus was and away they went. Jesus did that with everybody. He was the Master at taking the given situation and turning it to Himself. The apostle Paul was pretty good at it too. He says to the weak, I become weak; to the strong I become strong; to the Jews, I become as a Jew unto the Law to the ones who aren't under the law I become as one not under the law; I become all things to all men that by all means I may save some. And he says this in verse 23, I Cor. 9, "I do this for the gospel's sake". I mean, the Spirit of God has done all the preparation I want to make sure that when the presentation comes I'm the tool that can be used. See? It's so important. That's evangelism. Peter put it this way, "Always be ready to give to every man a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear". You ought to have something to say to every man wherever he's at. So the presentation of the gospel, then, is constructed the Word.

Secondly, it's centered on the Savior. Jesus is who he preached. He preached unto him Jesus. That proves he was Spirit-filled because in John 26 and 27 the bible says that the Spirit would come and announce the things of Christ. Watch out for too much autobiography and opinion, preach Jesus.

I think some of the reason that people reject Jesus is He hasn't been well enough presented so that they really understand who He is. I think of Trumble, one of the greatest soul-winners who ever lived, he said one time in his life, he said - I promise from this day forward every time I have the opportunity to introduce the topic of conversation it will always be Jesus.

And he spent his whole life developing ways that he could inject Jesus Christ into every conversation and present completely the person of Christ and he was one of the greatest soul winners the world ever knew. So the presentation that saves is constructed on scripture, centered on the Savior, third concerned with salvation.

What do you think he told him? How to be saved. He went through the substitutionary atonement in Isaiah and announced the whole truth of Christ, salvation. Philip didn't talk about the church. He didn't

talk about religion. He talked about Jesus and he talked about how to be saved.

True evangelism presents the whole doctrine of salvation. You know what else Philip even taught him? About Baptism. You say, - Is Baptism important? It must be Philip taught him about it. Is it important for salvation? No. But it's important for confession of salvation publicly. And you know something, the preparation was right, the presentation was right, quickly and we'll just look at it. Look at the personal response. When those two things are right - bang - it happens. Verse 36, "And as they went on their way they came unto a certain water", hmm, just so happens out in the middle of the desert there's water. "The eunuch said, Look water", this is unbelievable, terrific. "What does hinder me to be baptized?" What does that prove? That proves the personal response, number one, faith - he believed.

He was ready to go the whole way. His faith was real he wanted to be baptized. What hindered him? Nothing hindered him. Nothing at all. Verse 38, "And he commanded the chariot to stand still and they went down both into the water both Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him." First thing faith, second thing confession. He confessed his faith because of his obedience.

Incidentally verse 37 does not appear in all of the ancient manuscripts, apparently added about the second century. This apparently became the formula for baptism of the early church, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest", and then the person being baptized would answer, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God", but it doesn't appear in any of the early manuscripts a scribe apparently added it thinking that there's no statement in here of the eunuch's faith so he had to put one in but in all of the modern translations we have it's left out. It's a formula that comes from the second century, the baptism formula, very likely, but doesn't really belong. The faith of the man is assumed. If the preparation's right the presentation's right, you don't need to say anything more. And so he was baptized. Now it's a good case for immersion as a way to be baptized with salutations to all you Presbyterians, they went down into the water, verse 39, they came up out of the water. I like that. Okay, enough of that. Anyway, I don't want to get in trouble. Anyway, there's faith here and there's confession here. He confessed in the obedience of baptism the third thing that really proves his salvation was really rejoiced, it was rejoicing. When Simon finally expressed himself it wasn't rejoicing it was terrible fear, wasn't it? Verse 24, but with this man it's rejoicing.

I love verse 39, "And when they were come up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, the eunuch saw him no more", hey, you know what that was? That was a miracle. Don't you think that eunuch didn't know it.

Why did God do miracles in those days? To confirm what? To confirm the Word He did a miracle, that whole caravan saw it and confirmed the Word and you know what else it probably did? Established a base for that eunuch to preach all the way to Ethiopia. And incidentally, Philip, who was going to be maybe worried about walking down there didn't have to walk back. "Philip and the Eunuch and he

baptized him", and I like this, "then the Spirit caught him away and he went on his way doing", what? "Rejoicing" Oh, he was happy, that's great. "But Philip", guess what he did? "Was found at Azotus", and this up the coast, Azotus, Ekron, Jamnia, Lydda, Joppa, Antipatris, Caesarea all the way up the coast the Lord just kept depositing him wherever he wanted him.

And look at this, "But Philip was found at Azotus and passing through he", did what? What did he always do? It never was a question of what he did it was only where he did it. So there he goes back, preaching, "preaching till he came to Caesarea." Hey, here you have the faith that saves.

Faith that really saves. And here you have an illustration of one man's availability to reach one other man that could have meant the difference in a continent.

Let me close with this, listen, will you? You say, - Well, you know, I wish I could do something really effective for the Lord. I know Philip and I can't do stuff like that can I? Listen to me, friend, you may only reach one person but you don't know what that one person's going to do. Did you ever think of the person that lead Billy Sunday and D. L. Moody and Billy Graham and other people like that to Jesus Christ? You say, - Well, I've only got five little girls in my class and four of them have a little curl in the middle of their forehead and etcetera, et cetera and I don't see, I don't know if I'm getting through et cetera. Give yourself to those because you don't know what God's going to do in their lives. Reach whoever God places in your path. Don't ever evaluate the importance of anything, let God evaluate that. Don't minimize it, magnify it. Let's pray.

Father, thank You that we've been able again to look in Your Word and to see clearly what it is that You would teach us today. I'm thankful for Philip oh what a joy it is to see a man who is available to the Spirit who was a tool sharpened and honed so that he could perfect that which the Spirit of God wanted to do in the life of another. God, may we be such tools, fit for the master's use, sanctified, set apart, purging ourselves from the sins of

the world that You might use us as vessels unto honor. Lord, we know that there might be some folk here this morning who've never met Jesus Christ, who never have really experienced the faith that does save, O Holy Spirit, do the preparation work, send the tool and make the presentation clear that this day might be the response of faith, confession and rejoicing in that heart. We pray in Christ's name. Amen

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