

Leadership Beyond Borders (Acts 8:26-40)

today we come to a passage that is so powerful, I just know you'll be touched as we talk about **Leadership: Beyond Borders (Acts 8:26-40)**

We saw last week how the stoning of Stephen moved the church from being localized in Jerusalem, to the surrounding area of Samaria.

And if Stephen is the first martyr – stoned for preaching the truth of God, a man by the name of Philip becomes the first missionary.

And as the church moves out and is scattered, Philip begins to preach in the city of Samaria, and huge crowds come to hear him preach. And people are responding, and people are being saved.

But in the midst of the revival - calls Philip out of a big crowd to go out to the desert for ONE person.

And it's here – that we see how important ONE PERSON seeking God Will, is to God.

Verse 26 -

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."

Gaza was just a bump in the road town in the middle of the desert – 165 miles away from where Philip had been preaching. Furthermore, it was in Philistine territory, so it was way out of the comfort zone for a Jew. But verses 27 says:

27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch . . .

Today, Ethiopia is a small country. But in that day, Ethiopia was basically everything in Africa south of the Nile River. Huge area.

So a couple of things: Philip "started out," and he met a man he did not formerly know while he was "on his way"

When you GO with Jesus – you'll meet some people who will bless your life in ways you could never have imagined life without them.

God is in the going!

I was leading a Bible study Thursday night – 8 ladies gathered around a flip board as we talked about Acts 6 and the importance of being a leader that people can trust.

And I asked, "Do you have many people in your life you can trust?" And one of the ladies said, "I didn't 6 months ago – a year ago – but when I got to Gracepoint, I began to have friends I could count on." She said, "Today I've got people I can count on." Because when you go with God, he'll bless you."

Verse 27 – so he "started out," and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means "queen of the Ethiopians").

We know him as the Ethiopian Eunuch (and because of what's been done to him, he was unable to produce children), but he's also the Queen's Treasurer – and I assume he would rather us call him that.

This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.

The Queen's Treasurer was curious about the God of the Jews, and so he went to Jerusalem to learn about God.

BUT – there's a problem. (In fact, there's three).

He's already got three strikes against him.

1. His race.
2. His physical condition (the OT says eunuchs can't go into the temple).
3. And his complete lack of Bible knowledge. (Oh, he had a bible – he didn't understand what it said).

So he's reading the Bible, but he's not getting it. He'd been up to Jerusalem to see if he could learn more about God, and he got all the way up there and found out, "You can't even go in the temple."

And so isn't God good? He couldn't enter the temple, so God sent a temple to him.

And now – we see where race, meets grace.

²⁹The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

STOP! How did the Spirit say this to Philip?

It doesn't really tell us. But one of the things you find in Acts is that the Holy Spirit speaks to people, moving them into mission.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned 59 times in Acts, and in about 40 of those, HE is speaking.

"The spirit said to Philip . . ."

Acts 10:19 – the Spirit said to Peter, "Go down and talk to these men, and don't be afraid."

Acts 13:2 – "The Holy Spirit said to the church – set apart Barnabas and Paul for ministry."

1. And so sometimes in Acts – he speaks through a word of prophecy through someone else in the church.
2. Sometimes he gives someone a divine vision or dream.
3. And sometimes it seems to be just a divine yearning that God puts on your heart.

BUT HERE'S THE QUESTION: Are you aware of when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you?

When was the last time you sensed Him sending you to a person, to a place – calling you to GO ON MISSION – for God?

Listen – God is not a yesterday God! He is still speaking. The question is – are you listening?

It happened to Jack's Oduro's father, Lawrence (Ateiku, Ghana). He was a gold miner by vocation, and he was taking a train from one city to another when his train was delayed in a small community, and when he heard singing coming from one of the local churches, he investigated the service and the singing, and very quickly gave his life to the Lord. And the rest is history as literally thousands have heard the Gospel, because one man, in a little out of the way place like Gaza – listened to the Holy Spirit speak words of life into him.

²⁹The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

(You see, you need to listen, because God is speaking in the details).

³⁰Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

³¹“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³²This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

³³In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth.” (he’s reading from Isaiah 53 – which was written about Jesus some 800 years before his birth).

Isaiah had prophesized that the Messiah would be like a lamb led to the slaughter – he would be wrongfully accused of crimes he did not commit, and he would not open his mouth.

HE WAS TALKING ABOUT THE ONE WHO, on Good Friday – would be beaten by his enemies and murdered on a Cross.

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” ³⁸And he gave orders to stop

the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.

(We’ve experienced that a lot here at Gracepoint this year – three beautiful souls baptized into Christ last Sunday. Today, another one after the second service).

³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

It was a moment that changed everything.

In fact – the ancient historian Eusebius, says that this eunuch (and the band of servants that would have been with him), went on to plant the first church in Africa.

And so isn’t it wonderful – because by the time there were even the first Western, European converts in Acts (that would come through the preaching of the Apostle Paul)– a thriving church was already meeting in the capitol of Africa!

And BTW – Africa is one of the places where the church is growing the fastest in the world today.

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COUPLE OF THINGS:

1. Your obedience positions you for divine appointments.

2. The eunuch made a decision. He made the decision to accept the free gift of God in salvation. God is so good – he died – led like a sheep to the slaughter for you and me!

I have just one question – “When wrongfully accused for crimes he didn’t commit, why would he not even open his mouth?”

Well – when you are being accused in a court of law and you make no response, what are you conceding? Guilt. Jesus was conceding guilt.

But it was not his own (because he had no guilt; he was the only person who lived a perfect life).

He stood silent, because he was consenting to my guilt.

He was wounded for MY transgression – and HE did it all – because of his great love!

The eunuch made a decision to trust the love of God and receive that love into his heart.

(In fact – do you know why he was so eager?)

There was a sign out front of the outer court of the Temple that said, “No lame, no blind, and no eunuchs may enter here.” But in this same section of Scripture, from which the eunuch was reading, Isaiah said,

No foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord should say, “The Lord will exclude me from His people”; and the **eunuch** should not say, “Because I cannot have children, the Lord will not accept me.”

⁴For the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases me and hold firmly to my covenant, I will make

their names remembered within my temple and its walls. It will be better for them than sons and daughters. I will give them a name that will last forever, that will never be forgotten (Isaiah 56:3-5)

Because of Jesus, the man on the outside was suddenly in. (And the eunuch couldn’t wait to accept Jesus – and be IN.

3. Secondly – he was immediately baptized!

He asked the question, “What hinders me from being baptized?” And apparently Philip said, “Nothing – nothing at all.”

And the next thing we see is them both going down into the water on the side of the road, and getting baptized.

So today – Alan Cunningham will give his life to Jesus in baptism. Last Sunday – we had one baptism schedule, and we ended up having three.

Today – what hinders you, from being baptized?

If that’s what’s on your heart – then put action to your faith. As we sing together.