

The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles”
Acts 8:1-40, Part 4 vv. 26-40
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**Introduction: “Saul, Samaritans, Sorcerers and
Southerners”**

Introduction:

Conversions are glorious, would you not say? Conversions are of God. Conversions are real. Conversions are miracles, and actually the best miracles. You and I could list hundreds of adjectives describing how we view conversion experiences; yet there is one aspect of conversion experiences that stands out. They are always of God! Period! There are many facets of this truth; yet, God is still the central figure in the conversion experience. God was working in your life to draw you to him long before you knew he was there. This is called *prevenient grace*. This is God's love on full display towards the sinner.

Question - Why have I started the message this way? I believe that the single most important issue to a Christian is the conversion of their family, friends, and the lost of our world.

We do all we can to get them to church and to share by every means possible the Gospel, and they reject it, and even go away hating what they heard. Many times the lost go away even hating those that shared the good news with them. We think that maybe they just can't be saved and that they're too far gone. We are afraid that we will push people away from God by pressuring them too much. Then we end up not witnessing at all. Take heart – this message is for you.

Quote: Dr. Gray Allison, “*A lost man is as far from God as he can get.*” You cannot do anything to push him away further.

I studied last week and this week's conversions in Acts and even some in John's gospel. Jesus, the apostles, the first deacons, the

witnesses, and others were not “*seeker sensitive*” or *culturally friendly*. They simply shared the truth. In John 3, the Holy Spirit calls Nicodemus to Jesus for a conversation about the new birth. Nicodemus had a legalistic, cold, dead orthodoxy in his heart, and he was looking for a Savior to love him. In John 4, the woman at the well was a bit rude to Jesus, and then He pinned her down - He named her sin. Jesus spoke plainly, clearly, but lovingly, about her sin. John 4 is where love and truth are displayed as undivided entities in salvation. We can do the same thing... Love people into a conversion experience with the truth.

Context: We are going to study these three conversion experiences in detail.

- In Acts 1-7, the Gospel goes to the Jews –
- In 8-10, three conversions mark a turning point in the book.
 - Philip leads the Ethiopian Eunuch to Christ.
 - Jesus himself goes to get Saul.
 - Peter goes to Cornelius.

Application:

When you see what happened to this Ethiopian eunuch, you will know that there is no one who is out of God’s reach, and no circumstance He cannot use to reach those you love. These three conversions in Acts 8-10 are rewarding to study. These conversion experiences are not Baptist, Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish, they are just conversion experiences of sinners who came to Jesus Christ for salvation. This should be a joyful experience to see how these individuals came to Christ.

The key for us is that we don't put limits on God and tell Him how to go about saving people. Just do as you are told. Each conversion has common factors, but all are different.

With these statements in mind, let’s look at the Gospel going South!

Acts 8:26-40

We have already been introduced to Steven, and we know that chapter 8 has focused on Philip and his ministry. These two men were part of the first deacons elected by the church, and they both became good evangelists. These two men remind me of the men we just elected as deacons here at Woodlake.

Boice makes a great observation about the outstanding character of these two evangelists. Phillip even earned the title Evangelist. Both of these men stood up against some very powerful religious and political figures and even risked their lives sharing the gospel. Stephen actually lost his life sharing the gospel. You would think that seeing Steven die as a martyr would have deterred Philip, but it only increased his passion to fulfill God's calling on his life.

I know that you clearly remember the qualifications that the church requested of the first seven deacons; and I am personally convinced that these seven men were exactly what the scriptures say they were. Phillip had stood face to face with a satanic magician and spoken the truth to him.

Acts 6:3

3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.

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Acts 6:9-10

9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)-Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, 10 *but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.*

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Point 1 – The Divine Call: Verse 26

- There is a call from above.
- There's a call from within.
- There is a call from without.
- There is a call from below.

We must remember that the call is not ours alone. The call to evangelize and to receive Christ is a divine call. This means that we never go alone when we witness. What we are doing is fulfilling the command of Christ through obedience. I don't know of anything that a Christian can do to be more obedient to Christ than sharing the precious message of the gospel. Sharing Jesus with an unbeliever is congruent with pleasing God.

Verse 26:

The call has never changed. God uses people to reach unsaved people.

The call to evangelize is a command. The Lord sent an angel to Philip to give him instructions.

- The Great Commission is still operative. It was never called the great suggestion.

Matt 28:18-20

. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

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The Angel of the Lord. Possibly a real Angel. Possibly a Christophany. Maybe a post-resurrection appearance of Christ? In verse 29 the Spirit speaks to Philip, messengers may change - the message stays the same. The Greek word is

anggelos, which is messenger, angel, or pastor.

* It is still God that calls. We do not witness of our own free-will. God calls, enables, and delivers.

* Philip is told to go south to the desert. He did not argue. He went. I can promise you that many of us would have objected to this call to go South.

What was going on in Samaria? Revival. The apostles had gone back to Jerusalem, so Philip was the leader in charge. If Philip leaves, the entire revival might collapse. People are being saved, and the name of Jesus is being glorified. For the average Christian, this would make no sense at all.

What we might have said to God:

- I'll go, but not now. Gaza is very important to me, but not right now; we'll get to that later.
- Send someone else; I am too valuable right here at this time. We would have actually said that as humbly as we could have.
- Lord, did you know that Gaza is a desert? Lord, there's not very many people down there in Samaria. We have lots of people who need Jesus up here.
- I am a bit overqualified for that area, right?
- If I end up in Gaza, nobody will know anything about my ministry.

Boice: “But, as I say, I do not think Philip had any of these thoughts at all, because Phillip knew something we need to know and that will be very helpful in our lives: God's ways are not our ways; His thoughts are not our thoughts. How do we know this? We know it because God tells us in Isaiah 55:8. This means that although Christianity is not an irrational thing and although none

of us are called to be irrational, nonetheless, when we are engaged in spiritual work, there are always going to be areas we will not fully understand. We will find ourselves asking, “why does God do that?” Or, “why does he do that rather than something else?” That's just the way it is going to be.

Why would God take the prophet from the revival where people are being saved and send him to the desert? That seems irrational.

Where Shall I Work Today?

“Father, where shall I work today?”
And my love flowed full and free.
Then He pointed to a humble spot
And said, “Tend that for me.”

I answered quickly, “Oh! No! Not that!
Why no one would ever see.
No matter how well my work was done;
Not that little place for me.”
He answered me tenderly,
“Ah, little one, search thine heart;
Art thou working for them, or Me?
Nazareth was a little place
And so was Galilee.”

unknown

Did we ever think that God may want to win Egypt to Christ while we are thinking of a region called Samaria.

~ God’s call is divine – that means he uses the circumstances and people He desires. We are only servants.

~ God may have you in a desert right now. God may have you on the way to a desert. Trust God and obey His call. He knows what He's doing.

Have you ever known Someone who is doing great work for Christ and being successful in ministry, and then they get sick and die. Have you ever seen someone doing great ministry work, but yet they struggle financially and can hardly make it. And in our heart of hearts, we question what God is doing; that's only natural for the human mind and spirit to ask such questions. Just think of the great work that Charlie Kirk was doing and how many young people were coming to Christ on college campuses, and then Charlie Kirk is taken out of the picture completely. Many of my brilliant professors could have been scientists, doctors, or lawyers, but they chose to teach young men in seminary where the pay was nothing like other fields. Many people who are overqualified for their God-called ministries are humble servants that went South to Gaza. Now I can give you some pat Christian answers for that, but they're just not adequate for me or for you. But I do know this, God is in control, and he has a purpose behind everything that he does, and it's always best. Many of our missionaries are smart, hardworking, and capable of being in much better jobs. They suffer and sacrifice dearly and live in dangerous, undeveloped areas of the world because of God's call. They are unknown on earth but mighty in heaven.

Examples: Educators, teachers, administrators, pastors, missionaries, medical professionals, first responders, doctors, lawyers, scientists, counselors, and many others who sacrifice to reach others and use their skills for the gospel's sake.

CJ #41 - Havner Quote

Has God called you from a Samaria to a Sahara? Has health failed, has adversity shut you down, have loved ones died, must you undertake a hard work among strangers? Does the sudden shift in God's orders seem so abrupt that you hesitate and argue that it doesn't make sense? Ah, but His ways are not ours. If he sends you to the desert, he can furnish streams of water there. Philip had a date with the eunuch and didn't know it. If God orders you out on the lonely road, he has a date for you to keep with someone, maybe with some bewildered soul, maybe with himself.

Jesus himself left the lost sheep of Israel and went purposefully through Samaria to tell one sinful woman the good news so that the entire community could come to Christ. One faithful Sunday School teacher told a small boy the gospel, and he grew up to be Billy Graham.

Church, I know many people right here at Woodlake Baptist Church that are way overqualified for what they're doing. God took them from a vibrant, positive, growing atmosphere and sent them to the desert to work for Christ. And I will promise you by the authority of the Word of God and the promises of God that the Lord is going to bless their obedience. I have seen preachers leave enormous churches with big salaries and end up in small towns that many would consider a desert, and then God would move and make streams in the desert for that pastor and for that community because God wanted to reach it. We never know what God is doing until the work is completed. The work of the Christian is a work of faith; we do not walk by sight; we walk by faith.

Point –

The privilege to witness is a divine call with divine results – mysterious results. God can save anybody, anytime, anywhere.

On the altar in Samaria or in the desert of Gaza. Never feel like your job in the Kingdom is too small. Never think that the town you are in is too small. Never think that the place of service where you sweat and bleed for Jesus is not worth it. Never think your ministry does not stack up to the glorious and grand ministries of others. The Kingdom of God does not work like that. Your small church with its small, little budget may lead Billy Graham to Christ and change the world. The spiritual world is not measured by the means of the world. Just be obedient to the call that God has given you. Paul said make your calling and election sure. Trust Jesus and go to work.

* As a matter of fact – most people have to be in the desert to get saved. When God puts 'em in the desert; Thank Him for it. When God wants to do great works, He usually calls someone out of a desert. Did not Jesus, Abraham, John The Baptist, and Moses come from the desert to do great works?

Desert Road

Song by

Casting Crowns

I don't wanna write this song
I don't want this pain to be my story
I don't want this desert road
Are you sure this is the plan that You have for me?
Out here in the dust and clay
God, if there's a bigger picture
It's getting hard to see today
But I know that You won't leave me here

I don't know where this is going
But I know who holds my hand
It's not the path I would've chosen
But I'll follow You to the end
Lord, as long as I am breathing
I will make Your glory known

Even if it means I'm walking
On this desert road
(Where You lead me, I will follow)
On this desert road
(Where You lead me, I will follow)

You got my attention now
I was doing the talking, but now I'm listening
This is where my hope is found
Knowing life is hard, but You're still with me
I'm not out here on my own
You are close to the broken-hearted
'Cause You've already walked this road
And You're gonna finish what You started

I don't know where this is going
But I know who holds my hand
It's not the path I would've chosen
But I'll follow You to the end
Lord, as long as I am breathing
I will make Your glory known
Even if it means I'm walking
On this desert road

Point 2 – A Desperate Man: Who was the Ethiopian eunuch? Verse 27-29?

Verse 27 (Obedience)– Philip arose and went on his way; he meets the eunuch (By God's call). This is what I call a Divine Encounter. People who walk with Jesus walk into people who need Jesus. Brother Jerry, why do things like this never happen to me? If you're asking yourself that right now, you have some serious spiritual issues to talk over with your Savior. If you are not sensitive to opportunities, God will give them to someone who is.

Who was this man?

He was impotent – An oriental eunuch was a man deprived of testes. An emasculated man.

Matthew 19:11 – Jesus speaks of these men. After giving a hard word about divorce. Jesus gives 3 reasons men chose to be Eunuchs.

Matt 19:8-12

8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

10 The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

11 Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

1 Cor 7:5-9

5 Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command. 7 I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

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(Singles today may stay single to serve God).

~ Eunuchs were actually excluded from being Priests and

temple Worship because of their mutilation. They were literally excluded from the congregation of Israel.

Greek: ευνουχος – A bed, to keep, This indicates a keeper of a bed or chamber. Eunuchs were used to take care of the King's concubines because they could be trusted because of their emasculation.

He was an important man – Ethiopia, in ancient days, was a large area of Africa, South of Egypt. Today the area is much smaller and is Southeast of Egypt. This is the area from which the Queen of Sheba came in the days of king Solomon. This may be why there was such a connection between that part of the world and Judaism even today. The Queen of Sheba had come to Jerusalem to ask Solomon spiritual questions about Judaism. She also learned about life and many other subjects. The Ethiopian eunuch may have learned about the Jewish faith and our God from what was passed down from the Queen of Sheba. Many believe that she and Solomon had a child together. There is a history concerning the Ark of the Covenant that is also tied to Sheba. There's actually an Ethiopian tradition that holds that the Ark of the Covenant resides in a building in Axiom, which is guarded within the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion. Some scholars actually believe that Solomon gave the Ark of the Covenant to the Queen of Sheba for safekeeping.

Greek: “Important” - courtier “dynastes” dynasty.

Kings and Queens put these emasculated men in charge of their Harems. They were *trusted* with the beds of the women.

Esther 2:14,15

As time goes on, these men were so reliable that they were trusted as prominent officials and treasurers of Kings, Nobels and Courts. Any man who would go this far and mutilate the

flesh so that he could be of service to others was a trusted individual.

Thus, this man, the Ethiopian Eunuch was in charge of Candace's Treasury.

Candace – not a name, but a title cf, i.e. Pharaoh, Herod. Many of these officials became eunuchs and were not emasculated.

He was an inquisitive man:

He traveled a long way to find God. He may have been a proselyte, one who accepts the Jewish God and is circumcised, or a God-fearer. One who accepts but does not get circumcised. He came with a huge caravan for many miles.

He finds out some bad news when he gets to Jerusalem.

He had a bad church experience.

He wants to worship God, and he is turned away from the temple. He is black, he is a Gentile, he is a Eunuch, mutilated.

- He cannot be a priest because of his mutilation of God's image.
- He cannot have a heritage in posterity or in land.
- He cannot worship in the temple.
- He cannot even get past the court of the Gentiles.

* Never underestimate God's power to save anybody, anytime, anywhere.

* He was literally driven from God by the legalists. **The Holy Spirit sent Philip to tell him about Jesus.**

* He had gone to worship, but God had awakened his heart. The church never saves anybody. It's God!!! If anyone had an excuse to blame their rejection of God on the church, it would have been the Ethiopian eunuch. The most important thing about the story is that the eunuch was searching for Jesus, not just a church or a temple.

The church had let him down. He found a group of men who were more concerned with jots and tittles than the Spirit. The church today is just as disappointing. People today go to church to be around their friends. They couldn't care less if they hear the Word preached or truth spoken. The church is more of a social gathering than a mission center. Most Baptists have never searched for the heart of God like this Ethiopian eunuch. They're not even good religious people. As long as they have somebody to play pickleball with, they're in good shape. This Ethiopian eunuch found a politically dead orthodoxy of legalistic and narcissistic pseudo-Christians in Israel. He must have left Jerusalem with a broken heart.

~ He left, thank God, with one thing: A purchased copy of **The Scroll of Isaiah**. Because lost men can't understand the Word of God, the Lord sent Philip all the way from Jerusalem to explain the Word of God to him. Now that gets my heart fired up.

Verse 28-29: The Eunuch was being drawn by God. Not Many lost people read the scriptures. The Spirit speaks to Philip and he goes up to the chariot. The tradition of the day was to read the scripture out loud. God put Isaiah 53 right in front of his eyes. On his way home, he begins to read Isaiah the prophet describing the coming Messiah. It's my belief that if you take a step towards Jesus, he will not meet you halfway, he will meet you all the way.

Point 3. – A Decisive Word – vv. 30-35

Something that decides an issue. Being able to decide quickly and effectively.

Verse 30:

Reading was done aloud to aid memorization.

~ The Big question – **Do you understand?** (1 Cor. 2:14)
What a great question. I'll stand before you every Sunday preach the riches of God's truth to you. What I'm really saying every Sunday and Wednesday night is do you understand. I am pouring my heart and soul **into** preparation so that I can instill in you the engrafted word of God. My sole responsibility is to help you understand. This exercise is so important that pastors, preachers, teachers, and evangelists all over the world have given their lives to this calling.

~ Where did he get an entire scroll of Isaiah? It must have cost a lot.

- * This man had all he needed.
- * The Spirit, The Prophet, The Word.

~ We must remember- men without Christ do not understand.

Truth is revealed.

Verse 31:

You are the person that has to explain it. You do not have to be a Theologian; you just have to be saved. Here is what you can tell them. Jesus changed Me! Tell them salvation is needed; tell them salvation has been provided; tell them salvation must be accepted. Tell them the ABC's of salvation: accept, believe, confess.

Verse 32:

Tell them Jesus was sacrificed for them. He is a spotless Lamb – He went with all the power and authority of heaven to the Cross in Submission and Humility. He went quietly and with great love for us all to be slaughtered.

~ He did not complain – He willingly died and suffered for you and me.

~ He submitted to God's Authority –

Submission = Grace

When we submit, we come under the protection and provision of those we submit to.

Illustration:

e.g. I submit to my Doctor's authority as a Doctor. If not, I get the consequence.

e.g. The workers on traffic detail. Submit or hit a car head on.

Verse 33:

Jesus was shamed and humiliated for the lost. (Isa. 53:8-9) - He was cut off – no children physically.

The Eunuch would have understood this.

* Christ inherited children Spiritually.

* He did not get a fair trial. He was innocent and yet He willingly did not fight the charges. He became sin for us.

Jesus was denied everything we take for granted. He took the bad and gave us the good. We get mercy and grace because He took Justice.

2 Cor 5:21

21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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Phil 2:5-11

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death —
even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

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Verse 34-35:

Tell people about Jesus – so simple, but often neglected.

The Eunuch wanted to know who the prophet was speaking about.
It's all about Jesus.

(Dr. Gray's bubble gum sticker) – business card.

Jesus did the same thing to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Luke 24:25-27

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

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Point 4 – A Delighted Believer and a Departing Prophet - vv. 36-40

Verse 36:

- Baptism is after salvation.
- Baptism is by immersion (v.38, into the water- eis).

Verse 37 is a later addition, but still gives the sense of what the early church felt about how one is saved.

Verse 38 - He stopped and got out in front of the entire caravan – What a witness. No shame and excited to proclaim his faith in the Messiah of the good news.

Explain Baptism

Verse 39 – The Spirit takes Philip away like Elijah and Enoch. He was left rejoicing. (Picture of the Rapture). Joy is symbolic of salvation in the Scripture.

Boice says Philip went on his way rejoicing as well, and he had a great career after this. He went up the coast to the north and preached in many other cities (AZOTUS) for one. Eventually he arrived and Caesarea, where he settled down and had a family. Acts 21:8 says that Luke and Paul stayed with Philip when they arrived in Caesarea from Macedonia on their way to Jerusalem, and by this time Philip had four unmarried daughters who were

prophetesses. John Stott calls attention to the differences between the two samples we know of Phillips' evangelism. In the first case, he spoke to people of mixed race, part Jewish, part Gentile. In the second case, he evangelized a pure-blooded Ethiopian who was wealthy and of great influence. Two very different cases. But the message was one and the same because there is only one gospel of Jesus Christ.

He went from Temple to Descent to Glory.

Acts 21:8-9

8 Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. 9 He had

four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

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Closing:

#1. Isaiah – 56:3-8

What do you think this eunuch did when he got back in the chariot and started back home? He picked up the scroll and began to read Isaiah again.

What do you think he felt like when he got to 56:3-8?

Isa 56:3-8

3 Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely exclude me from his people. "And let not any eunuch complain, "I am only a dry tree."

4 For this is what the Lord says:

"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant — 5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an

everlasting name that will not be cut off. 6 And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant — 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

8 The Sovereign Lord declares — he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."

NIV

He was not excluded anymore. God can reach Anybody,
Anytime, Anywhere.