

2007-01-13

Acts 8 “Philip the Evangelist”

Jerry Arnold

“Father in Heaven, we are about to open Your Word. And Lord, we are asking for a miracle to take place. We are praying that You will speak to our heart, that You will inform us, inspire us, that You will intrigue us, You will change us for eternity. Heavenly Father we pray that You will now send angels to fill this auditorium creating an atmosphere of heaven. We ask that Your Spirit will move up and down the aisles and speak to us directly. And we pray that You will stand here and preach Your Word to us. We are asking this and praying in Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

Luke wrote the Book of Acts. It was, some called, the birth of the church. Others say it’s not the birth of the church; the birth of the church goes back to Abraham. Well, we could debate that, it doesn’t really matter. What is important is that Jesus died, was buried, rose again, went to heaven, promised His followers that He would send His Spirit out upon them. They receive the Holy Spirit and they began to teach, to preach in the Name of Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts is a record of what took place. Not everything that happened, but many things that happened. Theologians all across the spectrum of perspectives believe that the Book of Acts in many ways will be relived in the last days. There will be another outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit. There will be another representation of His presence in a body of people that will go forth and change the world, like it happened back then.

Today, as we are looking at the Book of Acts, we are continuing our series. We are in chapter 8 if you’d like to turn there. And we are going to focus on the experience of one individual. His name is Philip. He is called in the Book of Acts, “Philip the Evangelist.” There are two Philips that are mentioned in the Book of Acts. I’ll tell you where the texts are, and you can find them later if you’d like. In chapter one there’s a Philip that is mentioned as being one of the apostles. In chapter 6 there is a Philip that is mentioned as being one of the 7 who we call the deacons, the first deacons. He was appointed to help in the distribution.

The Philip of Acts chapter 8 is the Philip of Acts chapter 6. He is not Philip the Apostle, he is Philip the Evangelist. Let me show you how we know that. Chapter 8 verse 1, Stephen has just been killed. It says, “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time the great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles.” So the 12 stayed behind. This story is about a man named Philip who went on. So it’s not Philip the Apostle.

In Acts 21, keep you hand here in Acts 8 and turn to Acts 21. You will see he is called Philip the Evangelist. Acts 21 verse 8: “On the next day we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.” What you just read will take place about 20 years after what we are going to study. So Philip the evangelist is the individual we are looking at. Who was he? What does he do and what’s the significance to us? These are some of the questions we want to ask as we look at his life.

Now just so that we make it an air-tight case, turn back to Acts 8 and look at verse 40. Philip has had an experience that we’ll preach about in another date, where he has baptized the man, he has brought him to Christ, it says in verse 40: “But Philip was found at Azotus, and passing through

he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.” So the two experiences about Philip in Acts chapter 8 and with him preaching at Azotus and going to Caesarea. Twenty years later we read about Philip being in Caesarea with his 4 daughters, and Paul on his way to Jerusalem with Luke and a few other people will stop and stay there for a few nights. So that’s our Philip, Philip the evangelist.

Let’s see what happens in Acts 8 verses 5-8. “Now Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.” Simple story, there are three things that happened, three powerful things that happened. It says that he preached Christ to them, that multitudes were healed and that there was great joy in that city.

“Now Philip,” it says in verse 5, “. . . went down to the city of Samaria.” And scholars make a lot to do of that saying of course you know, geographically Jerusalem was a high point in that area, going up to see the Lord. You know, we go up to Jerusalem. But there is also, the way that it’s written, as you are well aware, the Jews did not have high regards for the Samaritans. “Philip went down to the Samaritans.” This is racially charged. This is significant. This is powerful. This saw is reeking-havoc and it causes the church to be scattered. “Philip goes down to Samaria” and what does he do there? He creates a revival. He creates an event that turns a whole city to God through Christ. How does he do it? Maybe we can learn something from his methodology?

It says in verse 5: “Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.” The word here for “preached” can be translated this way: “told stories.” Philip apparently could tell stories. He was a good story teller. And what was the story he told? He told stories about Jesus. He told stories that were appropriate to the situations that people were in. If somebody was discouraged, he told them the stories about Jesus that would help them. If somebody was too kooky, he told them a story about Jesus that would help them. He preached Jesus to them. And I think this is fascinating especially in light of modern Christianity. And when I say modern Christianity I certainly don’t mean our denomination only. I hope you don’t believe this is just about us. There are all kinds of Christians all around, and yet, strangely enough we find our selves quite similar. When I think of modern Christianity and maybe some of the reasons why it lost its power, maybe there is something in our methodology? Philip told the story of Jesus and it changed the whole town.

What do modern Christians do? Modern Christians share doctrine and basically they do it this way: “We are right, you are wrong. Now let me show you why you are wrong! And I’ll show you why we are right. And if you don’t come over to our side, you are going to hell.” That’s modern Christianity! Doctrinal debates! Basically a classic gun-fight; ducking behind the rocks you know. Paw, paw with my text, paw, paw with theirs, and I am not listening, I am ducking, and on and on. And people look in on Christianity and they say, “What in the world is wrong? We are supposed to be serving the same God, having the same Lord, and yet some of the greatest divisions are among supposed believers. Doctrinal debate!

Oh, there is another one. Another way we'd like to witness and that is as theologians call it, "eschatology" or "last day events." There is rapture; there isn't rapture, pre-millennial, post-millennial. The mark of the beast is here now; it's later, on and on, great debates! Until the non-Christian listening is got to say, "What is wrong with Christianity?" There is another way that Christians seek to witness. They are involved in current events and issues. Gay marriage, abortion, all these things and from many pulpits across America, on a given weekend, these are the topics that are discussed and talked about. We are right, and they are wrong, and we are going to have a parade and we are going to counter their parade and on, and on, and on, and on. We've lost our witness!

Another way modern Christianity seeks to witness is through politics. "I believe in church plus state!" "Oh, no, no church and state, no, no, that's wrong!" "I believe the whole problem started when they took the Bible and prayer out of school!" "Oh, no, you can't go there that way. That would create a state-church and we can't do that." And we debate it. "If we can just get the right people in office, somehow we can create the environment where Christianity will thrive in this country," where supposedly we are persecuted. And we wonder why we've lost our power. In the Book of Acts, it was simple. Philip shared stories about Jesus! What are we doing? We debate doctrine, we debate eschatology, we fight over current issues and we fight in politics, and we wonder why we've lost our power?

You don't need Jesus Christ to fight doctrine, you don't need Jesus about eschatology, you don't need Jesus with current events, you don't need Jesus for politics. All you need is an opinion, and they are bound. Christianity has become so institutionalized. Unfortunately, this group is fighting for their flavor, and this group is fighting for their flavor, and they are each saying each other's flavor is wrong. And the person who hasn't committed says, "Brother!!!" Philip told stories about Jesus.

Thirty two years ago, this month, maybe this vary day, I can't remember the day that it happened, but I definitely remember the month. It was January 1975, towards the middle of the month. I was stationed on the US coast guard Cutter-Me Cano, it's an ice breaker. We were ported in Sue St. Marie Michigan. It was one of the coldest winters on record. We received a special citation for keeping the water ways open that winter. And one night, lying on my bed, it's called a rack on a ship; I had an encounter with Satan. It was stronger than any encounter I had prior to that. I knew I was in a process of being demon possessed. The long and short of it is, I cried out to Jesus Christ, He came into my heart, the devil fled. Jesus delivered me from drugs, from alcohol, and from a multitude of other problems. And I will tell you, nobody taught me how to share Christ. I couldn't stop but share Christ. He delivered me! There was nobody that came along and said, "Here is how you are supposed to do it." Nobody had to tell me that. I just had to share. Because Christ was in my heart, I had to share the story of what Jesus had done for me, and what He could do for you, and what He could do for your friends, and your family. And then, I began reading in the Bible what He had done for other people.

Philip shared the story of Jesus. He shared stories about what He had done for other people, and about what He had done for himself, and Philip changed the whole town. Could it be we've turned away from the proper emphasis? And the truth is brothers and sisters, doctrine and all that, eschatology, current events, politics; it doesn't matter if you are right. If you don't have

Christ, you are lost anyways. So who cares? Jesus was talked about by Philip. He told stories about Jesus. And I think to myself, in our context, wow, with all the training that we have to teach people how to witness: “You can do this, you can do that,” and we have these canned programs regardless of where people are at, and you go through this. “No, no, sorry, I don’t care that your mother died, we are studying this tonight.” You know, and we do all this stuff, and really, when you get down, when you peel all the layers off, it really comes across as self promotion, trying to build our own institution up.

The truth is brothers and sisters, if we had been taught how to learn the stories of Jesus, if had been taught how to have an experience with Jesus, nobody would have to teach us anymore beyond that. We would share the story, and the world would be changed. You don’t need training to share.

You know, it’s fascinating about theologians and theology. I liken it to this. If you go and visit someone in the hospital, and they had something taken out, and you talk to them. What do you ask them? What’s the first question you ask? “How are you feeling?” “Oh, I feel okay. Yeah, they took out – whatever, parts a, b, and c; said I am going to be okay now.” Have you ever said, “Well, how do they do it? How does anesthesia work and what are the surgeons doing? And how do they cut through you and keep you from bleeding to death, and all that?” Do you go in all those details? No, you just ask them how they are doing, and that’s all they know. “Well the doctor came in and said I am going to be okay. I may have a little pain here, and a little, you know, it’s going to take care of that twitch, or...” what ever it is. They are sharing their experience. They are not getting into the nuts and bolts of it unless they are a surgeon or something.

But theologians, and unfortunately people like me, we stand in pulpits week after week, and we make this thing so complicated; people are confused and discouraged and feel like, “I can’t do any of it because I don’t know how to answer all those questions. I don’t...” Just forget everything you’ve ever learned, and learn of Jesus, and you’ll be just fine. You experience His story and share that with other people, and you’ll be just fine. Philip shared Jesus with people. Verses 6 and 7 it says: “And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip. Hearing and seeing the miracles he did. For unclean spirits crying with the loud voice came out of many who are possessed. Many who are lamed and paralyzed were healed.” Philip shared the story of Jesus, and Philip was involved in a healing ministry. We’ve had people healed in our church as a result of our prayers.

And I don’t know how it was happening here. I don’t know if there were long lines at the assembly’s where he preached, and he, you know, padded them on the forehead and people had to catch them and all that? I don’t know if he was doing that? And I am not trying to mock that what’s happening on TV because I don’t think we should be so naïve or foolish to think we can speak for God. Whether He is in something or not, we don’t know exactly in every detail. Are you with me on that? But I do know this that whether there are miraculous healings taking place every time we gather together or not, there is a ministry to be done in helping to heal the mind and the hearts of broken humanity. That comes through sharing the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ with other people.

But also, if you've been hanging out with our denomination for any length of time, you know there is a great emphasis on health. I am just curious, how many of you are vegetarians? Yes, a lot of us are. It's because of health. We want to be healthy. In fact, we probably as a people know more about health than any group of people there is. But unfortunately, instead of it being a ministry, we've made it a matter of salvation. We say, "Oh, you are eating that? Oh, I can show you in the Bible; it says in the last days people that are eating that, they are going to hell. You shouldn't eat that. You should eat my soy-patty." And you know we really win a lot of souls that way, don't we?

What if it were a ministry instead of, "Well, we got to get them interested in this, and then we'll hit them with this, and hit them with that, and then we'll just nurture them right along until they are one of us." Oh please God don't make them one of us. We need to be Christians. Christ followers, sincere individuals with an experience with Jesus. What if we took the simple things we know about health and taught them to people who needed to know those. And what ever happen, happens. You know about nutrition. There is no scientist on earth that will argue against a plant-based diet. But it is not a salvation issue. And let's not ratcheted up to a salvation issue; it is a healthier way to eat, that's all. Unless you do what most of us do, and you add all those sweet treats that just accelerate your triglycerides, munching right up to the moon. Nutrition, exercise, it's a simple thing.

You got somebody that's hurting physically and stuff. If they are able take them on a walk, and walk with them at their pace, the distance they can go. Let them get up and help them get started. Make it a ministry instead of salvation issue. Water, it's fascinating; I believe now since bottled water has been invented that more water is being drunk than ever before, and that's good. There is something relaxing about drinking out of a bottle or thinking that this Evian stuff that was made in someone else's city it's cleaner than the stuff made in our own city. There is just something relaxing about that and encouraging, and we should drink lots of water. It's healthy for us.

Sunlight, you know the simple principles. Ten-fifteen minutes of sunlight a day, just get out there and let it touch your skin and warm your body and strengthen your capacity to assimilate vitamin D and some of the other things that it does. And frankly, it gives you a better attitude. Temperance, hey, avoid the stuff that's bad. Air, you got to start breathing. Breath, breathe so that your stomach protrudes. In fact, I have 13lbs of new breath, just since Thanksgiving. Rest, you know of all the things I've learned from this denomination, this thing called "The Sabbath" it's the bomb. Man, it's the best! Because last night, sun went down, shut the curtains to the world, 8:15 I was in bed. Rest, oh man, can you imagine what your life would be like if God hadn't said, "Hey look, I want you to take one day off." You'd just drive yourself and those around you crazy. Rest and we need to learn to trust in God. These are simple principles and ones that you've heard about. But what if they were shared as a ministry instead of a means to try to get them to become one of us or as a way to show them where they are wrong.

Philip went down to the city of Samaria. Told the story of Jesus and people were healed of mind and heart. In verse 8, "And there was great joy in that city." Wow, let me ask you something. Would that describe our people? Oh, there are such a joyful people! Joy means gladness of heart. Would people say as domination, "Oh man, those people are fun to be with. Oh, they are so joy

filled.” It kind of reminds me of an experience I heard when I was living in Michigan. I heard some man preaching on the radio. And he was describing Christians, and he said he was driving through Chicago with another man. And the fellow he was driving with pointed to the corner and said, “That man is a Christian.” And he says, “Do you know him?” And he said, “No, I don’t know him at all.” He says, “Well, how can you tell he is a Christian?” And he said, “Well look how sad he looks; look how sad he looks.”

Here it says, “Great joy!” The experience of the Ethiopian Eunuch when he accepted Christ, it says in verse 39, it says: “Now when they came up out of the water” he’d been baptized, “...the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away so that the Eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing.” Filled with gladness in his heart, joy, joy! Now let me tell you brothers and sisters, the Bible teaches clearly that in the presence of God there is fullness of joy! God sent Jesus Christ as a means to get you into His presence throughout eternity. God’s goal for you is to be in His presence. The result of being in the presence of God is joy!

Did you know God’s ultimate goal for you is joy? The means is Jesus Christ, and the process is being in the presence of God through Jesus Christ. Do you understand what the ramifications of this are? Think of this: God’s plan for you, His purpose for you, His ultimate goal is joy. That means if that’s the ultimate place, if that’s where we are supposed to go, that’s where we are to take people, and Christ is the means to get there, do you know what being a witness for Christ means? I am here to help you experience joy. Now think of that in the context of witnessing. Here you are, you are working over at McKee’s, and you are working on the line, and you know, it’s been you habit, you are straightening people out doctrinally, eschatological, and on current events, and politics and all of a sudden the whole thing changes in your mind and you are thinking, “My witness for Christ is to bring joy to this person so that they can begin the process of wanting to learn how they can have joy.” All of a sudden everything changes.

What will it do to the home? Husband and wife both earnestly seek the joy, the gladness of heart of the other one. And to think that the Christian home should be the happiest place on earth, why? Because each other seeking the joy of one another. Even as parents, believe it or not, our ultimate purpose is seeking that our children will experience joy. Now I know you set that aside when they are adolescence. You have to. But here is what I think is one of the greatest crimes on this planet. I understand conflict when they are in their teens. My children, praise God, the youngest is 22 and I like all my kids again. I’ll tell you the greatest crime; to have your children as adults and they don’t want to come around you. Because when they come around you, you are pumping them with doctrine, you are pumping them with current events and issues, you are pumping them with politics, eschatology, and it gets to the point where they don’t want to come around mom and dad. Why? Because mom and dad, to them it feels like they are being hocked on, mom and dad are trying to make up for lost times.

But think about it. If our purpose was to create joy in their life, gladness of heart, they’d want to come around. And they’d be around. And the Christian home should be the happiest home on earth, and the strongest witness on earth should be the Christian home. The husband, who is a Christian, seeks the joy of his wife. The wife who is a Christian seeks the joy of her husband. That is unusual and miraculous and it tells powerfully in this dark world; it shines bright, much

rejoicing, great joy. If you know Jesus, and you know His stories, and you have an experience with Him, you will have joy.

Now I want to share with you an amazing thing about the story of Philip. Look at Acts 21 please. We are looking at verses 8 and 9. In Acts 21, verses 8 and 9 it says, “On the next they we who were Paul’s companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.” In Acts chapter 8 Philip on his, after going to Azotus, went to Caesarea. Twenty years later, where is Philip? Where is he? He is in Caesarea. What is he called, what is his title? Philip the evangelist; Philip the evangelist! What has he been doing for 20 years? He’s been raising a family in one town. And many people think, all through the Book of Acts is just filled with these itinerant preachers who go around everywhere, and they have no roots anywhere. No, Philip the Evangelist lived in one town for 20 years and raised a family!

Brothers and sisters, we’ve made it so hard for you. We’ve told you, “Unless you go somewhere and do evangelism, you are not doing evangelism.” We want you to go somewhere else and do it. And the truth is, the reality is, everyday of your life God brings people into your life. There is your mission field, and it is ripe for the harvest. Those people need their hearts gladdened by your joy. And they need to hear the story of Jesus. The people you are with every day.

Let me share with you. We’ve made it so complicated for you. People are so filled with guilt and they fill so unskilled and unable to share. I’ll tell you what we should have been doing. We should have been teaching you how to read the Bible, and how to pray, and how to have an experience with Jesus. We wouldn’t have to teach you how to share after that. In fact, I want to invite you to come out Tuesday night at 7:30. We’ll be studying about Moses, but I am going to teach you how to read the Bible so it’s meaningful. And if you are not a member of the church, or if you are a new member, afterwards at 8:15 we’ll have another class, and you are welcome to come. We are studying about God. Imagine studying about God and His word.

This Philip stayed home in a city. Got a job, bought a house, lived a normal life so to speak, but from that posture raised up a church right there in Caesarea. Brothers and sisters, you don’t have to go anywhere. Everyday, every person who comes into your life is in one of two conditions. He either does not know Christ as the Savior, or he does know Christ as the Savior. If he knows Christ as a Savior, then strengthen and encourage their experience because it’s a hard journey. If they don’t know Christ as their Savior, live your life honesty, openly, sincerely before them in such a way that you won’t turn them away. And then let God in the right time in the right way give you an opportunity to share the story of Jesus with them.

Every one of us is a minister for God where we are right now. Now take just a little bit and look around; just look around right now. The people you see are the people right now God wants you to minister to. That’ it! They are here, and you are here, and these are the ones God wants you to minister to. We the church, and those who represent the church have made this so very difficult for you, it’s no wonder the church has lost its power.

Today, I offer you no doctrine. Today I offer you no eschatology, today I offer you no current events or issues, and today I offer you no politics. I only offer to you Jesus Christ. And my story

is simply this. When I asked Him to come into my heart, He did. And He delivered me from the clutches of Satan. He delivered me from alcohol, and from drugs and the whole cadre of activity around it. He delivered me, and I know He will deliver you. And if you would like today to say, "Lord I want You to come into my heart. You may never have said that before, now it would be a good time. Or you may have said that and drifted, or you may have said it but you want a deeper experience, it doesn't matter. If you want to say, "Jesus please come into my heart, bring healing of mind and heart, and fill me with Your joy," I am going to ask you to stand right where you are at.

"Father in Heaven, we ask for Jesus to come completely and fully into our being; we are praying Heavenly Father that not only could we learn stories about Him but that we would have our own story about Him. Please heal our minds, heal our hearts and fill us with joy, we ask in Jesus' name, Amen."