

Being Faithful vs Being Fruitful

How to be faithful that you might be fruitful

Acts 8.26–40

[Based on three articles by Brandon O'Brien]

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • July 26, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2020

Scripture Reader and Reading: Dan Calvert – Acts 8.26–29

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: – Larry Amberg – Songs on salvation

Prelude:

I. The Lord is in charge.

- A. So what does he do to get the things done that he wants done?
- B. For example, before he ascended to heaven he gave the Great Commission
 - 1. that the church should preach repentance and remission of sins,
 - 2. starting at Jerusalem and go to every nation.

II. As you know the church started in Jerusalem, yet

- A. it stayed in Jerusalem,
- B. until a major event happened that made the church spread out.
 - 1. In Acts 2, they are in Jerusalem because that is where the church started.
 - 2. In Acts 3, they are still there.
 - 3. In Acts 4, they are still there.
 - 4. In Acts 5, they still have not spread out even to other places in Israel.
 - 5. Acts 6 shows a problem in the Jerusalem church.
 - 6. Acts 7 shows Stephen preaching to the Jewish Council in Jerusalem.
 - 7. However, Acts 8.5 says:

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.

– Acts 8.5

- a) What prompted Philip to go down to the north and go to Samaria?

b) Truly, he did a great work there:

6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

– Acts 8.6

12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

– Acts 8.12

C. Still, there appeared to be no plans

1. to spread out in the land of Israel, and
2. certainly there were no plans to go into the rest of the world.

III. Yet, it eventually happened.

A. What was the catalyst that got the church to leave Jerusalem and

B. preach throughout Israel and eventually here to Grants Pass, Oregon?

1. Remember that in Acts 7,
2. Luke showed Stephen, one of the first deacons in the church,
 - a) preaching to the Jewish Council.
 - b) They did not like what he said.
 - (1) Therefore, they stoned him to death.
 - (2) At that time, Luke introduces us to a young man named Saul, and
 - (a) Luke showed Saul of Tarsus doing something
 - (b) that got the church out of Jerusalem:

1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a 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.

– Acts 8.1

- i) That is then when Luke shows Philip going to Samaria.
- ii) Undoubtedly, Philip had decided to stay there.
 - (1) I would,
 - (2) after all the success he had there!

IV. However, later in the story,

- A. Luke shows Philip on a deserted road,
 - 1. southwest of Jerusalem,
 - 2. preaching to a high official from the empire of Ethiopia.
- B. How did he get there?
 - 1. What happened when he arrived?
 - 2. Let's find out.
- C. Open your Bibles and follow as I read Acts 8.26–40.
- D. Now, let's note somethings about these two men.

Persuasion:

I. Persecution

- A. Philip had to go to Samaria because he was persecuted in Jerusalem.
- B. Luke shows a lot of persecution in the Book of Acts.
 - 1. Years ago I gave a sermon showing
 - a) that most people call it the Book of Conversions, because
 - b) it shows the church carrying out the Great Commission.
 - 2. However, I have found 65 cases of persecution reported in Acts, and
 - a) not nearly as many records of conversions,
 - b) leading me to say that it should be called the Book of Persecution.
- C. Interestingly, the persecution did not seem to bother Philip, but

1. he went right on doing
2. what brought on the persecution.

D. Writing about the persecution did not concern Luke.

1. He did not complain.
2. He did not encourage the church to rise up in opposition.

E. Jesus said that it would come.

1. He also taught that we should rejoice in it.
2. That is what we saw Philip doing.

II. Philip Was Obedient as a Servant of the Lord

A. An angel of God told Philip where to go and he went.

B. Luke introduced us to Philip back in Acts 6.

1. Philip served “tables,” because that was what was needed.
2. Philip preached later because that was what was needed.

C. Philip did what needed to be done.

1. He served to free up the apostles, the preachers,
2. that they might devote themselves
 - a) to prayer and
 - b) to the ministry of the word.
3. The church had a need, and he filled it.

D. Someone in the world (the Ethiopian) had a need, and he filled it.

E. Listen, brethren, the New Testament teaches

1. that we are servants, slaves even, of the Lord Jesus Christ,
2. that is one reason why we refer to Him as Lord!
 - a) If He is our Lord,
 - b) we are His servants.
 - (1) We do what *he* wants,

- (2) not what is convenient for us or
- (3) what is tasteful for us or
- (4) what we like to do.

III. Philip Was Ready

A. Philip was open to the Ethiopian.

1. “Do you understand what you are reading?”
2. He just knew that an angel and the Spirit had brought them together.
3. Then Philip ran with it.
 - a) Even as he saw the need of the widows in Acts 6, and
 - b) even as he saw the need of the lost in Samaria here in Acts 8, and
 - (1) did what needed to be done in each case,
 - (2) so he saw this man’s need and did what he could to meet it.

B. The Ethiopian was on a journey.

1. He had traveled to Jerusalem from Ethiopia, and
2. he was on his way back when he met Philip.
 - a) Depending upon where he was going,
 - b) the trip may have been 2,000 miles or more.

C. Yet, the Ethiopian was in Jerusalem because

1. he was on a spiritual journey.
2. Not only did he worship in Jerusalem,
 - a) showing that he was a convert to Judaism, but
 - b) he was reading Scripture and searching for its meaning.

D. Philip found out where the Treasurer was on his journey, and

1. took it from there,
2. leading him to see Jesus in the Scriptures.
 - a) Philip was faithful.

b) The Lord made him fruitful.

E. First Peter 3 shows that this is what the Lord wants us to do:

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

– 1 Peter 3.15–16

F. Colossians 4 teaches us to learn to know what to say:

5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

– Colossians 4.5–6

G. Proverbs 16 shows that being ready is a wise thing:

**21 The wise in heart will be called prudent,
And sweetness of the lips increases learning.
22 Understanding is a wellspring of life to him who has it.
But the correction of fools is folly.
23 The heart of the wise teaches his mouth,
And adds learning to his lips.
24 Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.**

– Proverbs 16.21–24

H. Proverbs 15 agrees to this:

**28 The heart of the righteous studies how to answer,
But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.**

– Proverbs 15.28

IV. The Ethiopian

A. He served his queen as a treasurer.

1. Therefore, he was well-paid,
 - a) shown by riding a chariot, rather than walking,
 - b) had a personal copy of at least part of the Scriptures (expensive), and
 - (1) was making a long journey,
 - (2) which would require money and time.
2. Let us be careful of what we say about government people.
 - a) Consider Psalm 116 and what the psalmist said about all men, and
 - b) apply it to politics:

**11 I said in my haste,
"All men are liars."**

– Psalm 116.11

B. Look at this man:

1. He was an Ethiopian.
2. He was a eunuch, probably because he worked for a queen.
3. He was a treasurer.
4. He worshiped God.
5. He meditated on the Scriptures.
 - a) To be a eunuch he may have been castrated.
 - b) Deuteronomy 23 says this about eunuchs and the temple:

**1 "He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter
the assembly of the LORD."**

– Deuteronomy 23.1

- (1) He went all that way, but

- (2) could not even enter the temple!
 - (a) Nevertheless, the man still sought God and
 - (b) still made the journey to Jerusalem.
 - i) Would anything keep this man from seeking the Lord?
 - ii) That reminds me of the woman who sought Jesus:

21 Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. 22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." 23 But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." 24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" 26 But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." 27 And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

– Matthew 15.21–28

- (1) The Lord ignored her.
- (2) The disciples were annoyed with her.
- (3) The Lord put her on a level with dogs.
 - (a) Yet, in wisdom she persisted.
 - (b) She would not let anything deter her from the Lord.

C. Getting back to the Ethiopian; see his humility.

- 1. This man is rich.
- 2. This man has great authority.

- a) Yet, he told Philip that he could not understand the Scriptures
- b) without someone guiding him.

D. Look again at Acts 8.32–33.

1. The eunuch fixated on Isaiah 53.7–8.
 - a) He wanted to know who this man was
 - b) that would or had suffered slaughter.
2. Undoubtedly he had been reading more of the surrounding context.
 - a) Then Philip used that passage
 - b) to declare Jesus to him.

E. What was the result?

1. The Ethiopian wanted to be baptized immediately.
2. And Philip did so without scheduling a future time.

V. The Lord Let Man Do His Part

A. We saw that an angel and the Holy Spirit brought these men together, but

B. Philip had his part to do.

1. Heavenly beings will not do what we should do.
2. The Great Commission, doing good works, and other things,
 - a) were not given to the Spirit or to angels.
 - b) They have their things to do behind the scenes, but
 - (1) the Lord gave us instructions and commandments
 - (2) on what he wants us to do.

C. The Ethiopian eunuch could not have a family, but

1. on that day he became a part of the family of heaven, and
2. I look forward to meeting him.

Exhortation:

I. Jesus is the symbolic lamb of Isaiah 53.

- A. He was silent before his accusers and judges.
- B. Then they led him to the slaughter.
 - 1. He did those things that he might bare our sins.
 - 2. The punishment heaped upon him,
 - a) satisfied the wrath of God, and
 - b) now we do not have to experience it.

II. The way you benefit from this sacrifice

- A. is you submit to baptism.
- B. That is why the Ethiopian wanted to be baptized immediately.
 - 1. What hinders you from being baptized?
 - a) Do you believe that Jesus is the lamb of Isaiah 53?
 - b) Do you want to cease from sin?
 - 2. The only things that hinder you from being baptized are:
 - a) Declaring what you believe about Jesus, and
 - b) your decision to do it.