

"Sowing the Seeds of the Gospel Message"

5/26-27/07

6 p.m.; 9 & 10:45 a.m.

Acts 8:26-40

INTRODUCTION*Who am I?*

If someone was to ask you, "Who are you?" you would likely answer by telling your name. But, your name isn't who you are, it is your name.

So, who are you?

In your program this morning, you will find a card, the size of a book mark. At the top it reads, "Who I am in Christ."

Let's answer the question, "*Who am I?*" by reading this aloud together ...

I am ACCEPTED

John 1:12	I am God's child
John 15:15	I am Christ's friend
Romans 5:1	I have been justified
1 Cor. 6:17	I am united with the Lord, and am one spirit with Him
1 Cor. 12:27	I am a member of Christ's body
Eph. 1:1	I am a saint
Eph. 1:5	I have been adopted as God's child
Col. 1:14	I have been purchased by God and forgiven of all my sins
Col. 2:10	I am complete in Christ

I am SECURE

Romans 8:1-2	I am free forever from condemnation
Romans 8:28	I am assured that all things work together for good
Romans 8:31	I am free from any condemning charges against me
Romans 8:35	I cannot be separated from the love of God
2 Cor. 1:21	I have been established, anointed and sealed by God
Col. 3:3	I am hidden with Christ in God

Phil. 1:6 I am confident that the good work that God
has begun in me will be perfected
Phil. 3:20 I am a citizen of Heaven
2 Tim. 1:7 I have not been given a spirit of fear but
of power, love and a sound mind
Hebrews 4:16 I can find grace and mercy in time of need
1 John 5:18 I am born of God and the evil one cannot
touch me

I am SIGNIFICANT

Matt. 5:13-14 I am the salt and light of the earth
John 15:1, 5 I am a branch of the true vine, Jesus, a
channel of His life
John 15:16 I have been chosen and appointed to bear
fruit
Acts 1:8 I am a personal witness of Christ's
1 Cor. 3:9 I am God's co-worker
1 Cor. 3:16 I am God's temple
2 Cor. 5:17 I am a minister of reconciliation for God
Eph. 2:6 I am seated with Christ in the heavenly
realm
Eph. 2:10 I am God's workmanship
Eph. 3:12 I may approach God with freedom and
confidence
Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through Christ Who
strengthens me

(Living Free in Christ, Dr. Neil Anderson)

Knowing and believing these truths not only gives us great confidence in our relationship with God, it also sets us free to do anything that God asks of us.

And, today, we're going to see this kind of freedom and confidence at work in a man named Philip, and how it applies to witnessing for Jesus.

OPEN Acts 8:26-40 (**PAGE** 1705)

READ Acts 8:26-40

To sow the seeds of the Gospel message ...

I. Believe That God Speaks to You (Acts 8:26-27a, 29)

v. 26-27a: "Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.'

27 So he started out ..."

Angels are messengers of God. So, these words to Philip originate from God Himself.

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

God was speaking to him, so he was obeying. God was leading, so Philip was following.

It's not necessary to hear from an angel to hear God's voice. In fact, even in the Bible, when you consider it covers about a 4,000 year span, it isn't a common experience.

If you are spending regular time with God in His Word, and applying it, you will be sensitive to His promptings and grow in discernment.

If you aren't sure if it is God speaking, or your own mind, or the devil, you can ask a Christian friend, leader, pastor about what you're hearing, ask what they think, and then learn to cultivate listening to God's voice.

Is what you're hearing in concert with God's Word? That is the core and ultimate test.

God will speak to you because you are His child. You are His servant. You are His representative in this world.

So, learn to know His voice through His Word and through increasing discernment, and follow His leading.

To sow the seeds of the Gospel message ... I. Believe That God Speaks to You

To sow the seeds of the Gospel message ...

II. Believe That God is Speaking to Others (Acts 8:27-28)

In v. 27-28, We see that God is speaking to the Ethiopian official through His Word.

This man is a "eunuch." In various cultures this was the practice if a man had an assignment in the government that included protecting the queen or the wife and concubines of a king.

It tended to strongly curb the sex drive, so they were considered safe to guard or work close with high-ranking women.

This is an important detail in regards to this story because in Judaism, if a man was a eunuch, he wasn't allowed to enter the temple. He was considered ritually / spiritually unclean.

So, in Judaism this Ethiopian official had two strikes against him in terms of drawing close to God: he was a Gentile (a non-Jew) and he was a eunuch.

How many strikes do you feel you have against you?

Lifestyle?

Committed horrible sins?

Greatly hurt someone?

Killed someone?

Destroyed other people's lives with drugs, alcohol, neglect, abuse?

Really, before God, all of us have only one strike against us before we come to Christ: we have chosen to direct our own lives instead of allowing God to direct our lives. That is what the Bible calls "sin."

The Bible says that "all have sinned" and fallen short of God's perfection. (Romans 3:23)

And everyone is forgiven the same way ... through faith in Jesus' payment for our sins. (Romans 3:24)

In spite of the strikes against him, the Ethiopian sought acceptance by the true God, and did what the

Jewish Law required of genuine followers of God ... this is why he was worshipping in Jerusalem.

This man has whole-heartedly responded to all the spiritual light he has been given...

- He has a scroll of Isaiah the prophet ... very expensive to own your own. It was copied by hand.

- The trip from Ethiopia and back took at least three months traveling as he was.

He is passionately pursuing God and responding to the spiritual light God has given ...

... and now God is going to give him even more.

REMEMBER: God is always at work preparing people's hearts!

And you can't tell who that is that by how they look, talk or act!

Philip doesn't know any of the specifics about this man, all he knows is that God told him to go on the road he's on and has told him to go to the chariot and stay near it.

Trust that God is at work in others ... have confidence in His ability to get anyone's attention!

God wants everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth!

He doesn't want even one person to be separated from Him for all eternity!

All people have the spiritual need for Jesus Christ.

And, so, in v. 30, Philip clearly sees that God has arranged an appointment with this man!

He sees that God has opened a door through that open scroll of Isaiah, and he hears the man reading it aloud ... a prophecy about Jesus, written by Isaiah 800 years before Jesus was born.

And so Philip walks through the door that God has opened, **"Do you understand what you are reading?"**

v. 31: And this very important official, this brilliant man, who manages the millions of dollars of assets for a nation, says, to this very common man who just ran up along his chariot, "How can I understand unless someone explains it to me? *Jump in and take a seat.*"

What an open heart! What an inquisitive mind!

v. 32-33: The passage of Scripture he *just happened to be reading* was Isaiah 53:7-8; a passage that predicted the death of Jesus for our sins.

v. 34: The Ethiopian asks the key question, **"Who is the prophet talking about ...?"**

v. 35: **"Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus."**

APPLICATION: Read the Bible so that you will know the story. You'll be amazed how much you will know by reading 5-10 minutes a day, going to Home Group and being here on Sundays.

v. 36-38: The Ethiopian believes, sees water on the side of the road, and asks to be baptized, and Philip baptizes him. (It was likely a spring, it is still there today, and still in use)

v. 39-40: God takes Philip to his next assignment, and the Ethiopian goes on his way rejoicing!

Can you imagine Philip's conversation with friends, *"You'll never believe what happened on the road to Gaza!"*

Can you imagine the Ethiopian official's conversations with friends, *"You'll never believe what happened to me on the way back from Jerusalem!"*

I. Believe God is speaking to you

II. Believe God is speaking to others

To sow the seeds of the Gospel message,

III. Believe Who You Are in Christ

We're back to where we started !

If you believe you are fully **ACCEPTED** by God, you won't let rejection by people control your witness.

If you believe you are **SECURE** in Christ, you won't allow fear to control your witness.

If you believe you are **SIGNIFICANT** to God's plan, you won't believe your witness is a small thing.

ILLUSTRATION

A man stopped at a McDonald's drive-thru for lunch. When he came to the drive-up window to pay, he noticed an attractive, hand-carved cross hanging from the woman's neck, so he commented, "I like your cross."

Her reply was a lesson in how simple it is to share one's testimony. She said: "Thank you. And I love the person who died on it for my sins and rose from the grave."

She easily could have left it at "Thank you." But her words show how simple it can be to plant the seeds of the Gospel.

CONCLUSION

Have you opened your life to Jesus and asked Him to forgive your sins? You can do it right now!

Do you believe God can speak to you? Do you believe He can speak to those who don't know Him? Will you believe this?

"Father God, I will spend time with You in Your Word so that I can hear Your voice and become so familiar that I will know your promptings as I live my daily life. Please use me to share the love of Jesus with people You are speaking to. Thank You! In Jesus' Name, Amen."