

## Going: Next Door and Beyond

### Oct. 3: Love in Word—the Verbal Witness: Acts 8:26-40

Intro: The Holy Spirit is empowering and directing the early church in remarkable ways. Walls are coming down. Doors are opening. The world is changing.

Part of the revolution that occurs with the coming of the Christian era is a REDISCOVERY OF THE BIBLE. The Bible had been captured by the religious elite and frozen in time. It had become a book just as dead as their religion was dead. They lived in tombs and they read what used to be but is no more.

Then Jesus came. He revealed the scriptures to them, particularly the promises about a Messiah that God would send to deliver his people from sin and death and bring them into a heart relationship with God. This new understanding of the Bible is clearly exemplified here in Acts 8 where the Holy Spirit transports Philip and then directs him to an exegesis of the text of Scripture that honors Jesus as the Promised One sent from God.

Much of our world is now experiencing the power of Scripture. Religious people who are dead in their sins and their religious works are rediscovering the Bible. And they are discovering what the Bible says, “He sent his Word and healed them.”

The Bible is a different book when you firmly believe that God speaks to you in the here and now through its pages. If you read the Bible simply as history or theology, you miss the whole point. God gave the Bible so that we might BELIEVE in Jesus as the Savior and be transformed by his living presence in our lives.

Nothing is deader than dead orthodoxy. Without the movement of the Spirit, we are all trapped in religious law and ritual. We must have the Spirit working in us to liberate us from the law—even the new laws that religions create—so we can see the living Christ.

That is what we want to do in this hour of worship. We want to hear from God through His Spirit and His Word.

**I. YOUR VERBAL WITNESS DEPENDS ON THE SPIRIT** --“The Spirit told Philip, ‘Go to that chariot and stay near it’” (Acts 8:29).

A. Who is actually at work during this entire event? The Spirit of God is directing everything! This Ethiopian man comes to know the good news about Jesus only because the Spirit of God brings it about. He is in control.

B. This kind of *sensitivity to the Spirit* is common in the Bible. People are listening to God and following his instructions. You cannot get in the place where God can speak through you or to you unless you are open to the Spirit.

\*\*\*I look at someone one and “love them” with a surprising and strong affection. I think it is the same experience that Jesus had when he looked at the rich young ruler and loved him. And I want to communicate to them the truth of God that will encourage and inspire them. I feel like I have a word from God for them. I am not saying it is infallible, but it is a direction that the Spirit leads me in these days, and it is exciting to me. I saw a lady and child, pressed down by concern and obviously anxious, and I wished for them the peace of God. I don’t want you to be lost. I want you to know God through Christ Jesus the Lord.

C. *The Spirit carried these authors* along, Paul tells us. He watched over their minds and hands so that they wrote the very words of God. Now he is carrying us along,

walking us toward his Word and toward himself. He gave us his word because he wants to know us and us to know him. Since this is his goal, he will certainly be continually at work bringing us to the Word by His Spirit.

D. *The Spirit opens the word.* You cannot understand spiritual things unless the Spirit of God is at work in you. When you get something, when the light comes on and you understand, that is the work of the Spirit. You have just experienced the activity of God in your life.

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**II. YOUR VERBAL WITNESS IS AN EXPLANATION**—“How can I, he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” (Acts 8:31).

A. The *perspicuity* of the Bible is an ancient doctrine that says a man can pick up the Bible, and read and understand. And that is true. On the other hand, these 66 books of the Bible are very diverse. They range from poetry to history to prophesy and proverb. It helps the know something of the ancient culture, the ancient language, and the nature of the literature you are reading. It’s not absolutely necessary to know these things, but it often helps. You will find yourself like this Ethiopian man—“how can I unless I get an explanation?”

B. God is taking us back to the Scriptures. He wants us to know His Word—it is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. The READER has a responsibility, then, to go through the struggle of understanding. This Ethiopian is doing the right thing. He is calling someone alongside to explain. You do that as you listen to preaching and teaching of God’s word.

C. The Explanation needs to center on the Word of God. Is someone simply giving their opinion or are they explaining the Word? There is a difference. True Bible preaching and teaching is focused upon the text and truth of Scripture.

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**III. YOUR VERBAL WITNESS RESPONDS TO AN INVITATION**:—“So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:31).

A. The Ethiopian GIVES an invitation. He is hungry to know. He is under conviction of the Spirit, we would say. He is open to hear the word of God. He is READY FOR A CHANGE. I am confident that there is someone in this room who has yet to issue the invitation, to open your heart, and invite someone to share with you what the Bible means.

This Ethiopian is a very capable human being. He is the Minister of Finance for a highly developed civilization on the Nile River. It is referred to in many ancient texts as the Kingdom of Cush. He is in charge of the treasury. His wisdom in the area of finance has not prepared him, however, to understand the ancient prophesy of Isaiah that he is studying.

B. Philip responds to the invitation. He knows immediately that the Spirit has brought him to this man for this very reason. He does not brow beat the man. He does not coerce the man to listen. He has a ready and willing audience in someone who has already been prepared by the Holy Spirit. When you get such an invitation, you must accept it.

C. This invitation opens the Gentile world to the gospel. The Ethiopian is a black man, a Gentile. He will be carrying the gospel back to a distant part of the world. His influence in his culture and country is powerful, and the gospel will take root in this distant place through the witness that is now occurring.

**IV. YOUR VERBAL WITNESS IS FOCUSED ON JESUS**—“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35).

A. Jesus is the commonality that binds together the books of the Bible. \*\*\*The 66 books of the Bible are like a string of pearls. They are held together in beautiful harmony by a strand that runs through them. That strand is Jesus. If you sever that strand, those pearls will fall out of order like a broken necklace. Jesus is the way.

B. Jesus is the object of God’s favor and his promised one. He is the climactic Word of God to humans.

C. Jesus himself is the most important HERMENEUTICAL principle that you will find. We know God through Jesus, and we understand the Scriptures through Jesus. Interpreting the Scriptures without reference to Jesus is like studying our solar system without reference to the sun.

**Conclusion:** Many people are disappointed in their churches these days. Day after day the new revelations about organized religion and those who live by it are disheartening and confusing.

Where do we go when we are disappointed with religion and its trappings? We go back to the Bible. Your priest or preacher may disappoint you. But God himself will never disappoint you. You may be confused by what people say about God and religion. But you will receive enlightenment as you open the Bible and allow the God of the Bible to speak to your heart today.

The Bible is about Jesus. This eunuch could never be a full-fledged Jew because of his physical blemish. But he could be a full-fledged member of the church of Jesus Christ through faith.