

Evangelising the Ethiopian

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[0 : 0 0] so if you've got a bible be great if you had a bible and you can open up at acts the book of acts again if you don't not used to reading the bible go to the very front there's an index and in the new testament acts turn to chapter eight the big letter number eight and we're looking at verse 46 and down to 26 down to verse 40 i want to ask a question just at the very beginning people often say what is god's will for me in life maybe you're asking that question john and hillary have asked that question what god's will for them is and it is for them to be married and it sounds like john has a call from god to to go into the ministry of the word and we all have a calling from god we've all got something that god really wants us to do um what is it for you do you ask that question what is god's will for me we know there is one thing for sure that god wants for all of us and that is having come to know christ that is supreme to know him to know jesus as our lord and savior he then wants us to be a philip he wants us to be evangelists now that doesn't mean to say that we have to you know have the office of an evangelist and philip was known as one of the first deacons actually um in acts chapter six uh but also as an evangelist we don't have to have that tag um but we are all called to share this wonderful news that we've got of jesus with the people whom god places in our on our path and and around us so what's god's will for it is to be evangelist to share the gospel gospel means good news uh when jesus left the world remember the end of matthew's gospel we're told that uh he said to his disciples go or in fact it's going and make disciples of all nations uh teaching them to observe everything i have commanded you baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit and i am with you always to the end of the age so what we have here tonight is a great teaching uh for the task that jesus has given to us to be evangelists and philip's in kind of the ethiopian unit it's a great model for us so we notice three things here in the passage that will help us first of all there's the prompting of the spirit so we begin in verse 26 now an angel of the lord said to philip go south to the road the desert road that goes down from jerusalem and to gaza and he started out but then we have in verse 29 the spirit told philip go to that chariot and see uh and stay near it and then after that in verse 39 when they came up out of the water after they had baptized the ethiopian eunuch the spirit of the lord suddenly took philip away and the eunuch didn't see him anymore so the prompting that we find read off here first and foremost seems to be of the angel of the lord but then it's as if the spirit of the lord is prominent in the next two verses now it's either that the angel of the lord is synonymous with the spirit or the angel of the lord was you the spirit of the lord was using the angel of the lord or guiding the angel of the lord to tell philip where to go because he had somebody god had somebody who he wanted to share with the the gospel of his son

jesus so either directly or indirectly what we have here first of all is the prompting and the role of the holy spirit of god now that's important in life it's important in evangelism um it's important in everything that we do as a christian and i think in what we in our circles you know reform circles we probably it's probably a reaction to a kind of a charismatic emphasis on the holy spirit we have um lost focus maybe or lost sight or lost the emphasis uh on the person of the holy spirit and the role of the holy spirit is very much you know like the the the point and purpose of floodlights at a match in the evening so if you go to watch a football match uh you don't go to look at the floodlights of course you don't the floodlights are there to shine on the the match that's going on and the whole point of the floodlights is so that you can see and watch and follow the match and the holy spirit is very much like that you'll have heard that illustration so often before so they're not there for us to gaze at in fact we would be blinded by the floodlights they serve a purpose and throughout the scripture the holy spirit is always called the spirit of god or the spirit of christ he flows from the spirit he's from god the father he's sent by god the son he is happy if i can say it like this the spirit is happy in his role as pointing us to jesus pointing us to god the father so we have the prompting of the spirit what does

that look like though in our lives what does it mean or what does it look like to be prompted in our lives and evangelism by the holy spirit well there's a passage in galatians in fact the whole of paul's letter to the galatians it's full of references to the holy spirit and chapter 5 he says in verse 16 so i say live by the spirit so there you go this is we're told to live by the holy spirit and so then the question is how do we do this how are we prompted by the spirit how do we live by the spirit he says two things one thing he says is passive and the other thing he says is active the first in galatians 5 that is passive is in verse 18 he says you are led by the spirit be led by the spirit that's a passive word there it should be translated let yourself be led by the spirit let yourself be carried in fact the word can mean carry as well by the holy spirit it's something passive but then there's also something active because in verse 25 paul says since we live by the spirit let us keep in step with the spirit so that's very much an active term it means it means listening to and responding to the spirit who speaks into our lives so we have this both this passive element and this active element that tells us how to live by the holy spirit how to be prompted by the spirit the passive element is and in galatians 5 paul talks about the fruit of the spirit it's not something we can generate fruit of the spirit is something that the spirit himself grows in our lives and it's a bit like when we pray in psalm 51 david prayed uh lord create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit that word david is praying lord create in me this that word create is a verb in the bible that is used only of god the creator god so david is saying change me lord but only you can that's the same idea with this passive element of the holy spirit but then the active element of the spirit is that we must keep in step with him and in galatians 5 the context very much is putting to death what paul calls the the the sinful nature or the acts of the flesh putting to death the things that we know are wrong that we know that dishonor god actively put them to death passively saying lord holy spirit fill me bear your fruit in me and that's what prompting the prompting of the spirit looks like in our lives i suppose you know we could call it a kind of a synergistic uh kind of thing it's past it's passive but it's also active and as we do as we pray for filling and practice i guess crucifying sinful acts you know the holy spirit will really make us more alive to situations just as he did with philip more alive to people that we should be maybe speaking to sharing the gospel with more alive to opportunities to share the good news of jesus you know it's a bit like this when you know you've ever been a smoker and you stopped smoking you know your taste buds you don't get new taste buds but certainly you just taste things differently don't you um that's what the holy spirit in us does as we um as he bears his fruit and as we we keep in step with him he just gives us a new taste for souls a taste for god a taste for the gospel so it's the first thing in the passage the prompting of the spirit and evangelism second thing is this the priority of the scripture so here we see philip from verse 28 and down he he meets this uh ethiopian unit in verse 20 uh 28 um an important official in charge of the treasury of candace queen of the ethiopian so he was a senior civil servant um working for a very powerful queen uh chief treasurer and in a chariot probably well we probably like driving a rolls royce a really kind of posh car uh posh vehicle and the spirit prompts him to go over there and to start speaking to him and you know what philip does philip acts as a midwife for this this ethiopian you know this unit comes to faith in jesus he's born again and just like a midwife doesn't cause a baby to come out or make the baby if you like so philip didn't make that baby didn't cause the baby to come out but he certainly helped that man to come to faith in jesus christ led him in the whole process of being born again and that's what god can do with you and with me as well as we're prompted by the spirit and as we give priority to the scriptures and that's what we see here so we see philip and he comes to the man and there are four things i want us to notice about his engaging with the you know the first is this beginning he begins with a passage of the bible that the man was reading in verse 32 he was reading this passage of scripture he was led like a a sheep to the slaughter and as a lamb before our shearers is dumb so he opened not his mouth is he a 53 very well-known passage philip began where the man was and i think that's a very important principle for us when we're evangelizing start where people are if people know certain passages of the bible start with what they know we're in a day and age where folk really probably largely don't even know the big you know kid stories of the bible daniel and the lions den david and goliath jonah and the whale or big fish um you know that kind of thing so if somebody has a knowledge of something of the bible it's a really good place to start with them don't we we should not go up with our idea of where this conversation should start when i think we need to be led by the spirit and where an individual is at it was the way it was in the ministry of jesus do you notice that he always started where somebody was so if it was the woman at the well chaotic lifestyle multiple marriages living with a guy he started there legion

demonic lifestyle i mean just in the grip of of evil and a broken man cutting himself self-harming crying out in anger crying out in pain um he's he addressed where legion was um mary and martha when their brother lazarus died he he approached them where they were at and started where they were at i am the resurrection and the life jesus said to the sisters he's he's spoken to death so you know we need to begin where the person is at whether it's a part of the bible whether it's where they are in their in their journey literally this man was in a certain part of his own journey and happened to be in isaiah 53 so that's the first thing the beginning the second is this um it's speaking we see here philip speaking to him that's crucial you might say well of course we know speaking is important well it was was it saint francis of assisi who is meant to have said preach the gospel at all times and and if necessary use words sounds very catchy and it's not what he said well he did say that but it was my understanding as i was taken way out of out of context um of course what it means is we should be doing good um uh jesus was known as a man who went about doing good and healing and feeding the poor and and restoring lives and absolutely but without speaking without sharing the gospel then we're no we're no different than many other um charities or many other mission agencies of one sort or another many other kind and helpful neighbors the gospel is different the gospel you know focuses on christ and who he is so we need to be speaking uh so david and marta or in peru are involved in a a church plant in colloquy i think is the how you pronounce it and and at present or giving out a lot of support as are many other mission agencies individuals and agencies that that many of us may support and they are doing practical good but it's in the name of christ and with the goal of sharing the person of jesus with these people because the bible says what is the profit if we if we gain everything in the world but then at last lose our own soul and jesus christ is the answer to eternal life so we do need to be using words i think we need to think about how we do use our words again we thought about that this morning speaking the truth but you know just think be gentle be kind sometimes be harsh absolutely but think how we use our words so there's beginning there's speaking there's focusing verse 35 we read philip began with that very passage and told him the good news about jesus so he began with isaiah 53 and then he expanded into all the other parts of the bible it would have been only the old testament by that time but you know i would suggest philip knew his old testament um and jesus is throughout the whole of the old testament we've got the new testament so we can use the whole of the bible to focus on jesus but it must focus on him see otherwise if we're just telling somebody to believe in god and especially in our day that can mean anything and everything i'm a spiritual person people will say well you know so is the devil he's a spiritual being um well i'm very religious well no i don't like that phrase at all why believe in god well what what does that mean though we need to bring our conversations friends friends to focus on the person of jesus christ that's what the holy spirit does he brings the light to bear upon jesus the father said this is my son of my love i am well pleased with him listen to him that entails us you know knowing our scripture knowing where to go knowing which passages that will reflect or speak into somebody's situation so we need to be yeah equipped with the bible ourselves that means our time with god every day is really crucial and critical so beginning and speaking and focusing and then there's responding there's responding because after this uh as he traveled along the road in verse 36 they came to some water and the eunuch said look here is water why shouldn't i be baptized how did he know about baptism because philip had obviously told him as jesus told the disciples go and teach nations baptizing them in the name of the father son and the holy spirit philip told him to repent and be baptized these are crucial responses that we need to press an urge on people only god can do it only god can give new life but we have to be pointing to people that towards have to turn away from our old life and turn towards a new life in christ following jesus we're not very good probably at pressing for a response are we for different reasons but if the time is right and if you sense that it is that time don't be afraid don't be afraid to say to somebody do you want to pray and ask jesus to come into your life to forgive you your sins and for you to hand over your life to him i wonder when there was the last time i did something like that when was the last time you did so there's the prompting of the spirit the priority of the scriptures all that philip did and said completely revolving around the scripture and then finally there's the place of the sign so verse 36 and following himself philip and the ethiopian eunuch pass some water they get down into the water he is baptized they come up out of the water and the spirit takes philip away so having believed he was baptized the question is why why be baptized why be baptized at all well it's a command jesus said that and as he left the the world um it's covenantal so in the old testament there was uh passover and circumcision and we don't have time for for this tonight but clearly in the

new testament there is the lord's supper and baptism and that these were signs of the covenant external markers that were witness that a person was passed in their lives to god and also baptism shows a continuation of the gospel

[20 : 19] message that links the old and the new the bible from genesis to malachi and from matthew to revelation is actually one story of grace you know it's all one story grace abraham was saved by grace and every new testament believer is saved by grace old testament believers were saved by grace and new testament were as well we are not dispensationalists in that respect it's all of god's grace and and baptism is a sign that that points to that points to the the cleansing away of our sins by the lord jesus christ so john hillary are going to get married i think this week hopefully um there'll be a ring involved does the ring on hillary's finger or on john's finger does that make them married no it doesn't but the ring on the finger um shows that they're married you see that's the difference so baptism cannot save us the thief on the cross one of the two thieves uh on either side of jesus one cursed him even up to his death the other said lord jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom and jesus said i tell you the truth today you will be with me in paradise that man was never baptized but it doesn't mean he didn't go to heaven of course it doesn't but when we can when we're able to we should be baptized if we have not been baptized we should also sit at the lord's supper and celebrate the lord's supper and we pray and trust when that when we come out of lockdown um and that's another thing we need to work through in churches but these are two what we call sacraments two signs that are tangible outward external reminders of what is an inward reality of the grace and mercy and forgiveness of the lord jesus christ and that's the place of the sign they are significant s-i-g-n significant they are a sign but the reality the most important thing of all is jesus himself the prompting of the spirit the priority of the scriptures and the place of the sign amen let's pray our loving god and heavenly father our prayer tonight is that that you will save us and that that then in mercy you will use us in your service and kingdom and whichever way that is you are the god who uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things it's wherever we're at wherever you've placed us and particularly lord as we come into more physical contact with folk during the week as time passes on or whether it's on technology will you help us to use every opportunity as philip did with the eunuch to show jesus and to introduce people to jesus holy spirit do a powerful work in this regard we pray may your kingdom come our father and may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven in jesus name amen in man for us you you