

Name and Claim It!

by Denis Lyle

Denis Lyle's sermon emphasizes the importance of being in touch with God's will, Word, and work in the mission of evangelism through the example of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.

Scripture: Genesis 10:1, Psalm 92:14, Isaiah 53:6, Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8, Acts 8:26, Acts 16:7, Romans 8:14, Romans 12:11, 1 Corinthians 15:3, Colossians 1:9, 1 Peter 1:21

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Evangelism"

Description

Denis Lyle preaches on the mission of the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the evangelization of the world through bringing people to Jesus Christ. The sermon delves into the story of Philip in Acts, showcasing how the Holy Spirit works through individuals like Philip to reach diverse people groups, highlighting the importance of being in touch with God's will, word, and work. It emphasizes the flexibility in how the Holy Spirit guides us, the need to share the gospel using God's Word, and the significance of being obedient and fruitful in serving God throughout our lives.

Transcript

Reading: Acts 8:26-40

19. WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Is there a hell Yes! Is there a heaven Absolutely! Did Christ die on the cross and rise again to keep people out of hell Yes. So basically our work as Christians is all about getting people to Jesus Christ!

Someone has said, "The mission of the Holy Spirit is the evangelization of the world". Just look at Acts.

The theme, indeed the analysis of the book is presented to us in (Acts 1:8) There the Risen Lord Jesus says,

" But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth". Now this verse summarises the entire book. (CHs 1- 7) describe the church established at Jerusalem. In (CHs 8-12) we see the church scattered to Judea and Samaria. Finally, in (CHs 13-28) we see the church extended to the remotest part of the earth.

Now as you trace the expansion of the gospel during this transition period you begin to see how the Holy Spirit reaches out to the whole world. In (Acts 8) the Ethiopian who was converted was a descendant of Ham. (Gen 10:6) In (Acts 9) Saul of Tarsus was saved, a Jew and therefore a descendant of Shem.

(Gen 10:21) In (Acts 10) the Gentiles find Christ and they are the descendants of Japheth. (Gen 10:2-5) Now the whole world was peopled by Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 10:1) and My, God wants the whole world... all of their descendants to hear the message of the gospel. (Mk 16:15) Remember the mission of the Holy Spirit is the evangelisation of the world. Now what I want to do this... is show you how the Holy Spirit uses one man in His purpose of reaching the lost for Christ. His name Philip. Now reading Acts for the first time none of us would have realised when we came to the dawn of Philips ministry in (Ch 6) that he would ascend to such spiritual heights in (Ch 8) Philip's ministry began as a servant, humbly doling out the widows portions in the Jerusalem church.

But it soared to unimagined heights when persecution hit. Though he was not an apostle, Gods power coursed through him to the despised Samaritans, and large numbers of them believed the good news and were saved. In the last half of (Acts 8) Philips ministry is still at its zenith. However, instead of the vast multitudes of Samaria, the transforming touch of God now comes through Philip to one man in a desert place far from the teeming city. My, God valued that individual as much as the multitudes, and He used to Philip to touch his life. Now I want us to look at Philip's portrait as its presented to us here in a three fold way.

(1) A MAN IN TOUCH WITH GODS WILL

Do you recall Pauls prayer for the church at Colosse

He says, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding". (Col 1:9) When Philip was appointed as one of "the seven", he was full of the Holy Spirit. And being in touch with the Holy Spirit Philip was open to the Spirit's guidance. My, his sensitivity to divine guidance was a major factor in him becoming a blessing to others. Philip was a man in touch with Gods will! Now God has a plan for you, just as He had a plan for Philip long ago, and Philip was an ordinary person that God used in an extraordinary way. Let me show you something about the working of the Lord in Philips life. Notice for e.g.:

(a) GODS GUIDANCE IS REVEALED TO PHILIP:

Its so easy is it not, to develop certain rigid ideas about guidance We suppose that because the Lord dealt with us one way, one time that He is under obligation to deal with us the same way, the next time and He is not. Ill: For example, some preachers look down on others because they prepare their messages beforehand, and thus they say, they are not being subject to the Spirits guidance while preaching. The other side of the coin is the story of the preacher who told his congregation one Sunday morning, "I have had a terrible week, and have not been able to prepare, so I am going to have to depend on the Holy Spirit. But let me assure you, this will never happen again." My, we must never confine the Lords guidance to the box of past experience. He just will not fit. You see Philip was:

(1) Flexible as to HOW the Lord would lead him:

He was wise enough and well taught enough not to be put off by the varied guidance of the Lord. For e.g.

(a) Philip was led by ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES:

(8:1,5) The Lord employed the pressure of persecution to lead Philip out from the mother church in Jerusalem, to a wider sphere of ministry in Samaria and elsewhere.

Here is God guiding through circumstances and of course He still uses this means today. My, we must never forget that the Lord is the Master engineer of circumstances, and this is a means of guidance, if the arrangement of those circumstances is left to Gods hand alone. Coming to the junction of two roads a gypsy threw a stick into the air. Three times she did this and then set off along one of the roads. Someone who was watching her, overtook her and asked for an

explanation, "Why", she said, "I always throw up a stick at the cross-roads to see which way to go". "But why did you throw it up three times" "Because it pointed to the other road the first two times and I wanted to come along this one". My, if we ask God to order our circumstances in such a way that we might understand His direction, then the arrangement must lie solely in His hands and not ours!

(b) Philip was led by the MINISTRY OF AN ANGEL:

(8:26) Some versions gave the translation, "An angel of the Lord". The Lord sent one of His angels on this unexpected mission. Why did the angel tell Philip to

go Why didn't the angel go Why didn't Philip say to the angel, " Go yourself, I'm busy". Here's the reason, God does not send angels to witness to people. Angels have never known what it is like to be a guilty sinner or to experience the joy of salvation. Actually, angels can only look in awe at God's amazing salvation work.

(1 Pet 1:21)

" Holy, holy is what the angels sing

And I expect to help them make the glad hosannas ring

But when we sing redemption's story, angels fold their wings:

For angels never knew the joy that our salvation brings."

Angels appear on several important occasions in the book of Acts. And the book of Hebrews tells us that they are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation". (Heb 1:14)

(c) Philip was led by THE HOLY SPIRIT: (8:29)

Now the NT is replete with instances of guidance being given by the Holy Spirit. Do you recall what happened on Pauls second missionary journey (Acts 16:7) Sometimes the Holy Spirit RESTRAINS: but look at

(Acts 16:9-10) Sometimes the Holy Spirit CONSTRAINS: (Rom 8:14) But lets keep this in mind. The Holy Spirit will never lead us to do anything that is contrary to the Word of God. My, if that inner voice tells you to do some foolish thing, something that is contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture, then you can be sure that it is not the Holy Spirit who is speaking. But My, do you see how FLEXIBLE Philip was as to HOW the Lord would lead him

Philip didn't say, "Well now, the last time God guided me an angel came. I've got to have an angel this time". Just the gentle inner speaking of the Holy Spirit was enough. Nor did Philip say, " Well, the Lord really spoke to me the other time. I don't hear any voice now.

He recognised the pressure of circumstances as being a form of guidance. Now tell me: are you flexible as to HOW God might lead you Or do you look on this matter of guidance as something which is stereotype

(2) Flexible as to WHERE the Lord would use him:

Look at (8:26) Now you put yourself in Philips shoes. Try to imagine Philips situation. Here in Samaria, immense success. The whole city stirred. Masses of people turning to Christ Great joy filling the city. My, its a happy time... a marvellous revival, and suddenly the Lord tells you to take a journey, to all places, the desert. Philip went from an exciting city and a growing congregation to a lonely desert road and a congregation of one. It would have been so easy to be discouraged, to question God. "Lord do you really want me to go to the desert There is nothing there but lizards. Have I not proved myself worthy of a broader ministry

I have been faithful in the small things. I even waited on widows. And now the desert Lord ...!" But that is not how Philip responded. He was ready to serve anytime, anywhere. "And he arose and went."

Do you believe that God wants people who are flexible like this I do. My, if God has done some great thing through you. Something that perhaps has been taken note of by many people, don't be so big and important

that you cannot serve Him joyously in some little sphere or in dealing with only one person. Oh, for believers who are flexible as to WHERE God wants to use them.

Tell me: are you Have you placed yourself absolutely at His disposal Can you say, "O use me Lord, use even me, just as Thou wilt, and when and where (a)

(b) GODS PURPOSE IS RESERVED FROM PHILIP:

That is Philip had no way of knowing that he was going to be used of God to lead a very important person to Christ. Luke does not give us the subsequent history of the Ethiopian eunuch after he had come to Christ.

But according to the church Father Irenaeus, he became a missionary to the Ethiopians. Someone who opened all North Africa to the gospel. Now Philip had no way of knowing that. All that he knew was that God had spoken to him and just said, "Go south to Gaza". and Philip said, "Yes I'll go". My, you have no way of knowing how God will use you if you obey Him!

About a century ago a Mr. Kimball led D.L.Moody to Christ. Now who was Moody Well, he was a world famous evangelist. Moody was an orphan at the age of four. He did not have the opportunity to get a formal education. As a matter of fact in the last letter Moody wrote before his death there were at least forty grammatical errors. He murdered the Kings English but he not disappoint the King. He loved the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Now Moody the shoeclerk came to Cambridge, England to preach. There in Cambridge was a young athlete whose name was C.T.Studd. Now Studd was one of the greatest athletes of his time. He played

cricket and as one of the Cambridge eleven he was a star. He was a man of great ability: culture: charm: and wealth. Indeed C.T. Studds father was a personal friend of the Queen, and was a multimillionaire. C.T. Studd had it all. I mean he had the looks: mind: money: athletic ability. But when C.T. Studd heard Moody preach, God touched his heart and Studd resigned from athletics and no longer was he a member of the Cambridge eleven. But he got involved in what became know as the Cambridge seven, who went to China, and established one of the mightiest movements in modern missions that this world has ever seen. Do you know what C.T.Studd said This man who was so mightily used of God under the influence of Moody! They said, "What motivated you to do what you did To leave the wealth: prestige and everything else behind" Do you know what he said, " If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him" I mean the man who led Moody to Christ had no idea that Moody would be used of God as he was. My, you have no idea of knowing how God will use you if you obey Him. (a) (b)

(c) GODS TIMING IS RECOGNISED BY PHILIP:

Do you see here the wonderful working of the Lord You see God directed Philip to the right person at the right time. My, is this not how the Holy Spirit

works From ABOVE we see the sovereign God working in a mans heart in such a way that after making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem he remains spiritually hungry.

And while reading a scroll of Isaiah as he is borne across the desert, he encounters a Spirit sent ambassador of Christ, Philip who leads him to the Saviour. From GROUND level we see the role of human obedience. Would the eunuch have been saved even if Philip had disobeyed The question is irrelevant. God chooses to use human obedience to carry out His plan. Heres Philip away up in Samaria and here is the Eunuch a way down on the Gaza road and God brings the two together. You see Gods sovereign work plus mans obedience brings the touch of God to needy human lives.

Put another way, there are all kinds of "chance," meetings ready to take place in a life that is sensitive and obedient to Gods leading. Some years ago late one afternoon I was completing my visitation when I felt constrained to visit a young married woman and her children who had been attending the services in Carryduff. I had called before and but unknown to me at the time she saw me coming and did not let me in. But this time it was different. For within a short period of time she opened her heart to Christ and was born again. Believe me I was glad when on that day I was sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and little did I know,

what results that step of obedience would bring! For since then, through that mothers testimony to her family

I've had the privilege of leading others in her family to Christ. Like Philip are you in touch with Gods will

Are you sensitive to the Holy Spirit Do you hear His whisper My ... have you wondered how many opportunities you and I have missed Because we've argued with God: questioned God: hesitated (1)

(2) A MAN IN TOUCH WITH GODS WORD

Can you imagine how Philips heart missed a beat when he saw the Ethiopian's entourage out there in the desert It must have been an impressive caravan because the man was the secretary of the treasury for the Candace Dynasty of the kingdom of what was then known as Ethiopia. Now Ethiopia in that day was a

large kingdom located south of Egypt. To the Greeks and Romans it represented the outer limits of the known world. It corresponds in our day to the modern region called Nubia. This was a black man and therefore a Gentile. He had just completed a thousand-mile religious pilgrimage to Jerusalem and had a searching heart. Evidently while in Ethiopia he had come under the influence of Judaism and had gone to Jerusalem to become either a proselyte (Deut 23:1) or a near proselyte. My, here was a noble man on a noble search. And as he travelled along in his chariot, he was reading (Is 53:7-8) aloud, as was the universal practice in the ancient world.

And suddenly there stood Philip, Gods hitchhiker.

" Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot". (8:29) And Philip was so much in touch with Gods Will and Gods Word that what followed came naturally. Now if we are going to be used of God we'll need to be (2) This chapter is full of what these early Christians preached. Look at (8:4) look at (8:5) look at (8:14) look at (8:35) Do you know the three gifts that God has provided to get sinners to Christ, the Word of God which brings light to their dark hearts, the Spirit of God who convicts people of their need of Christ, and the child of God. The Holy Spirit uses the Bible in witnessing and Christ is the central person of the Bible. He's one every page. The Old Testament anticipates Him. The New Testament announces Him. The OT predicts Him. The NT presents Him. Now from God's Word Philip showed the Eunuch:

(a) THE CONDITION OF THE LOST:

He showed this man that he was a sinner and that Christ had died for his sins. (1 Cor 15:3) The 53rd chapter of Isaiah which he was reading says: " All we like sheep have gone astray ...all". (Is 53:6) My, I have no doubt that Philip took that to explain why the Lord Jesus went as a lamb to the slaughter, why He was dying for our sins. Now noone has ever been saved who has not admitted that he or she is sinner. In the average congregation you have two classes of people who don't get saved. Those who think they are TOO GOOD and those who think they are TOO BAD.

But My, there is nobody so good that he need not be saved and there is nobody so bad that he cannot be saved. But we have to admit that we're sinners! Have you made that admission Have you prayed and meant it, " God be merciful to me a sinner" (a)

(b) THE CHARACTER OF THE LAMB:

For this very passage that he was reading (Isa 53:7-8) was all about the Lamb. What greater gospel text, and what greater opening for Philip, could be found in all the Old Testament Here was a seeking sinner, reading in the Scripture all about the Saviour. The Eunuch had come to the great passage in Isaiah that described Christ on the Cross, and he asked Philip the question, " I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this of himself, or of some other man" (8:34) Do you see what Philip did He lead him by the hand to Calvary and introduced him to Jesus. It was just a short step from the Scripture portion to the Saviours person. But how Philip would have delighted to relate that great Isaiah passage to the Christ of Calvary. "Why sir", he would say, "the prophet speaks of some other man". And what a Man!

And Philip would retrace the tragedy of Calvary. He would speak of the resurrection and the ascension. He would tell of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, of the birthday of the church, of the Great Commission to go into all the world to preach the gospel, baptising believers in the name of the Triune God! My, no matter what else you preach if you don't tell folk of the death: burial; and resurrection of Christ

you've missed the mark. "Then Philip ... preached unto him Jesus."

(8:35) In your ministry are you making much of the Lord Jesus The glory of His person: the sufficiency of His work Are you determined to know nothing among the people "save Jesus Christ and Him crucified"

(1 Cor 2:2) From Gods Word Philip showed... (a) (b)

(c) THE COMMAND OF THE LORD:

For we read (8:36-39) Obviously Philip had made clear to the eunuch that faith in Christ is followed by confession of Christ in baptism. Belief always precedes baptism. For baptism is the outward expression of an inward experience. My, the eunuchs experience makes very clear the Subjects of Baptism. Believers and believers only. The eunuchs experience makes very clear the Mode of Baptism. For (8:38) says, "And they went down both into the water". This was baptism by immersion. Still again, the eunuchs experience makes very clear the Outcome of Baptism. "And he went on his way rejoicing". (8:39) Could it be that you have no joy because you've been disobedient to the command of the Lord to be baptised (Matt 28:19) Philip (1) (2)

(3) A MAN IN TOUCH WITH GODS WORK

Many years ago a man stood up in one of D.L.Moodys meetings and said, " I have been for five years on the Mount of Transfiguration". " How many souls have you won to Christ" was the sharp question that came from Moody in an instant. "Well, I do now know". "Have you won any", persisted Moody.

" I do not know that I have", answered the man. " Well", said Moody, "sit down then. When a man gets so high that he cannot reach down and save others, there is something wrong." My, it does little good to be in touch with Gods Will and Gods Word if we are not in touch with Gods Work and that means people. You see at:

(a) THE DAWNLIGHT OF PHILIPS MINISTRY:

He was in touch with Gods work. Do you recall what the apostles said " Let our hands be freed from this responsibility of looking after the temporal needs of widows, and let us have men who are specially appointed for this purpose". Philip was chosen as one of "the seven," to serve tables and he not despise it! My, are you too big to be involved in Gods work Apart from warming a pew and throwing a few pound into the collection, what contribution do you make, to your local church (a) And at:

(b) THE NOONLIGHT OF PHILIPS MINISTRY:

He was in touch with Gods work. My, if Philip had not loved people with Christ's love, he would never have reached across the substantial barriers between Samaritans and Jews. It was the same with the Gentile Ethiopian here in (Acts 8) You see Philip loved Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, whites, blacks, ... it made no difference. He was in touch with people and genuinely cared about them. My, has Calvary love stripped you of racial and social haughtiness (a) (b) And at:

(c) THE TWILIGHT OF PHILIPS MINISTRY:

He was still in touch with Gods work. The book of Acts provides us with a brief peek at his life near sunset. Look at (21:8-9) This is the final glimpse we have of Philip, and here we see a thrilling career drawing to a quiet close. Some 20 years have elapsed between the time of Philips Samaritan ministry and his receiving

Paul as a guest in his home in Caesarea. The big meetings are over. The huge throngs are no more. The lilt and lift of the sensational went with the yesterdays. The noonlight has gone, the twilight has come. But Philip is still serving the Lord albeit in a different sphere! Philip had learned in the school of Christ to grow old gracefully.

I like to think that while Philip:

(1) Faded from Prominence he did not fade from Obedience:

Demas faded... tragically. He forsook Paul. He forsook the Lord. (2 Tim 4:10) But not Philip. The obedience that took him from Jerusalem to Samaria, from Samaria to the desert, from the desert to a royal chariot, was still his holy habit when last we have a look at him. Let our popularity with others pass if only our loyalty to Him remains.

(2) Faded from Fame, he did not fade from Fruitfulness:

There were those "four unmarried daughters who prophesied". (21:9) Instead of being frustrated maidens they were radiant and articulate spinsters.

What a tremendous influence Philip exercised over his family and how wonderful to see four girls walking in their Dads footsteps. My, think of the prayers: tears: precepts that had gone into the making of these four gifted girls. You see Philip was still bringing forth fruit in old age. (Ps 92:14)

(3) Faded from the ministry of Signs he did not fade from the ministry of Saintliness:

Here in this quiet Caesarean home "far from the madding crowd", the man who once travelled to points remote and risky now bore his witness mostly, it would appear with the constricted orbit of his home. My ... think of the contrast between the past and the present

In Samaria 20 years ago "the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did". (8:6) Where were the signs now Gone! Big crowds, big miracles, big tumult... all gone. Yet something bigger than signs remains. The character atmosphere of Christlikeness which is the hallmark of a saint. My, its a beauty that banishes bitterness: a sweetness that surmounts sourness: a tranquillity that triumphs over turbulence. The mark of a saint is that, when career glamour is utterly gone, character glow shines on. Philip maintained his spiritual glow right to the end. Indeed the fruit of the Holy Spirit was abundantly evident in his life. (Rom 12:11)

For as the shadows lengthened with the years, Philip one of " the seven", was still in touch with Gods WILL: Gods WORD: and Gods WORK.

And so continued to be the touch of God to others, his family: his friends finding refreshment under his roof.

" What is the mission of the Holy Spirit" The evangelisation of the world. And what a picture of that we have in Philip who was led by the Spirit, filled by the Spirit and used by the Spirit to bring others to the Saviour. Dr. Jonathan Goforth saw a mighty work done for God in Korea and China. He was so deeply concerned to see revival in his area, that he gave himself to an intensive study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He then preached what he had learned to the groups he visited. Deep conviction and confession of sin followed, and an increasing number of conversions.

While speaking to a heathen audience in a Chinese city, Goforth witnessed a stirring in the people's hearts such as he had never seen before. When preaching on the text

" He bare our sins in His own body on the tree", conviction seemed written on every face. When he asked for decisions, practically everyone stood up. Then, turning around seeking one of the ten evangelists who accompanied him to take his place, he found the whole band with a look of awe on their faces. One whispered, "Brother, He for whom we prayed so long was here in very deed tonight". Everywhere they went in succeeding days, souls sought salvation. They had given the Holy Spirit His rightful place in their work, and reaped their reward in His mighty working in their midst. My, is that not exactly what Philip did Is this not exactly what we need to do The mission of the Holy Spirit is the evangelisation of the world. That starts with us. Are you willing to be used of Him to bring others to Christ.

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