

The Holy Spirit in Action (Part 1)

by J.B. Rowell

The sermon explores the active role of the Holy Spirit in personal evangelism, emphasizing obedience and readiness to respond to His call.

Duration: 31:09

Scripture: Isaiah 53:7-8, Matthew 28:19-20, John 1:43, Acts 8:26, Acts 8:34-37

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Personal Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of relying on the Holy Spirit for guidance in personal evangelism. They highlight the joy and fulfillment that comes from leading others to Christ. The speaker uses Acts 8:26 as a scripture reference to support their message. They share a personal experience of approaching a United States Army captain on a train and engaging in a conversation about the need for Jesus as a personal savior. The sermon concludes with the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, emphasizing the importance of belief in baptism.

Transcript

The closer anyone lives to the Lord, the more that one will long to become a winner of souls. And so this afternoon I'm going to speak on the subject of the Holy Spirit in action, or personal evangelism. And then as I said this morning, wake up and get into the front line of action with the Holy Spirit.

Where would I turn for my scripture? Well, there's always a good scripture for any theme that you want to follow along scripture lines. And this is in Acts, the Acts of the Apostles, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, chapter 8 and verse 26. Acts 8, 26.

And this is a message that I love to give wherever I go. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went.

And behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority, and a Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, read Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot.

And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired, Philip, that he would come up and sit with him. And the place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb done before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth.

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man. Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him, Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said unto, and said, See, here is water.

What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and they baptized him.

And when they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus, and passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea. One thing is stressed in our thinking in these days, and that is that God is not seeking better methods, as much as he is seeking better men.

He is seeking holier men. For if a man is living in the attitude and experience of holiness in the presence of God, he will have a deep yearning to reach the lost for Christ. He will have a deep longing to go out after those who know nothing of our Savior.

I told you of Dr. Johnson from Japan who said, Rather, unbelievers do not believe because they do not believe that believers believe. Shall I read that again to you? Unbelievers do not believe because they do not believe that believers believe. The fact is this, that oftentimes our own attitude towards the things of God seems to be so cold, and so indifferent to the welfare of others, that we act towards the ungodly as though we had no responsibility towards them, and further, that we did not really believe that any out of Christ are on their way to hell.

But I believe that our convictions will have to deepen in connection with this, and the truth with regard to men and women who are out of Christ. We are told of one minister who preached a sermon on hell one Sunday night. The next morning he was down in the city, and a man of the city met him and said, I was in your service last night.

I want to ask you a question. Do you really believe what you were preaching last night? The minister said, well, of course I do. He said, of course you do not.

So the man said again, let me ask you, do you really believe the doctrine you were preaching last night? He said, I certainly do. He said, you certainly do not. And so the minister said, well, what do you mean? He said, I mean just this, that if you really believed that men and women who are unsaved are on their way to hell, you'd live a different kind of a life from the life you are living.

There was something in the minister's life which did not impress the questioner, and it may be that when we have said the last word in our sermon, there may be something that hinders the acceptance of the message. And we need to live lives in dead earnest in relation to the subject that I am presenting to you

this afternoon. It was Charles Finney who said at the end of his life, he said, if I could have my life over again, for every sermon I have preached to the unsaved, I would preach ten to the saved.

He was convinced that that is where the trouble lies, that if men and women who profess to belong to Christ were really aflame, really on fire for God, that would be the testimony which would gather in the unsaved to hear the gospel. And what is needed even today in this large auditorium is that every one of us shall be in prayer, praying that God the Holy Spirit shall visit us according to his own mighty power, his convicting power, his revealing power for the exaltation of Christ and for the winning of the lost to Christ. Now I have read a scripture, it is a very important scripture, and it has to do with the Holy Spirit's work in relation to personal evangelism.

And may I suggest this, never attempt personal evangelism or tract distribution without looking to the Holy Spirit of God for his guidance in this matter. Can you conceive of anything more wonderful that God should use anyone here in this auditorium to win another to Christ? Who can tell the thrill of joy and blessedness in the hearts of those young people after they have told the story of that elderly man being saved, to pass out of darkness into light and to be willing to tell of Jesus Christ as his own personal saviour? In giving this message I'm going to give you quite a number of outstanding points which I discover in this particular passage of scripture, because I feel convinced of this that if you want to preach on any particular theme there is usually some scripture which gives a condensation of that which you want to give. It is an epitome of the message with regard to the winning of the lost to Christ.

And so I give you the first thought here, and that is the Holy Spirit's choice of a man. It says here, and the angel of the Lord speak unto Philip. Now it may be that the Holy Spirit of God will speak unto an individual here and there and there.

I ask you this this afternoon, are you ready to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit as addressed to you, or do you regard the message as being given in a general sense for everybody but no one in particular? Well, I believe that it's going to be for someone in particular, and I hope it'll be you and you and you, and as well as myself, because we must first preach a message to ourselves before we dare to preach it to anyone else. Now here is the thought then, the Holy Spirit's choice of a man. Have you ever asked yourself this question, why did the Holy Spirit choose Philip? I want to ask you to look at the gospel according to John the first chapter and verse 43, and here you discover the reason.

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee and findeth Philip and saith unto him, follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph.

Notice, the day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee and findeth Philip and saith unto him, follow me. Philip findeth Nathanael. Philip was no sooner called by Jesus Christ than he went out to call someone else.

May I dare to ask this question of you today? I don't know how long you have been a Christian or how long you have been saved, but how many have you directed to Jesus Christ? How many of you sought to lead to Jesus Christ? Perhaps you've already been a believer for 5, 10 or 15 years, and perhaps you could not put down a list of names of those you have brought to the Lord Jesus Christ. Well the question is this, are you ever going to engage in this work? If you are, when do you propose beginning? Are you going to begin now or are you going to defer it for a more convenient season? The Holy Spirit's choice of a man,

well may the Lord choose many here today for this tremendous work. The second thought here is this, the Holy Spirit's call and command.

And here it is in this scripture, and the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip saying, arise and go. There's the call and there is the command. And it may be this afternoon one will hear that word of the Holy Spirit, arise and go, calling you to some special field of service, calling you to go to speak to ministers, to someone in particular.

One thing I have found is this, that if you are willing to engage in this work, you will discover that if the Holy Spirit of God directs your mind towards a particular individual, he is in all probability, if not in all certainty, preparing that mind, the mind of that one to receive you. I remember when I was on the train between Santa Barbara and San Francisco, and the train was crowded, but I saw on in that coach a United States Army captain, captain of the army. He was in full uniform, his breast was covered with medals and ribbons.

And as I looked at him, he walked down the aisle towards me and past me. And as he passed me, I thought to myself, I would like to talk to that man. He soon returned and was in his seat and the seat alongside of him was vacant, so soon I was in it.

And I began to talk to him, I drew out my tracks and I began to present one to him and then to talk to him as to our need, not your need or his need, but our need of the Lord Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. I'd only proceeded talking with him just for a minute or so when he looked me directly in the face and he said, there's something very remarkable about this. He said, do you know just last night I was praying God to send someone to talk to me and now you come and talk to me.

And in that coach, I had the privilege of talking to him about the Lord Jesus Christ, telling him of what the Lord had done for me because I think we must be very practical when we're talking people about the Lord Jesus Christ. And then he was willing to bow with me in prayer in that coach with the people all around while I prayed with him and prayed for him. And then he jumped to his feet and he put out his hand, he said, I'll never forget this and I'm going to read what you have given me.

And so we parted, but who knows what we're going to meet in the glory because of that meeting that day. Well, I go further than that and here in the third place I find the Holy Spirit's choice of a field. And it says here the angel of the Lord speak unto Philip saying, arise and go down toward the south.

Here is the Lord giving direction to Philip. And some of you young people are asking the question, well, where am I going to serve? Am I going to India, Africa, or where? Do not be concerned about that. The Holy Spirit, if he has his hand upon you at all, he has already chosen a field for you and he will lead you into the field of his choice.

And if it is the field of his choice, it will be the field where he will use you to his own glory. I would like to mention this, that a commander in the Navy, when he leaves port, usually has sealed orders and he is not supposed to open that envelope with the sealed orders until he reaches a certain latitude and longitude on the ocean. But when he reaches that point, he can open it and there discover where he has to go.

And so it is here in this story. It seemed that the Holy Spirit gave sealed orders to Philip, go down toward the south. He didn't tell him to whom he was to go, he didn't tell him just what he was to do, but he started him out in the direction where he wanted him to go.

And it may be that the Holy Spirit will do that with you. He will deal with you in the same way. He will perhaps redirect you as you're going downtown someday.

And instead of going down one street, you will go down another street. But whichever way you go, you may depend upon it, that the Lord has some work for you to do, someone to meet, someone he will use you to bring blessing to. I was on the ferry going from Vancouver to Victoria and I usually give out tracks on the boats.

But there was one lady in particular, I saw her and I thought I must give her the track. But she had her back towards me and as I advanced towards her, she went through the door onto the deck outside and the door sprung to and I was on the inside, she was on the outside. So she walked along the outside, I walked along the inside.

And I met her at the other end of the lounge as she came in again. And when she came in, I just advanced towards her with a gospel tract and I began to talk to her. And you know, I realized in a moment that I was in the presence of a woman in great distress.

What were her words to me? She says, one thing I know, I know that God sent you to me. Now how did I know? I did not know. But the Holy Spirit of God does know.

And if I could impress anything upon your hearts today, it is this. Trust the Holy Spirit to direct you in this great work. He knows the one to whom he would have you go and he will give you just the right word to say at the right time.

Well then the fourth thought here is this. The soul winner's response and obedience. We have been stressing the thought of obedience to the revealed will of God.

And here we stress it once again. The soul winner's response and obedience. And notice what it says in verse 27.

And he arose and went. The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip saying, arise and go. And he arose and went.

How immediate was the response. Are we prepared to make a like response today? When the Holy Spirit calls, there's no time to reason about it and to question why. There's no thought here in the mind of Philip of asking a reason for it.

Well, was there any reason why he should ask a reason? Well, humanly speaking, there was. Because in the very same chapter, you find that he was already a very busy man. For instance, in Acts 8 and verse 5, then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.

And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits crying with loud voice came out of many that were possessed with them, and many taken with pulses, and that were lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.

There, Philip is in a field to which the Holy Spirit had called him. He was in a prosperous piece of work. And there was great joy because of the great results.

When suddenly the Spirit of God says, Philip, arise and go. Didn't that require faith on his part? No questioning at all. And now if there is that ready obedience in your heart and mind, you may depend upon it that the Lord is going to use us and that to his own glory.

Right here in the heart of this passage is this thought, that the Holy Spirit makes the appointment. You find here that Philip had come to Jerusalem for to worship, in verse 27 and in verse 28, and he was returning. Here he had come to the city of religion in Jerusalem.

He did not obtain what he was wanting. He did not obtain any spiritual help. And he was returning to his home.

But will the Holy Spirit leave him if he has his mind and heart upon him? No. He will discover a servant he can send after him. And he found in Philip the one who would go after the Ethiopian treasurer who was returning from Jerusalem.

How soon are you to respond the moment the thought, the appeal, the challenge comes to you? I've told this different times because I value the experience very much. On one occasion I arrived back home when I was pastoring the church in Victoria. My wife said there's an urgent call for you to go to the hospital.

A man is dying and he's not a Christian and his wife is deeply concerned. I jumped in my car, went round to the hospital, went found the nurse. She said, well he's so very ill.

I said, I know that's the reason I'm here. She took me to his room and I went into the room and I saw there lying on the bed a man of big stature with his hands and arms stretched out over the bed covers. And I began to talk to him of our need of Christ as a personal savior.

And I'd only mentioned just a few words when those hands, helpless as they were, just came groping their way up until they were in the attitude of prayer. I knew he was the line he was thinking on and yet I had been told before I went that I would have to be very careful because he had been a very wicked man and no one had ever dared to talk to him along religious lines. And so when you go into a man's room and you're told that then you are wondering, well what am I to say to such a man? Well never bother yourself about that.

The Holy Spirit knows. He has the wisdom and he will guide you. He has promised to do the guiding.

And I said to that man, I said, I suppose you used to go to Sunday school as a boy. He said, I did. I said, and then you used to go to church.

He said, yes I did. I said, and isn't it easier to get away from these things? He said, yes and I've been thinking a lot about these things lately. Well I would never have known that that godless, wicked commander of the Canadian Navy had been thinking about spiritual matters.

And you will never know how deeply concerned this man or that man is until you approach them. Give them an opportunity to open up their hearts to you as many will if you approach them in the right way and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I mustn't stay with that story but I'll stay long enough to say this.

I quoted this and quoted that and scripture after scripture and he came to the definite personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as his saviour. And then I prayed with him and I prayed to the Lord to give him the blessed certainty of salvation and I wish you could have heard the hearty amen from that man. And then that the

Lord would give him the certainty of heaven and again there was that hearty amen.

And as soon as I had finished he said, I'm very tired now. I said, yes I'm going to leave you. I'd only been in his room for approximately eight minutes.

But I said, now before I go on I'm going to ask you this question. Can I go to those who sent me and tell them that you have definitely accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your saviour? He said, yes you can. Now this is the crucial point of my story.

Something I did not know and that was that he had been unconscious for days before I went into his room and up to within a few minutes of my going into the room. That was the reason the nurse told me he was very ill. And another thing I didn't know that in less than an hour of my leaving him he sank into unconsciousness again.

And when his wife came to see him that night she couldn't talk to him and he died that night. Now you know Christian friends I could just as easily have stayed at home because that was one of the days when I was feeling most unwell physically. And I had humanly speaking a reasonable excuse.

But I don't believe in using those excuses. I believe that we ought to launch out and if God gives you an opportunity he'll give you strength. And there was that man gloriously saved.

And the people asked me to write out an account of what happened in that room during those few minutes. And I wrote it out and they had it mimeographed and it was sent to relatives in California and in England and elsewhere because they were so amazed at the results. But why should we be amazed when we have the God we have? You know when I get on this theme it's a theme that I love to deal with because I know that it can become supremely practical.

I know there are men and women all around us. You are thinking of going to India, Africa, China, somewhere else, but there are people right on the campus here. There are people in Calgary when you go down.

Can you reach them? Of course you can. I was on the plane. I got on the plane in Victoria just last Tuesday, Wednesday rather.

The plane couldn't land in Vancouver. It landed in Abbotsford, fortunately for me because I found a whole crowd of people there in the port. And among them a lot of men from Ireland belonging to the Irish Fusiliers.

I thought well these are just the men who ought to have gospel tracts. And so I was soon giving them out to them and by and by I had a number of them around me and quite willing for me to talk to them about spiritual matters. Now I wish that you would pray just for that in particular, that those gospel tracts in the hands of those men who went on the plane with me and many of them came to Calgary and then they were going on to Toronto.

But pray the Lord will cause those messages to find a lasting lodgment in the minds of these men. And then too in the airport there was a Roman bishop. I thought well here's another opportunity.

So I advanced to him and I gave him one of my tracts. And I gave him my tract Blessed Assurance. And he took it and I sat right opposite from him and watched him read it through.

I believe this that once you put a spiritual message into the hand of a man and he begins to read it then begin to pray for him. Pray with him as he reads through. Why shouldn't a man be saved by reading a printed message as much as if he comes into a gospel service and is saved? This ministry is open to every young person here.

And if every one of you would become an ardent winner of souls, an ardent tract distributor between now and the end of your school year, how many would be saved? I don't know but I know that the Lord is willing to do mighty things for any one of us.

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