

Philip
(Evangelism; Love for others, Missions, World Evangelization)
Acts 8
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Moorsfield was a 16 acre park in the city of London. It was a place where people wiled away their Sundays off. It was not however the kind of place where you would want your daughter or son to spend their time. It was the site of bear-baiting, dog-fighting, boxing matches, pickpockets, and prostitution.

But Moorsfield was where the people were and 24 year old George Whitefield determined that if that was where the people were then that is where the gospel must be preached.

A couple of weeks earlier another brave soul had attempted to conduct outdoor preaching in Moorsfield. The table they carried into the park from which he was to preach had been broken to pieces and he and his companions had to run for their lives. The crowds wanted nothing of preaching.

It is to that park that George went that Sunday morning. He had been told that he and his friends would not come out alive.

WHY WOULD A MAN DO THAT?

He came out alive that morning and in fact he had the opportunity to preach to a very large crowd who didn't molest him at all. And that evening he went to another park, called Kennington. If Moorsfield was rough then Kennington was brutal; "here the lowest of London's citizens congregated in teeming numbers." (Arnold Dallimore, Whitefield) Mobs assembled in this park just to start and watch acts of violence; "here humanity gathered - men, women and children - unwashed and ignorant, wicked and diseased, a vast host of whom it might be said, "no one cared for their souls". (Dallimore)

WHY WOULD A MAN GO TO SUCH A PLACE?

Biographer Arnold Dallimore writes: "Moved with compassion...Whitefield walked out upon Kennington Common and proceeded to take the enemy's citadel by storm."

WHY WOULD A MAN GO TO SUCH A PLACE? He was "MOVED WITH COMPASSION!"

Philip, in Acts 8 was one of the people whose life was changed by Jesus. Philip had found the truth and truth profoundly transformed his thinking and his acting - his whole life. But when Philip and the others began to tell about Jesus they were met with unbelievable hostility.

Steven, another whose life had been changed by Jesus, was stoned to death for his beliefs. And once Steven was dead, it unleashed a firestorm of reaction to Christianity - even to the point that one Pharisee, Saul, was given authority to hunt down Christians and arrest them, have them beaten and even killed.

In response to this persecution, people fled for their lives. **Philip was one of them who fled from Jerusalem.** These people are running for their lives because they happen to believe in and desire to tell others about Jesus.

If your life was on the line would you talk anymore about Jesus?

But amazingly, Philip (we are told in Acts 8) goes to nearby cities and continues to tell about the Lord.

WHY WOULD A MAN DO THIS?

I. First of all, Philip cared; he was a man with compassion.

Last week I told you about Robertson McQuilkin of Columbia Bible College standing before an Urbana Missions Conference of over 10,000 students and telling them about all of the people yet to be reached with the good news of Jesus and how few people there are who are willing to seriously invest their time or their money in reaching them.

One student from the back yelled out, "How come?"

"How come what?" McQuilkin asked.

"How come there are so many unreached and so few willing to go?"

McQuilkin writes that during the few years since that question was posed to him he has developed a response.

For one reason there are so many unreached because so few care- truly care.

Why did Philip continue to tell of Jesus? He cared.

Why did Whitefield go into those parks to preach? He cared.

Why did the Apostle Paul continue to seek new cities, new people to tell?

He cared. He wrote: The Love of Christ compels me. He wrote: "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. I could wish my cut off from Christ if that would bring my kinsmen to Him.

Hudson Taylor, missionary to China for over 50 years said, "If I had a thousand lives, I'd give them all to China."

Alexander Mackey wrote: My heart burns for the deliverance of Africa.

Henry Martyn wrote after his arrival in India, "Now let me burn out for God."

Melville Cox died after only 4 months in Liberia. His last words were: "Let a thousand fall before Africa be given up"

Where are such men and women today?

Daniel Yankelovich, the noted research professor of psychology at New York University has written of a shift that has taken place in our culture. In his book, New Rules: Searching for Self-fulfillment in a World Turned upside Down, he says that Americans have one overarching goal in life: self-fulfillment.

He writes: They are forever preoccupied with their inner psychological needs. They operate on the premise that emotional cravings are sacred objects and it is a crime against nature to harbor an unfulfilled emotional need. They embrace a theory of freedom that seems to presuppose that you are free only when you do not commit yourself irrevocably. It used to be that success required subordinating the self to achieve worthy goals. While now self-fulfillment requires that the self be cultivated, not denied. It is in this conflict between denying the self and nurturing of self that we find the key to the changes of our era. (From McQuilkin The Great Omission)

While Christians don't espouse that theory, we live in a culture that does and we breath the same philosophical air and are greatly affected by it.

But in great contrast:Christianity is a religion of self-giving not self-serving love. God loved the world and sent His Son. Jesus loved the world and gave His life. Jesus looked at the lost of Jerusalem and cried.

Do you have a heart for those who do not know Christ? Does your heart burn for the deliverance of your neighbors, your coworkers, those in Mexico, those in India, those elsewhere around this world?

Do you look at the people who do not know him and cry?

Philip was a man who CARED - God help us to care!!

II. A second thing about this man Philip that is worth noting is that he was a man of vision.

Specifically he had God's eyes for the world. When Philip was approached by God to "go south to the road-the desert road, that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza" Philip went. You might say, "well if an angel told me to do something, I'd do it too!" Maybe not!

And when Philip finished there it says that he "traveled and preached the gospel in all the towns.

WHY IS THIS MAN DOING THIS? He knows what God is up to and Philip wants to be part of it. Why are so many unreached and so few willing to reach them?

Because we don't see the world as God sees it. I think many Christians are discouraged - we think God is losing.

When talking about reaching the world with the Gospel, there are some Evangelicals who have a theology that seems to picture God as some kind of poorly armed soldier who is forever defeated in battle for the world and is perpetually frustrated in trying to accomplish his will in the world. It's as if God is always losing and Satan always winning. The best they can imagine is that God will win in the end - that when Jesus comes again then it will all turn around and God will start winning for a change.

If I saw the evangelism in that light - I'd give up. If we are just in a losing battle that we must endure until the end then I'd quit. But my Bible says that God knows exactly what He is doing. He is moving people and events in just the right way to accomplish his ends. Jesus said that everyone whom the Father calls will come and no one can come unless the Father draws him.

As I mentioned when we looked more closely at ACTS 1:8; God has been in the business of bringing people to himself for over 4000 years. He was not done when he called Abraham. He was not done when he led the Israelites out of Egypt. He was not done when Israel expanded to its zenith as a nation. He was not done when he called and carefully disciple twelve men. He was not done when over 3000 responded to the Good News on the day of Pentecost.

"Jesus never intended to pick up a few converts and then gather just them together to enjoy His blessings forever." His heart was for the world. J.G. Davies has called our God a centrifugal God. God is love, always reaching out after others, always giving to touch others. And he will not fail!

But hasn't he already failed when we consider how many people have already been born and died? Do you realize that as many people have been born since 1975 as were born in all of the years combined before that.

Philip had World Vision because His Lord had world vision. Do we? Are you willing to be part of what God is doing in this world?

III. The third thing about Philip that I wish to point out today is that Philip believed the TRUTH. When Philip met up with the Ethiopian he told him the good news of Jesus.

Folks, if Judaism and Hinduism and Buddhism and Jainism, and Taoism lead people to the same God: if all religions are simply cultural variations on the same Divine theme, then evangelical Christianity is nonsense, the Bible is wrong and Jesus and Paul were fools!

Jesus said, No one comes to the Father except through me. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes..." The reason why there are so many unreached and so few willing to reach them is that we don't truly believe that. Somehow the pluralism of our culture has led us to act as if many roads lead to God. We don't want to be spiritually imperialistic. We don't want to offend. But if the Gospel is true than people must hear; telling them is not spiritual imperialism but the greatest kindness!

Here's what Paul said in 2 Cor 5: "Since then we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men...For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all...And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

Stephen Neill wrote: In this statement is nothing philosophically complicated - they are plain statements:

First: Jesus intentionally died and rose again and second: His death and resurrection have life and death implications for every person.

Whether it is your neighbor across the street or a person in the Godavari River district of India, the question is the same: Will that man or woman know God except through witness to the person and work of Jesus Christ? The Bible's answer is a resounding NO!!

Philip believed that he had life-giving truth to tell: He went from city to city telling the good news about Jesus.

Philip had God's heart for people, he had God's eyes for people and he had God's mind about the truth.

He was a WORLD CHRISTIAN: A man whose life direction was transformed by God's truth, God's vision and God's heart for people.

If we call ourselves followers of Jesus and are not "World Christians" then our work is cut out for us: We need to get God's heart for people - we do that by helping people in need. We need to get God's vision for the world - we do that by opening our eyes to the world beyond our own door. We need to get God's truth about Jesus- we get that through his Word.

People all over the world need to know about Jesus.