

Called to Break Down Barriers – Teaching Notes

(Acts 8:26-39; 8/13/17)

Introduction: A key idea in today's Sunday School material is that God used Philip to help an Ethiopian draw closer to the Lord. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to let God use us to help others draw closer to Him.

Body:

Read Acts 8:26-29

I. Obedience. Philip was instructed by an angel of the Lord to go south to a road. As he was following that instruction, he met an Ethiopian who was an important official. The official was on his way back home from worshiping in Jerusalem. The Spirit of the Lord told Philip to go near the chariot that the Ethiopian was sitting in and reading from the book of Isaiah.

Applications –

- **Following God's instructions.** Notice in vss. 26-27 that Philip learned as he followed God's instructions. First, God wants us to follow His instructions. The Bible is authoritative truth. But God also sends leaders and circumstances to help us discern what He wants us to do. Second, we are called to obey what we know. There are parts that we don't understand. But we should do the parts that we do understand. For example, we understand tithing and loving, even though there are details that we have questions about. Third, as we follow God's instructions, we can expect to learn more as we go. There is a hymn that talks about how "we will understand it better by and by." *Let's work on following those instructions of God that we do understand.*

- **Worshiping and studying the scriptures.** Notice in vss. 27-28 that the Ethiopian worshipped God and read the scriptures. First, the man being an Ethiopian is good evidence that he was a man of color. All the people in the Bible are not as pale as Charleston Hesston. Second, the man's high position didn't prevent him from drawing closer to the Lord, by way of worship and reading the scriptures. There are some who behave as if Christianity is only for struggling people. Third, the trip from Ethiopia to Jerusalem and back was about 1,000 miles. This was probably a once in a life time trip. But there is still something to say about a powerful man traveling 1,000 miles to worship, while many in our churches today will not travel 30 minutes a week to worship. *Let's work on worshiping God and studying His word, not matter what our status is in life.*

Read Acts 8:30-35

II. Observation. Philip ran to be with the Ethiopian. The Ethiopian was reading about Jesus being slaughtered like a sheep. Philip began to explain to the man how the text was talking about Jesus and the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection for those who believe.

Applications –

- **Understanding the scriptures.** Notice in vss. 30-31, 35 that the Ethiopian knew that he needed help understanding the scriptures. And thank God, God sent Philip to explain. First, we should know that none of us understand everything. Having a high paying job doesn't mean that a person understands the Bible. Second, we should be open to God using us to explain what we can. As disciples who study the Bible, we should develop some basic understandings over time. That is why we review things like the membership orientation material, each reach one, discipleship

habits, etc. And then thank God for God sending Pastors to teach the people of God. *Let's work on being open to learning and explaining those things that we do understand.*

- **Jesus the slaughtered sheep.** Notice in vss. 32-33 the prophecy of Jesus being like a sheep led to the slaughter. As Christians, we read the text as talking about Jesus. Jesus was killed on our behalf like sheep being killed as a sacrifice for the sins of God's people in the text. *Let's live like we appreciate what Jesus has done for us.* This kind of living should be known for praising God and striving to obey His will.

Read Acts 8:36-39

III. Outcome. As the Ethiopian and Philip were traveling, they came by some water. The Ethiopian started the conversation about being baptized in the water. Philip baptized him. The Spirit took Philip away. The Ethiopian is described as going on his way rejoicing.

Applications –

- **Christian baptism.** Notice in vss. 36-38 that baptizing the Ethiopian was more important than complying with some tradition. First, we should strive to keep “the main thing, the main thing.” Tradition is not the main thing. Helping people get right with God is the main thing. We should be open to looking at and using any methods that help people get right with God. Second, we should remember that Christian baptism is a symbolic dying and being resurrected to live for Jesus. If the symbolic water baptism doesn't picture what the person being baptized has decided in their hearts, the person is essentially just getting wet. *Let's work keeping the call of helping people to get right with God above the value assigned to traditions, and let's live like we are resurrected believers.* Resurrected believers should work on strong discipleship habits.

- **Rejoicing.** Notice in vs. 39 that the Ethiopian was rejoicing, in spite of Philip's being mysteriously taking away. First, as with Philip, there are somethings that happen in life that we really don't understand. We are urged to enjoy the moment, because we don't know what the next moment will bring. Second, we don't need to understand everything, to rejoice in the Lord. Understanding that we are saved through Christ and that God is working things out for our good are enough reasons to rejoice and praise the Lord. *Let's work on rejoicing about what we know, instead of being distracted by things beyond our control.*

Conclusion: Let's work on letting God use us to help others draw closer to Him. God has much for those who obey His will.