

Carried Along by the Spirit

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Date: 23 May 2021

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Acts chapter 8, verses 26 to 40. It's good to see all of you guys. I can't see those of you who are joining via Zoom, but thanks for joining us.

It's been good the last couple of weeks to see some of the faces we haven't seen in a little while in person to join us again. Thank you guys for joining us. We look forward to having more of you back in the coming months.

In the coming weeks. We're in Acts chapter 8, verses 26 to 40.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father, because you so loved the world, you sent your only Son.

And the Son you sent died for our sins, was raised, ascended, and he sent his Holy Spirit.

[1 : 31] That we too might be sent ones on mission that you have given us.

But Lord, we confess that we often lose sight and forget the mission given to us by our Lord Jesus.

We need to remember and we seek to be filled more and more and again and again with your Holy Spirit.

So we ask that you do that this evening. speak to us now.

Speak to us now. Glorify your name. Conform us to your will.

[2 : 44] Lord, pray that those of us who are dry in the wilderness will bubble up again with springs of life as your Word washes over them.

in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Acts chapter 8, verse 26 to 40.

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is a desert place. And he rose and went.

And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning seated in his chariot and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

And the Spirit said to Philip, go over and join this chariot. So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, do you understand what you are reading?

[4 : 08] And he said, how can I unless someone guides me? And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this, like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before a shearer is silent so he opens not his mouth.

in his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation for his life is taken away from the earth?

And the eunuch said to Philip, about whom I ask you does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else? Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with this scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

And as they were going along the road they came to some water and the eunuch said see here is water what prevents me from being baptized?

And he commanded the chariot to stop and they both went down into the water Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him and when they came up out of the water the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing.

[5 : 27] But Philip found himself at Azotus and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

The word mission is a buzzword nowadays in the church everything from in the world as well everything from cafes to schools have a mission mission statement now.

And if we were to ask Christians what they think is the mission of the church we're likely to get various answers. Some will take the wording from the Westminster Confession and say that the mission of the church is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Others will say that it's to love God with our whole heart and love our neighbors as ourselves. And still others might use the words of the famous hymn to say that our mission simply is to trust and obey.

Of course these are all true and biblical statements but they're so expansive and encompassing that they include all of Christian life.

[6 : 36] Not just the church but what every Christian should do in every aspect every second of their life. And precisely because they're so inclusive they don't help us to narrow down and focus.

Should Christians care about alleviating poverty? Of course. Should Christians care about abolishing human trafficking? Of course.

Should Christians care about improving public education? Of course. Should Christians care about being good husbands and wives and fathers and mothers? Of course. But are all of those things the mission of the church?

And if so considering that everything including our energy, money, and time are finite how do we prioritize?

How do we decide what to allocate our resources to? Missiologist just a fancy name for someone who studies missions Stephen Neal makes an important point he says quote if everything is mission nothing is mission if what I'm doing at home providing for my family trying to be a good dad and good husband is mission then I don't have to do anything else I'm doing mission the word mission by definition implies someone who sends us to fulfill a specific task and there is a specific task that the Lord Jesus has sent his church out to do and that's what we find in Matthew 28 18-20 Mark 13-10 14-9 Luke 24-44-49 Acts 1-8 John 20-21 all at the end of the gospel accounts at the climactic moment

[8 : 37] Jesus gives this great commission the most famous one being the one we know from Matthew 28 go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you that's the great commission and that's precisely what we see the early church doing over and over again throughout the book of Acts Pastor Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert put it helpfully in their book what is the mission of the church they say the early church in Acts show us that there is something worse than death and something better than human flourishing the early church understood that their mission was something higher than preventing human death and promoting human flourishing it's something more than that in Acts 8 26 to 40 we see

Philip fulfilling the great commission that God and his Lord Jesus Christ gave him and it really follows the outline of Matthew 28 verse 19 so we can use that as an outline of our passage first teaches us to go as directed by the spirit teaches us to make disciples of Jesus Christ teaches us to baptize into the church and and this passage main point is that we too must go wherever the spirit of God sends us to open the scriptures to speak of Jesus and to baptize those who repent and believe so let's talk about this in turn first we are to go as the spirit of God directs us it says in verse 26 now an angel of the Lord said to Philip rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza this is a desert place we don't know exactly how the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip whether he appeared physically to him or in a vision as in Acts chapter 10 verse 3 but either way

Philip receives a directive from the angel of the Lord notice in verse 29 it's the spirit who speaks to Philip since an angel is simply a messenger of the Lord and represents and serves the spirit of the Lord there isn't really a substantive difference it's the Lord who is giving him this directive and so the agency of the spirit in directing the mission is prominent throughout this passage later again in verse 39 it's the spirit of the Lord that carries Philip away to another location to preach the gospel and Luke tells us that Philip's obedience was prompt the angel of the Lord says in verse 26 rise and go and it says in verse 27 he rose and went again it says in verse 29 go over and join this chariot and it says in verse 30 that Philip ran to him it's kind of a funny scene to imagine if you think about it he probably had to run in order to catch up to the chariot and he's kind of running along the chariot trying to listen in to see what how the spirit leads him to witness to this Ethiopian eunuch this pattern of command and obedience emphasizes

God's authority and our need to obey to submit to him to promptly follow him and Philip's obedience I don't think was necessarily easy if you look at verse 25 which immediately precedes this passage it says now when they that's Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord they returned to Jerusalem preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans and then verse 26 says now an angel of the Lord said to Philip rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza the conjunction there in verse 26 translated now is also frequently translated but it notes a contrast Peter and John verse 25 return to Jerusalem but the angel of the Lord directs Philip to go elsewhere Jerusalem is a midpoint between the city of Samaria where Philip Peter and John were just ministering and Gaza and so it would have been very tempting for Philip on the way to stop in Jerusalem to stay with the rest of the apostles stay with the apostles but the angel of the Lord directs him to go somewhere else and notice where he tells him to go he says at the end of verse 26 this is a desert place recall that

Philip was enjoying an amazing reception in Samaria there was successful mass evangelism happening in Samaria the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip he said in chapter 8 verse 6 many men and women were coming to faith in the gospel and getting baptized and here that Philip is told by the Holy Spirit to go to the middle of a desert to minister to one person it would have been so easy for Philip to rationalize away this command from the Holy Spirit well that can't possibly be from the Lord why would I go to a desert place where there is hardly a soul when the Samaritans are so responsive to the gospel complacency makes us resistant to change and when the circumstances that God calls us to seem unfavorable to us it is very easy to rationalize it away even when it is a clear direction from the

[14 : 28] Lord when have you been tempted to do the same maybe you're on a plane and you feel the spirit leading to start up a conversation with the person sitting next to you and to share the gospel with him and then you rationalize well God doesn't want me to do that I don't know him and the conversation won't go anywhere anyway or maybe I have so much work to do before I arrive at my next destination or I've had a long week and I've been looking forward to relaxing and just reading a book on this plan all week or maybe God places a foreign nation and a people group on your heart and calls you to pack up and move there to proclaim the gospel but then you rationalize well that wouldn't be good for my children that wouldn't get a good education and surely that's not what God wants

I studied and worked hard for the last decade to earn this PhD it would be such a waste for me to give this up in my promising career to become a missionary surely God wouldn't want me to waste the talents he has given me I'm sure you can think of a hundred more scenarios where we can be tempted to rationalize away clear directions from the Holy Spirit of course we need to reckon with the possibility that some of us do not hear the directions of the Holy Spirit maybe not because he's not speaking but because we're not listening because we're reluctant to obey and because we're reluctant to obey we're not attentive to listen instead our posture should be the same as that of Samuel and 1st Samuel 3 10 speak speak Lord for your servant is listening yes we are commanded to test prophecies in 1st

Thessalonians 5 21 but we are also commanded not to quench the spirit or despise prophecies in 1st Thessalonians 5 19 to 20 whether it's a prophecy or a vision or a dream if after weighing them and considering their merit by checking them against scripture and getting counsel from mature believers in the church and if we determine that the spirit of God is indeed speaking to us and leading us our response should not be but and what if but here I am send me not every Christian is sent out as foreign missionaries if that were the case there would be no church left at home to send them but God gives to the church apostles prophets evangelists shepherds and teachers even if you are not sent out that's what an apostle is when it's sent out you ought to be prophesying or evangelizing or shepherding or teaching whether that's formally or informally if you are a Christian the great commission is a command for you go therefore make disciples of all nations baptizing in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit and teaching them to be everything

I have commanded you so in what ways are you contributing to making disciples of all nations we have a few members who are considering going into long term for missions that you'll be called upon to pray for and to support financially we have two missionaries visiting us we were here last week as well Mr. and Mrs.

Bishop who are also raising funds right now for Kosovo that you can support you can pray for how is the spirit of God directing you and as we are going we are to make disciples of Jesus Christ it's what verses 30 to 35 show us and central to this effort of making disciples is the opening up of God's word scriptures and that scriptures are mentioned repeatedly throughout this passage in verses 32 to 35 this is why Bible translation has been so central to Christian missionary efforts and in certain cases Christian missionaries have introduced writing a language a writing a written language to cultures that they were in to illiterate cultures in order that they might be furnished with their own Bibles to read scripture does not merely contain

[19 : 38] God's revelation to humanity it is God's revelation and it's the normative and authoritative means by which God speaks to us and is therefore essential for Christian discipleship so Philip obeys the spirit runs along by the chariot and it says in verse 30 that he heard the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah the prophet and asked do you understand what you are reading and the eunuch responds honestly and humbly in verse 31 how can I unless someone guides me and he invited Philip to come up and sit with him if your knowledge of scripture is not where you want it to be this kind of humble and humble admission is healthy humility is the posture of learning in their book how to read the bible for all it's worth Gordon

Fee and Douglas Stewart say this quote the single most serious problem people have with the bible is not with the lack of understanding but with the fact that they understand most things too well it's because we already think we understand it all it's because we already assume there's nothing new to learn that we don't learn as we open up God's word and so this question is actually a very good question that this eunuch asks how can I unless someone guides me he wants to learn he wants to grow he acknowledged the incompleteness of his knowledge and he asks for a teacher if you read the bible regularly you have likely had the same thought as the eunuch at times how can I understand unless someone guides me this is not to say that the bible is impossible to understand the bible is sufficiently clear to be able to make everyone wise to anyone wise for salvation through faith in christ jesus it's profitable for everyone this is the doctrine of scripture called the clarity of scripture or the perspicuity of scripture scripture everywhere assumes that people can understand god's word through ordinary means which is why later in chapter 17 the bereans are commended after hearing paul's sermon to go because they go and check the scriptures examine the scriptures daily to see if these things were so it would have if they were not able to understand it to see if what paul said was true the scriptures are clear however that doesn't mean that every part of scripture is equally or completely transparent even the apostle peter himself admits in 2 peter chapter 3 verse 16 that some of the scriptures written by the apostle paul are hard to understand and this is why there is still need for teachers in the church and the ethiopian eunuch puts it very pointedly how can

I understand unless someone guides me this is an invitation for teachers in the church to rise up there are people in our church and in our neighborhoods and among the nations who are asking this very same question how can I understand unless someone guides me Paul exhorts Timothy in 2nd Timothy 2 15 to be a worker who rightly handles the word of the truth it's possible to handle the scriptures wrongly so it's important that we are trained to handle them rightly this is why we have been offering bible interpretation help to our men's and women's ministries this is why we are starting up the preaching cohort that can be used to train up and assess men with pastoral aspirations that can be called potentially to formal teaching ministry some of you are very clearly gifted to church sorry gifted to teach hopefully you're all gifted to church as well huh even if you do not have a pronounced teaching gift there will be times you will be called upon to teach and this could be formal or informal when you're unbelieving family or friend asks you a question about the

Bible can you guide them to Jesus if you're not able to do so presently it's okay to say I don't know but then that should make you press into the local church even more so you can learn how to guide your unbelieving friend so that you might connect him or her with others who can help and so that your question next time it's asked to you in the future some of you are relatively new believers and you might feel ill equipped in your knowledge of scriptures hopefully this is a great incentive for you to delve more into your study of God's word with others in the church the passage that the Ethiopian eunuch was struggling to understand was a passage about the suffering servant in Isaiah 52 to 53 it's one of the most famous

Old Testament passages which describes the Messiah a servant of the Lord who suffers unjust humiliation and oppression and nevertheless he dies willingly for the sins of God's people so that they might be healed by his wounds and though this servant was cut off from the earth as it says in that passage without any descendants to continue his line he's eventually vindicated and honored by God himself and the two specific verses that that the eunuch was reading that are cited here in verses 32 and 33 are Isaiah 53 verses 7 to 8 please read along with me verse 32 and 33 it says like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before his shearer is silent so he opens not his mouth in his humiliation justice for his life is taken away from the earth the eunuch was evidently reading this out loud which was the custom back in those days and it's no coincidence that he's reading this this particular passage as

[26 : 10] Philip is running alongside his chariot he didn't understand whether what he was reading was about prophet Isaiah or about someone else as he asks in verse 34 and it says in verse 35 that Philip tells this eunuch that this prophecy of Isaiah does not refer to Isaiah but to Jesus and there are two important things that these two verses from Isaiah 53 tell us about Jesus first is his willing sacrifice like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before a shearer is silent so he opens not his mouth a sheep is innocent and submissive and if positioned correctly it will not resist or try to escape even when it's being sheared all four gospel accounts tell us that

Jesus did not protest or resist during his trials he remained silent gave no answer this is because as Jesus says in John 10 18 no one takes my life from me but I lay it down of my own accord Jesus was not being forced to the slaughter he went voluntarily because as the rest of Isaiah 53 verse 8 says he was cut off from the land of the living stricken for the transgression of my people the sheep was one of the most frequently used sacrificial animals in the Old Testament and it's for that reason that John the Baptist says of Jesus in John 1 29 behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world the lamb that is sacrificed to atone for the sins of people becomes a vivid picture of the death and bloodshed that they deserved but was spared of because the lamb took their place

Jesus is that lamb for us every lashing we should have received fell on Jesus the weight of sin that should have crushed us was carried by Jesus even our most heinous sins that you can think of the sins that you are most ashamed of the things you have hidden from the rest of the world Jesus took upon it himself when he died on the cross so that we might be forgiven and freed forever no one forced Jesus to do that he went to the cross without protesting he endured the cross despising the shame it says in Hebrews 12 verse 2 for the joy that was set before him can you imagine that the thought of cleansing us of our sins erasing our debt consecrating us as his special inheritance removing our shame making us a people for his special possession that happy prospect filled

Jesus with such excitement and anticipation that he was willing to endure the shame and pain of the cross for the joy that was set before him our redemption and salvation is his joy that's the good news for us this is the first thing that Isaiah 53 78 tell us the second thing it tells us about Jesus is this verse 33 in his humiliation justice was denied him who can describe his generation for his life is taken away from the earth Jesus was denied justice and humiliated his life was taken away from the earth that's a way of referring to his death he was cut off from the land of the living so who can describe his generation that's a rhetorical question no one can describe his generation Jesus has no progeny no descendant that anyone can speak of because he was taken away from the earth unjustly this interpretation is confirmed by a similar passage in

Jeremiah 11 19 where prophet Jeremiah describes himself in this way but I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter I did not know it was against me they devised schemes saying let us destroy the tree with its fruit let us cut him off from the land of the living that his name be remembered no more Jeremiah's enemy sought to kill him so that the tree that's Jeremiah along with its fruit that's his future prospect progeny would be destroyed meaning Jeremiah would have no offspring surviving him completely cut off and no more to be remembered in the ancient Jewish world to die childless was considered a most futile and cursed existence in the ancient Jewish world to die like that the kind of cruel injustice that Jesus was subjected to being completely cut off was really the worst thing that you can wish on anyone amazingly fertility and childbearing and barrenness are important themes in the book of

[31 : 44] Isaiah notably in Isaiah 54 which immediately follows this passage that the eunuch is reading from in Isaiah 53 it says this sing oh barren one who did not bear break forth into singing and cry aloud you who have not been in labor for the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married says the Lord enlarge the place of your tent and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out do not hold back lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes for you will spread abroad to the right and to the left and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities here's a wonderful prophecy and promise that in the new covenant age brought about by Jesus the barren one referring to Israel God's people Jesus is now the new Israel representing the people of God he will bear innumerable children and possess the nations similarly

Isaiah 56 3-7 promises that on the day of salvation God will include even the formerly excluded foreigner and the childless eunuch in his covenant blessings he says let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say the Lord will surely separate me from his people and let not the eunuch say behold I am a dry tree for thus says the Lord to the eunuch who keep my Sabbath who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off and the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord to minister to him to love the name of the Lord and to be his servants and to be his servants and everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it and hold fast to my covenant these I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples so then there is a wonderful connection between

Jesus and the eunuch here in Isaiah Jesus is the barren one the representative of God's people the Israelites but though he was childless though he was caught off from the earth so no one could speak of his descendants he will have many many children and his offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities so we see here that's what we see here in the book of Acts we see the followers of Jesus bearing witness to Jesus among the nations and thousands upon thousands coming to faith here even an Ethiopian eunuch is coming to faith in Jesus in a desolate place and in Jesus this Ethiopian eunuch though from God's people and his worship is accepted by the Lord and though he is a eunuch which means he was a castrated male serving Candace Candace is a title for the queen mother that ruled

Ethiopia he's basically a chief financial officer for Ethiopia but he's castrated to make sure that there's no question that the dynastic line the royal line hasn't been tempered with so he can't have any children but it says Isaiah promises that God will grant him a monument and a name better than sons and daughters I think this is precisely why Luke incorporates these two verses into his narrative Jesus did not defend himself he died in silence opening not his mouth but here we see Philip in verse 35 opening his mouth to bear witness to Jesus Jesus was vindicated by his resurrection and he's continually vindicated by his followers who bear witness to him similarly Jesus' life was taken away from the earth so no one could speak of his progeny and yet Jesus' spiritual progeny are multiplying all throughout the world among the nations and this

Ethiopian eunuch is the latest example of one so we're seeing them make disciples of all nations so we've seen Philip go as the spirit directed him and we've seen him make disciples of Jesus Christ and now we see him baptize the Ethiopian eunuch into the church the body of Christ says in verses 36 to 40 please follow along with me and as they were going along the road they came to some water and the eunuch said see here is water what prevents me from being baptized and he commanded the chariot to stop and they both went down into the water Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him and when they came up out of the water the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing Philip and Ethiopian eunuch happen upon a body of water in the middle of a desert place and the eunuch exclaimed see here's water what prevents me from being baptized wonderful question he immediately wants to get baptized now he's come to faith in

[37 : 02] Jesus in obedience to Christ command his command his comment is innocent what prevents me from being baptized he's basically saying why not here's water there's nothing keeping me this is a profoundly true statement because it's true that nothing prevents him from being baptized because of what Jesus has done but historically there would have been many things preventing him from being fully included among the covenant community of God first he was an Ethiopian man this is not modern day Ethiopia but the region that the ancient Greeks called Ethiopia which was south of Egypt modern day Sudan it's the area that the Old Testament calls Kush named after the eldest son of Ham Noah's son Ethiopia was considered in the ancient world to be the southern end of the inhabited world the known world and one of the most common features of

Ethiopians in ancient literature was their black skin color 13 verse 23 can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots the answer of course is no so this man was as foreign as he possibly can be he's quite literally from the end of the earth and he is black unlike Philip and the other Jews living in Jerusalem and Ezekiel 44 7 prohibited admitting foreigners uncircumcised and hardened flesh to be in God's sanctuary profaning his people it's unclear whether this man was an Ethiopian Jew someone who worshipped Israel's God or he was I guess from the if that's the case he would be a part of the Jewish diaspora or he's a Gentile who had converted to Judaism becoming a Jew or whether he was just a Gentile God fearer who was sympathetic to

Judaism and worshipped Israel's God but hadn't fully converted those options have been debated since the very early stages of church history so we can't settle that I personally think this man was an Ethiopian Jew mainly because later in Acts 10 Luke makes much of the gospel first being proclaimed among the Gentiles and the Holy Spirit coming upon them in Acts 10 the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewah I don't know how to say that one of the Ethiopian Orthodox traditions calls this Ethiopian Jew so if my inference is correct this man would have been ethnically Jewish but culturally Ethiopian a foreigner and his foreign identity is emphasized throughout this passage we know from verse 27 that this man had visited Jerusalem to worship God and the distance from Shendi which is near the ancient Ethiopian capital of Moreau to Jerusalem is about 3,000 kilometers or 1900 miles a horse drawn chariot or carriage could have traveled maybe 100 miles in one day and considering that roads and travel conditions back then were a lot worse than today this

Ethiopian probably traveled for at least a month to get to Jerusalem maybe months to worship there and then to come back so the round trip would have taken them several months and yet in Jerusalem this devout man would not have been permitted to enter the temple due to the second obstacle he was a eunuch Deuteronomy 23 1 specifies no one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord so this Ethiopian eunuch was doubly an outsider though he may have been a Jew he was a foreigner who looked and spoke and acted differently from the other Jews in Jerusalem and being a eunuch he was not admitted inside the temple he had as many reasons as anyone to be excluded from the people of

God and yet because Jesus breaks down the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles because Jesus tore down all that stood as a barrier between God and man on the cross what prevents me from being baptized when he asked that question the answer is nothing absolutely nothing even this Ethiopian eunuch can have full fellowship with the triune God and with his people through repentance and faith in Jesus baptism signifies and confirms the washing away of guilt and the purifying of our conscience it represents our union with Jesus in his death and resurrection we're saying we no longer live to ourselves now we live to

[42:16] Christ we've died with him have been raised with him and finally it also demonstrates our inclusion in the covenant community of God it says in 1 Corinthians 12:13 for in one spirit we were all baptized into one body that's the church the body of Christ Jews or Greeks slaves or free and all were made to drink of the one spirit when we are baptized we become members all each of us of the one body of Christ the universal apostolic church by baptizing this Ethiopian eunuch Philip is showing this man too is a full member of the body of Christ what prevents you from being baptized are you not yet a follower of Jesus do you feel that there are barriers that you could never overcome maybe you're a transgender man having gone through sex reassignment surgery so that you're castrated like this

Ethiopian eunuch you regret it you want to repent believe in Jesus and follow him but you feel like you can't maybe you're part of a despised ethnic group you've been discriminated against or or maybe you think that you're a foreigner in your culture in your family nobody follows Jesus maybe you've committed some heinous crimes or sins maybe you've served time in prison whatever you have done wherever you have come from whoever you are the promise of

Acts 2:38 is true for you repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ and for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit have you asked yourself what prevents me from being baptized nothing absolutely nothing prevents you from being baptized come to Jesus he has made a way for you so that you don't have to make a way yourself all you need to do is take your eyes off of yourself and fix your eyes on Jesus Christ and say there's nothing in myself that deserves salvation but there is everything in Jesus for my salvation faith is not a meritorious act it's not something that we contribute to our own salvation rather faith is an admission of our helplessness

God I can do nothing God I cannot save myself so I bring my whole self to you with all my sins so that you might save me that's faith and look at what happens immediately after Philip baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch it says in verses 39 to 40 and when they came up out of the water the spirit of the Lord carried Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing but Philip found himself at Azotus and he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea I love this detail Philip is whisked away by the Holy Spirit as soon as the Ethiopian eunuch is baptized which means this Ethiopian eunuch was the sole visible reason why the Spirit of God commanded Philip to go to this desert place to leave all of Samaria that he was enjoying so much successful ministry and to go to this desolate place to run along this one chariot to find this one eunuch it's mind boggling reminds me of the parable of the lost sheep in

Luke 15 Jesus or the shepherd that's in the parable leaves the 99 sheep behind to go after the one lost sheep it reveals God's heart for the lost if you are here or you're listening and you're not yet a follower of Jesus that's not this is not some chance event the living God who orchestrates the entire cosmos has been watching you has been caring for you and leading you and paying attention to you and wants to save you how can this be and if you're already a Christian don't forget this relentless love of God for you you're not just one among the masses that God saves God has singled you out

[48 : 01] God knows you by name he has the hairs of your head all numbered he has purchased you by the precious blood of his own son and he has sealed you with his very own Holy Spirit to declare you are mine when you know this good news of Jesus you can't help but rejoice so we see here verse 39 Ethiopian eunuch went away rejoicing similar to how there was much joy in the city of Samaria earlier in verse 8 when Philip preached the gospel to them and when you know this good news of Jesus you also can't help but share it so Philip is taken away again by the Holy Spirit to Azotus which is the ancient Philistine capital of Ashdod to once again preach the gospel there to people who have not heard it and through the book of Acts the book of Acts doesn't self tell us second century church father

Irenaeus as well as the third century church historian Eusebius both tell us that this Ethiopian eunuch became the first missionary to Ethiopia I'm going to challenge you to do this one thing as we close Philip ministered to the entire city of Samaria in the previous passage but here he ministers to one man why don't you start by writing down in your journals or maybe on a sticky note that you can put on your desk a name of one neighbor or one friend that you can pray for every day just one man one woman ask God to direct you as the spirit directed Philip ask God to embolden you give you opportunities to share the gospel with him or her God will answer that prayer let's pray together heavenly father that is what we desire

God we are overwhelmed by the love you have shown us what mercy how can it be that thou my God should die for me that we should have an interest in your blood being shed for oh God don't let us keep this to ourselves make us a church on mission to go to make disciples to baptize to teach and as we do that

Lord not to us Lord not to us but to your name be the glory in Jesus name we pray amen