

**Philip, the Evangelist****Lesson Scope:** Acts 8**Lesson Focus**

In the beginning years of the New Testament church, new things were happening. The Gospel message was going forth with zeal and power. Many were putting their faith in Jesus Christ.

New believers went everywhere preaching Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42). They were convinced that this great event in history was God's salvation for the whole world. The emphasis was no longer on keeping the Law and ordinances (Colossians 2:14). They had Jesus' own explanation of Moses and the prophets showing "in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). The Holy Spirit had also filled them with discernment and power to speak Gospel truth and perform miracles.

The latest event, however, was the death of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. The brethren faced reality as they buried Stephen "and made great lamentation over him" (Acts 8:2). Death is an enemy and nothing to rejoice over (1 Corinthians 15:26). But rather than withdrawing in fear and seclusion, the believers spread out, preaching Jesus Christ from the Scriptures.

There is a need in our circles to develop a heart and a message more like Christ's in relating to our fellow men in society. We have the organization and the activities (literature evangelism, street meetings, missions) for evangelism. But we need to grow in personal compassion for the souls we meet daily in life.

We also need to grow in our knowledge of the redemptive work of Jesus and use of the prophetic Word as Philip did. Current events are significant today. The powers in our world are changing, and people are wondering what is ahead. People are more ready to talk, and hearts are open. Are we filled with a knowledge of the Lord's Word and work in His world, and do we have relevant Bible answers?

Instead of dwelling on the awful condition of our world, let us focus on the wonderful advancement of God's kingdom. He is working among the nations and building His church and will redeem "whosoever will" through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ.

Our procedure in evangelism is somewhat different today than it was in the

Book of Acts, when a church organization was not yet established. In our lesson, Peter and John gave the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and Philip baptized the eunuch immediately. God later gave place for different administrations (1 Corinthians 12:5-6) and authorized the church to legislate according to the Scriptures and current needs (Acts 16:4-5).

Jesus commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." God enables His children to answer this great evangelical call to the fields that "are white already to harvest."

**Lesson Aim:** To portray principles for effective evangelism.

**Theme Verses:** [Matthew 28:19-20](#). Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

**Lesson Text:**

**Preaching the Word**

[Acts 8:3-17](#) <sup>3</sup> As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison. <sup>4</sup> Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. <sup>5</sup> Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. <sup>6</sup> And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. <sup>7</sup> For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. <sup>8</sup> And there was great joy in that city. <sup>9</sup> But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: <sup>10</sup> To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. <sup>11</sup> And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. <sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: <sup>15</sup> Who, when

they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: <sup>16</sup> (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) <sup>17</sup> Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

### **Discerning the Spirits**

**Acts 8:18-22** <sup>18</sup> And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. <sup>20</sup> But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. <sup>21</sup> Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. <sup>22</sup> Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

### **Guiding the Seeker**

**Acts 8:26-38** <sup>26</sup> 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. <sup>27</sup> And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, <sup>28</sup> Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. <sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. <sup>30</sup> And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: <sup>33</sup> In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. <sup>34</sup> And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? <sup>35</sup> Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. <sup>36</sup> And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? <sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they

went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **Preaching the Word**

1. Why did "official" opposition spread the Gospel rather than stop it?
2. What was Philip's message and work among the Samaritans?
3. What can we learn from the boldness of the apostles that will help us in our witness?

#### **Discerning the Spirits**

4. How did Peter discern Simon's true heart condition?
5. How can the church discern and help those who are misled?

#### **Guiding the Seeker**

6. Name some reasons the Spirit could use Philip.
7. Why must a man be "born again" to "see the kingdom of God"?
8. What are practical ways to keep Scripture foremost in our witnessing?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

The havoek (Acts 8:3) Saul made of the church was from man's perspective. Aggressive opposition served to quickly spread the Gospel across the world.

Samaritans were a mixed race brought in by the Assyrian king (2 Kings 17:24). During the Captivity, the Jews left in the land intermarried with them. Most Jews despised and avoided them.

Jesus intended a new attitude, of treating each created person as a prospect for salvation (John 4:5-9). God always had a provision for the stranger to come into Israel. And now, through Philip, the Gospel was going out to such people.

Simon was a powerful character, holding great influence through magic. Perhaps he assumed the apostles' miracles were the same kind of "lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9) and thus thought he could buy the "trick" that they had. But the apostles' power was from a different source. It was the great power of God, given for His purposes and glory, not man's. Simon showed a degree of sincerity, but we do not read of his repentance.

This high-ranking Ethiopian eunuch is an example of how God can bring truth to a sincere seeker. There are Ethiopian Jews today who trace their lineage back to the Queen of Sheba. Here we can see how the Gospel message came to them.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Preaching the Word**

1. Times of challenge and hardship are opportunities to witness (Acts 8:3-4). The Christian's testimony is often not taken seriously until he maintains his virtue even unto death. Then others may investigate the validity of his commitment. "The blood of the martyrs" has often been "the seed of the church."

Jesus foretold how believers would be brought before religious and political leaders. He said we should not plan ahead what to say. "For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Luke 21:15). However, the Holy Spirit can only use what we gain through daily Bible study and meditation. We need to apply the Scriptures to the issues of our times.

2. All men are candidates for salvation (Acts 8:5). The despised and lowly often seem most ready to receive salvation. We need to see each person as a precious soul, created of God. Today, with much immigration in America, we again feel social barriers. But we must show the love of Christ and have a word of salvation to all alike.

3. The preaching of Christ brings deliverance and joy (Acts 8:6-8). Our society is taking down Christian reminders and losing Christian values. In such an environment, Satan is oppressing and bringing many into bondage. It is left to us to be used of the Spirit to lift up a standard of life, light, and freedom in Christ.

4. Evangelism is a collective work (Acts 8:14-17). Although much evangelism is done on a personal level, the work of being Gospel messengers is to bring members into the body of Christ. The work of the Spirit through the body is much more effective in producing an enduring salvation experience than strong personality force.

### **Discerning the Spirits**

5. The church is built by spiritual means rather than by carnal means (Acts 8:19-20). Simon, although he appears sincere, was in bondage to his own selfish agenda. We must continue to resist efforts to attract the world through entertainment or recreational programs. These activities feed the flesh but starve the soul. If we need volleyball games and such like to rally our youth, we have widely missed the mark. The body of Christ is built through the power of the Holy Spirit changing lives. And changed lives thrive on spiritual activity.

6. Church leaders must discern wrong motives (Acts 8:20-21). Men must

go by outward expressions, for only God can see the true heart commitment (I Samuel 16:7). But leaders must be alert to things that reveal a carnal heart condition.

Peter offered repentance as the answer even to Simon's serious condition. The most we can do in our age of grace is to excommunicate (I Corinthians 5:5), and even this is to be redemptive. But the unrepentant may not remain a part of the body.

### **Guiding the Seeker**

7. Holy Spirit guidance is essential for effective evangelism (Acts 8:26, 29).

We must first be guided if we would guide others. Jesus said He would send the Spirit: "The Comforter... he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). But we do need to be filled with the knowledge of God through meaningful daily Bible devotions. Making applications in our own lives prepares us to help others.

8. The effective evangelist meets the unsaved at his point of understanding (Acts 8:30-35). The object of our dialogue is to connect with their understanding and answer their soul's need. If we elicit a question from them we have an opportunity to give Scriptural answers if we are "ready always" (1 Peter 3:15).

9. Leading people to belief, a new birth, and obedience is the goal of evangelism (Acts 8:36-38). We must go beyond merely passing out papers or giving sharp remarks to rebuke wrongdoing. The grace and truth of Jesus Christ in our heart will prepare the way for giving a message of salvation and eternal life that they can understand. We will know what to tell them to do to be saved (Acts 16:30-33).

### **Important Teachings**

1. Times of challenge and hardship are opportunities to witness, Acts 8:3-4
2. All men are candidates for salvation (Acts 8:5).
3. The preaching of Christ brings deliverance and joy (Acts 8:6-8).
4. Evangelism is a collective work (Acts 8:14-17).
5. The church is built by spiritual means rather than by carnal means (Acts 8:19-20).
6. Church leaders must discern wrong motives (Acts 8:20-21).
7. Holy Spirit guidance is essential for effective evangelism (Acts 8:26, 29).

8. The effective evangelist meets the unsaved at his point of understanding (Acts 8:30-35).
9. Leading people to belief, a new birth, and obedience is the goal of evangelism (Acts 8:36-38).
10. Every Christian is responsible to be a witness wherever he is (Acts 8:4).
11. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17; 8:4).
12. Teaching and instruction from the Scriptures are an essential part of evangelism (Acts 8:35-38).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. Why did "official" opposition spread the Gospel rather than stop it?

This Gospel message was God's truth. It had the power to save and was the direct fulfillment of God's redemptive plan in the Scriptures. As Gamaliel said, "If ... this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it" (Acts 5:38-39). This Gospel did endure! Even the strongholds of Satan could not stop it.

2. What was Philip's message and work among the Samaritans? The power of the apostles' message was "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). This is the only power that delivers from sin by a new birth and a new nature. Philip also healed many from sickness and demon possession, as Jesus said His disciples would (Mark 16:17-18).

3. What can we learn from the boldness of the apostles that will help us in our witness?

We also need to take opportunities to graciously present Jesus and have an answer for those who ask. The first believers were motivated by the reality of Jesus (their personal encounters) and the truth of their message. They therefore obeyed Jesus' command to "go ... and teach all nations." We also need to be motivated by the reality of Jesus in our personal experience.

4. How did Peter discern Simon's true heart condition?

Simon's request revealed that he thought material wealth was the road to power. He obviously wanted power for personal advantage. True believers die to self and are satisfied to serve others.

5. How can the church discern and help those who are misled?

In practical everyday living, good works are manifest, "and they that are otherwise cannot be hid" (1 Timothy 5:25). The difference between serving self and a love for God can be discerned by the spiritual mind.

Help is always found through repentance. We reach out in love to the erring, endeavoring to lead them to a fuller understanding of truth and a more complete surrender. Even Simon had the way of return shown to him.

6. Name some reasons the Spirit could use Philip.

Philip had already made himself busy in the Lord's work. He took opportunities to speak. Philip was open to the Spirit's leading and knew the Old Testament prophecies with their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

7. Why must a man be "born again" to "see the kingdom of God"?

We need to be a new creature and partake of the divine nature to be saved. Every person needs Holy Spirit power to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Just agreeing with the Gospel and trying to conform will end in failure.

8. What are practical ways to keep Scripture foremost in our witnessing?

We need to take time to make a list of Scriptures on repentance, confession, and Christ's forgiveness and acceptance. We can use these to lead a soul to Christ. We also need to have the Word hidden in our heart through memorization. Daily meditation and applying the Word of God in everyday life is essential.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

God likens the proclamation and defense of the Gospel to physical warfare. We need brave warriors today who will enlist in the army of the Lord.

In the warfare that is raging  
For the truth and for the right,  
When the conflict, fierce, is raging  
With the powers of the night,  
God needs people brave and true:  
May He then depend on you?  
—WC. Martin

### **Research Guide**

1. Some subjects to research in a Bible dictionary are:

"Samaritans." They were people of various pagan cities, which the King of Assyria sent to populate Samaria when Israel was carried captive (2 Kings 17:24-41). The Jews left in the land intermarried with them.

"Simon the sorcerer." The Christian church would hear more from him. According to the church fathers (Origen and Irenaeus), he went to Rome

and led many Christians after himself. He was an influence in Gnosticism and the early false church.

2. Read Martyr of the Catacombs to see how dying Christians with a pure, simple testimony convinced the consciences of other honest souls.

3. An understanding of the types of redemption in the tabernacle and the feasts (Leviticus 23) give us an idea of the apostles' message when they preached Christ from their Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus had begun at Moses and the prophets and explained the types of Himself on the road to Emmaus.