

Doubly Excluded, Yet Entering In.

Acts 8:26-40.

Sunday morning, February 28, 2010.

I. Go toward The South...

- A. Chapter seven in the book of Acts ended with the stoning of Stephen which represented the full and final rejection of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ on the part of the leaders of the Jews in Jerusalem.
- B. With that event a great persecution broke out over the church in Jerusalem and the believers were scattered everywhere.
With that scattering the gospel leaves Jerusalem for the first time and we have seen it go to Samaria. But it was not to stay in Samaria.
- C. So here we see how Phillip's ministry in Samaria comes to an abrupt end as an angel of the Lord directs him to the South; to the road which led from Jerusalem, South-Westward, to the city of Gaza on the Mediterranean coast. Philip is told that this road runs through deserted land; through a desert.
- D. This is all that the angel tells him. Phillip is left with a lot of unanswered questions. Why was he to go there? Why leave a fruitful ministry among the Samaritans? Things were going so well in Samaria. How long should he stay there. What kind of preparations should he make for this desert place?

Application:

The life of faith; our walk with the Lord always entails a leaving, losing, and a letting go. It also may be summarized as a going without knowing. Like Phillip, often, if not always, we are left with many unanswered questions. Why me; why this; why now? Questions the Lord may or may not chose to answer in His own time. Remember here the dilemma of Job; Job's "why" questions. The Lord never answered Job's questions. What is the purpose of that?

1. To teach us that God is big and wise and strong enough to be trusted implicitly, without having to give an account to us as we put Him on trial in our court. "Why did You do that?" Such were God's dealings with Job.
2. To provide us with opportunities to become like little children who entrust themselves implicitly to their parents of whom they know that they take care of them, and that they love them.

Does this sound at all familiar to you? Does it ring true with regard to the circumstances you find yourself in right now?

Then remember the response of Phillip. It is the response of humble childlike obedience. Vs. 27 simply says: "So he arose and went." No hesitation; no questions asked. Lingering questions in his mind? No doubt!

II. Doubly excluded.

- A. In humble obedience to the heavenly message Phillip positioned himself along the deserted road from Jerusalem to Gaza.
- B. The answer to his "why" questions came soon enough in the form of a caravan in which a high placed official of the Ethiopian government traveled.
- C. Ethiopia here refers to the land south of Egypt; land along the Nile River and its

tributaries, stretching all the way to the high ground of what is today Uganda. These regions were inhabited by dark skinned people and were considered “the ends of the earth.” The Roman Empire left these regions alone.

- D. These regions were ruled by queens, each bearing the title of “the Candace.”
- E. It was customary in those days for high government officials to be eunuchs; emasculated males. They were in charge of things like the harems and the treasury of the kingdom. Daniel and his friends were made such eunuchs in the Babylonian kingdom.
- F. One such eunuch had become a proselyte; a gentile believer in the God of Israel, and he had made the long journey to Jerusalem to worship God in His temple. There were difficulties with such worship however:
 - 1. A gentile believer was not allowed too close to the temple which was reserved for Jews only. For that reason the temple was surrounded by a large “court of the gentiles” which was as far as such a worshipper was allowed to go.
 - 2. He was a eunuch, and worshippers with mutilated bodies were not allowed nearer to the temple than the court of the gentiles, even if they were Jews. Such bodily mutilations served as a type of the mutilations which sin has worked in our hearts, and which by nature keep us separated from the Lord. On both counts this eunuch was forced to worship God from afar
- G. It is to this man that Phillip is sent to teach him the significance of the Person and the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1. See the significance of this after the turning point in the book of Acts in Ch. 7. After Samaria, now the gentiles, and not just any gentile, but a doubly excluded one.
 - 2. See in this light the significance of the passage in Isaiah the Eunuch was providentially reading.

Application:

Like the Eunuch we too are by nature doubly separated from God.

- 1. First by being the children of our first parents, Adam and Eve, who passed their fallen nature on to us in what we call original sin.
- 2. Second by the deformities which our actual sins have worked in our hearts. That is by our actual individual sins.

Do you feel distant and separated from the Lord? Then Phillip’s message is for you too. Jesus came to bridge that distance, and to bring those who are far away, near.

III. What hinders me from being baptized?

- A. The Eunuch understood that Jesus had come to escort him into God’s presence.
- B. Are there any hindrances left preventing him from drawing near into the presence of God? If not, he wants to do just that by being baptized in the name of Jesus, and by professing his faith.

Application:

What hinders you from drawing near into the presence of God? A deformed heart? The inheritance of our fallen natures from our first parents? Do you believe with this Eunuch that Jesus is sufficient to overcome these? The gospel tells you that He is.