

Sermon preached by Mr. P. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, at the  
baptizing of Miss M. Rolph, on Wed. evg., Nov. 21, 1962 ✓

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Text: Acts viii. 35-37.

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It is very evident from the Scripture that it is God's method to connect the preaching of the Gospel with the salvation of sinners. He was under no necessity to use any such method. And what a mystery it is that He should raise up sinful dying men to preach the everlasting Gospel to their fellow-sinners! But oh the wisdom of it! An angel could not preach the Gospel. They know nothing of sin, and therefore nothing of grace, nothing of mercy. They need nothing, and yet they are intimately interested in the church of God, for we read that there is joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. Philip appears to have been used a good deal by the Lord for gathering sinners unto Him. It was Philip who found Nathanael, and the Lord said unto Nathanael, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee". This was a different sight from the universal omniscience of the Lord. He saw Nathanael with a look of love; He knew he was there. I wonder if there are any here whom the Lord has seen in secret under a fig tree, or in some secret place? The Lord knew that Nathanael was there and directed Philip, and Philip brought him to Jesus.

The same foreknowledge is manifested in this case of the eunuch. "For the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip saying, arise, go toward the south unto Gaza, which is desert"; and he immediately obeyed the commandment of the Lord. But the Lord had a purpose. Exactly the same infinite foreknowledge as He had of the woman of Samaria. He knew what time that woman would be there. It is indeed a blessed consideration that God has an intense and loving interest in His church and people. He tells their wanderings; their tears are in His bottle. Their sighs and groans are known to Him. He leads them about and instructs them.

"And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot." And for substance the Holy Spirit directs ministers when it is His will and purpose to discover this or that sinner, when that period known to God arrives to call some sinner by grace. He may use the ministry, and the minister know nothing of what is going on in the pew. But the Holy Spirit will join, it may be, that service and that sermon to the experience of a special case. And what a meeting that is -- a seeking soul following after the Lord coming with anxiety, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" asking their way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, "Let us join ourselves unto the Lord"; and the Lord meets that seeking soul, and as it were says to the minister, "Join thyself unto that soul that is seeking his way to heaven, saying Let me join myself unto the Lord". And what a union, what a contact!

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot." The eunuch evidently was a man that was seeking. He was reading Isaiah, and Philip asked him if he understood what he read. He was a man of great authority in the world, yet how grace had humbled his heart! "And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or some other man?" He wanted teaching. It is a great thing to be made humble and teachable by grace. "Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus." And we might well say, as the event proved, he preached into him Jesus; he did indeed. The Holy Spirit preached

Christ right into his heart. And that is what some of you are waiting for. You want something more than to hear mere words, even something more than utterances of divine truth. What you need and seek is for that truth to enter into your hearts: "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple". Oh how penetrating is the Word of God when accompanied by the influence of the Holy Spirit!

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus." Everything is in Him; everything material and spiritual. He is the Creator of all things, and the Maintainer of all which He has created, and His divine sovereignty permeates all things. But oh, in the realm of sovereign grace, He is exceedingly glorious!

"Would we see His brightest glory?

Here it shines in Jesus' face."

Everything is in Him. What a subject this is! The whole of the Gospel is here. Every sermon that is preached by the Holy Ghost is in Jesus. The whole of the Scriptures must be fulfilled in Him, and through Him, and by Him. Everything that constitutes heaven is in Him. "Preached unto him Jesus." Declared Him evidently to be the Son of God. Oh how all-important this is! It is emphasized here, because when Philip said "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest", he answered and said: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God". The blind man made the same confession when he was cast out of the temple. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" He took nothing for granted, and we may take a pattern from this. "It is He that speaketh unto thee." Then said the blind man, "Lord, I believe". And he didn't just turn and walk away. He said, "Lord, I believe, and he worshipped Him".

"Preached unto him Jesus", His eternal Person, God's only-begotten Son. He preached unto him the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, His blessed birth and the reason of it. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." That is the purpose for which He became incarnate, in order that His people might be saved through Him. Oh "blessed are they that do His commandments, that they might have right unto the tree of life, and go through the gates into the city"! Jesus took flesh because His children were partakers of flesh and blood, and because the way to the tree of life was barred when Adam fell. The sword of divine justice turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. But the Lord Jesus opened another way to the tree of life, which is Himself. He came to fulfil the law which He had not broken; but His people had. The law demanded satisfaction from the nature that had broken it, and that is why the Lord Jesus came, and the love of God was such that He did not spare Him, but sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. "Preached unto him Jesus."

How He went to the end of the law for righteousness, to obtain righteousness. The intrinsic righteousness of God's dear Son which belonged to Him as the Son of God, is not the righteousness of the saints, although that righteousness that He wrought out derives its eternity from His Person. But He had to go to the end of the law to obtain this righteousness. It was wrought out. The fulfilling of the law was necessary in order that the justification of His people could

be accomplished. He preached unto him the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the soul will bring sinners to feel their need of that act of the Lord Jesus in the work of salvation. Some of you may have felt that by divine teaching. There seems to be something in the universal nature of sin in your being that you find that every act of this blessed Lord in human nature has a connection with something in your soul that needs to be redeemed. I believe I have felt that, and feel it increasingly, that I need the whole of the Lord Jesus Christ in just what He is in His divine Person united to human nature, and all the satisfaction that He rendered to the law of God. Therefore says Paul, "Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ". The law has nothing now to do with those for whom He lived, and suffered, and died, and rose again -- has nothing to do with them. The Lord Jesus has paid the great heavy debt that His people owed. And such perfection and completeness was in His work of salvation, that the law is satisfied.

"Preached unto him Jesus." He would preach unto him His blessed death. How can we preach the Lord Jesus without preaching His vicarious voluntary death? The death of deaths was the death of the Lord Jesus, the life of sinners. He swallowed up death in victory when He died. He took the sting out of death upon Calvary's cross, when the sword of divine justice entered into His sacred side and there came forth blood and water. Then He took the sting out of death. Oh what a sacrifice was offered there! "He preached unto him Jesus" as the great High Priest, and the one sacrifice which was of more efficacy than all the sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood through all the years. These sacrifices could never accomplish anything, could never reach the conscience, could never remove sin and guilt. "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sinners for ever, sat down on the right hand of God, henceforth expecting till His enemies were made His footstool". And His people were with Him in all that He did; He did it for them. So that the vital secret is union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And this ordinance of believer's baptism is a public confession of union with the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Holy Ghost should join us in experience unto the Lord Jesus in all that is revealed of Him from the eternal covenant, right down through His blessed virgin birth, through the whole of His sinless life, His sinless lips in which we shall find no guile, and that sacrifice which He offered upon Calvary, and should join us unto Him in every part of that work of salvation, we should know what it is to be complete in Him.

"Preached unto him Jesus." I wish I could preach Him. I need Him, I desire Him, and there have been times when I could say, I love Him. He preached unto him also the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a living Head, a living Christ, and all the virtue of what He accomplished is now with Him in heaven, and that is His authority. It is a wonderful authority that Christ as Head of the church possesses. We need to be very careful here, and need the Holy Spirit's help; and I would not speak a wrong word if I could help it. But the authority of Christ in all the virtue, and power, and efficacy of His finished work, is something different from His authority as the Son of God. Now I must not leave that there. That needs to be opened a little. The authority of God's dear Son belonging to Him would have been unaffected if He had never come to this world. But the authority that I am speaking of at the moment is His mediatorial authority. It is the authority of the satisfaction that He has given to the law. We sing of this:

"With cries and tears He offered up  
 His humble suit below;  
 But with authority He asks,  
 Enthroned in glory now."

He has that authority and can demand. He can say, "But I have paid those people's debts". It is only ~~say~~ so, and by virtue that He has gained the victory over the grave, that He could say to Lazarus, "Come forth". And it is by virtue of the authority and power of His resurrection that His people are quickened into life by the Holy Spirit when they are born again. And it is His divine authority as a risen and ascended Saviour that His people will be raised at the last day, resurrection unto eternal life. And it is by the authority of His blessed humanity now in heaven that His people's own bodies will be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Blessed authority! I think perhaps now you will see the meaning, that there is His divine authority as the Son of God, but there is also His mediatorial authority as a Conqueror. He has conquered, and defeated, and destroyed the works of the devil; He has that authority. And he preached unto him Jesus, a living Head, an Advocate, an Intercessor above. Oh my friends, how we need the Holy Ghost to take of these things of Jesus and reveal them, show them, bring them into our souls to be our life, our strength, our salvation!

"And as they went on their way, they came to a certain water, and the eunuch said, See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" There are two points here. One is this -- "faith cometh by hearing". The Lord sent Philip for the specific purpose of calling this sinner by grace, and it was through the preaching of the Lord Jesus, which was made salvation to this eunuch. But the response was not Philip's; it was the eunuch's. Philip did not say, "See here is water, why are not you baptized?" Or "will you be baptized?" I feel that point, and never use any influence to anybody relative to baptism, and you see the order here. The eunuch, when he saw the water, said, "See here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip had preached Christ right into his heart, and the love of God constrained him. Now, I have reason to declare, and am glad of it, that our dear friend whom we hope to baptize presently, was constrained by the same love. And that is the only right constraint.

"See here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" It is a mystery that we perhaps will never understand, that some godly people, some with whom we have had communion, cannot see what is so clear in the Scriptures, the ordinance of believer's baptism. I don't believe one of them have ever been able to give a satisfactory reason ~~for their objection to it. I have never heard a satisfactory reason at all. Some would say that when Jesus was baptized, that ended the ordinance. But this eunuch was baptized seven years after the Lord Jesus was baptized. Some say that the Holy Ghost is the only necessary baptism. The Scriptures answer that objection: "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost?" But "can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized". I know -- and we have tried to pray for our friend, I know that it is an ordeal to go through the water of baptism, and the flesh would consider~~

it/mush more pleasant and easier way to join a church without being baptized; and I wonder if that really is at the bottom of the objection. But I would say to such and bring before them what we sing concerning Christ — ~~Was it easy for Him upon the cross?~~

"It were an easier part,  
For Him the cross to fly;  
But love to sinners filled His heart,  
And made Him choose to die."

And when a poor sinner views a suffering Saviour, and the Holy Ghost whispers in the heart, "All this was done for you", then the poor sinner is willing to obey the Lord in this divinely instituted ordinance, which sets forth His sufferings, how the dear Redeemer was under the floods of divine wrath buried, and how He got the victory over the grave and was raised again. And His dear people in love to Him are willing to follow Him, and in this sense to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and also to know something of the power of His resurrection.

"And the eunuch said, See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" That was a gracious way of asking for baptism. As though the eunuch, who seemed in the first place to understand so little as to who the Scripture was speaking of, as though he would say to Philip, "Now thou man of God, thou knowest; is there anything about me, any reason why I should not be baptized, anything to hinder me? Are my sins too deep, too vile? Are they of too long a standing? Is my guilt too high, my life too base?" This blessed Man understands every question; therefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through Him. "What doth hinder me? My ignorance, does that hinder me?" Why, says the Lord concerning His poor, weak, despised people, He is made of God unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He understands every question because He has removed every hindrance Himself for His people. I have thought of that word which closes the Scriptures pretty well: "Blessed are they that do His commandments". That do them; not hearers only, but doers of the word. "That they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" Well, some of you may have some hindrances. It would be a mercy, those of you who truly fear Him and love Him, if He should say to you with respect to every hindrance, "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me". Oh then it would make His way clear before you, an open door, and give you to hear His voice: "This is the way; walk ye in it".

"And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." That was the standard that Philip, by the Holy Ghost, gave to the eunuch, and it is a right standard. "If thou believest with all thy heart." Not a mere assent to the truth, or to have correct notions in the head; but if thou believest with all thy heart. He had preached unto him Jesus as He is set forth in the 53rd of Isaiah. That chapter contains the very quintessence of the Gospel, which shows the ~~case~~ of redemption in the sufferings, pain, ignominy, and despising of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that chapter you will see, not only the cost of redemption, but the nature and power of sin. What an unspeakable mystery and terrible thing sin is, that nothing less than such condescension of the dear Son of God in human nature, in order to suffer, bleed, and die, to be a Surety, a Substitute for sinners, that the Father laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, that it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. I feel

that what we need is for the Holy Spirit to take us through that 53rd of Isaiah and open each point, join us to a suffering Saviour ourselves individually and personally so as to ring in our ears: "He was bruised for my transgressions, the chastisement of my peace was upon Him".

Well, the eunuch believed it, believed it in his heart. "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest." And that is the very reason why it is called believer's baptism. Do you believe with all your heart? Do you love Him? Have you ever felt your heart melt in sympathy with a suffering Saviour? "If ye love Me keep My commandments", and "if thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest". "And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." That is what he believed, and everything is in that belief. If we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, faith views Him to be that in the whole of His life. He was the Son of God as the Mediator. He was the Son of God when, after He was baptized, He was carried away into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He was the Son of God in the Judgment hall, when "His judgment was taken away from Him". He was the Son of God when "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and He opened not His mouth". But oh when He came to the end, my friends, the Lord Jesus did not die in the dark under desertion! He was deserted of His divine Father when He was crucified, but as soon as He had declared, "It is finished", then His sufferings were finished. The curse of the law was finished, for it was satisfied, And the Father lifted up the light of His divine countenance upon Him when He bowed His sacred head and gave up the ghost.

Now all this work the Holy Ghost works in the heart in a way of salvation. So when the Apostle writing to the Ephesians says, "Put on the whole armour of God", it is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ in all the completeness of His Person, His work, His death, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven. Well, may the Lord be with us now. It is a sacred ordinance, and we need to be exercised aright in passing through it.