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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on
Wednesday evening 3.7.74

Hymns 194, 425, 427

Reading: Acts 8 from v.25

Text: Acts 8.35

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

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This verse is part of a remarkable account that we have of one who under a particular leading of divine providence was brought to walk in the ways of the Lord. Some of the Lord's providential leadings may be very strange to us at times. Naturally speaking it would seem a strange thing to direct Philip to go down there into the desert when he was preaching the Gospel in the villages about Samaria and there was great joy in that city, - why not stop there, there was plenty of work for him to do there, many converts. One might hear Philip saying, It is the right place for me and here I purpose to stay for the Lord is blessing my preaching. So indeed the Lord had blessed his preaching, but it was not the Lord's purpose for Philip to stay there at Samaria. He received a clear direction to go down south into Gaza which is desert, and I understand that it was about sixty miles journey. How mysterious it seems, but Philip never disputed it; "he arose and went" down into the desert although he must have had some strange feelings; but the Lord had a purpose in sending Philip down into the desert as we have read this evening.

"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" - the providence of the Lord here is very striking - "Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 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". He may have been very interested in the record and yet he knew nothing at that

time of Whom he was reading. He said, "How can I except some man man should guide me?"; he did not say, I do not want your company; you had better go, "He desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 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: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.". How striking are these circumstances and how attractive they are. So Philip had to go down south into the desert for one soul, for this Ethiopian returning to his country. Philip preached unto him Jesus.

I now want to leave the connecting circumstances and enter more particularly into the subject matter. He preached unto him Jesus, and this undoubtedly is the subject matter of the Gospel ministry. It was the Apostle Paul's determination not to know anything among these Corinthians save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and this actually is the subject matter of every Gospel minister, to preach Jesus, for He is a Saviour to the lost, and the Lord has appointed a Gospel ministry unto this end that many multitudes of people should be brought to a knowledge of the truth through preaching Jesus. He opened his mouth; he did not whisper as though he was afraid somebody might hear it. He opened his mouth and preached unto him Jesus, and dear friends it is this blessed Person I desire to speak to you of this evening for a little while.

"He "preached unto him Jesus". When we come to consider this blessed Person we may as enabled view Him in several aspects. First of all in His eternal personality in the blessed Trinity. We read that "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one". The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I have often in my heart admired this. "They came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized". It would appear quite

likely that Philip had referred to this matter of Baptism for the eunuch to express his desire to Philip and it is very beautiful, "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest". This is very striking - not if thou believest thou mayest - but "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest". There may be many people who would say they believe in their judgement and perhaps they may consider themselves quite competent theologians and yet come short of what is desired here. "If thou believest with all thine heart". The Apostle Paul refers to this in the Epistles where he says he that believeth with the heart, his faith is unto salvation. It is a sweet thing to believe with all our heart. I remember a night with me when I did, when the Lord appeared to me and I had some view of Him by faith as I had not had before, and I believed in Him with all my heart; from the bottom of my heart I could say, I believe in Jesus Christ. He said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God". That was really a great thing to say because that was the matter that had been disputed. Many Jews had discredited Him, despised Him, hated Him and had crucified Him, but now here is one who could say, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God". It is a great thing friends to believe in a saving gracious way in the Person of Christ. There is a hymn that says, "Could we His person learn to prize

We more should prize His grace."

I wonder how many of you in this assembly can follow me, who in your spiritual experience have seen a glory in His person, the Person of Christ. He is the Son of God from everlasting in a relationship that can never change; through an endless eternity He will be Jesus the Son of God. It is great to believe this. It may seem very simple, but I mean something deeper than this, when this blessed Person is made a divine reality in your soul. It is very sacred and all-important to be well set down in the truth of His eternal Personality and Sonship in the blessed, glorious Trinity. Ministers are to preach this for it is a foundation truth in the Gospel ministry. We do not know everything that Philip said to this eunuch but he preached unto him Jesus and with a convincing effect. I have often

said, as my people know, that it is very sweet to believe. There is a sacredness in it, there is salvation in it.

"Saved is the sinner that believes,
The sacred gospel annals show"

What does the Lord say about this? He says, "he that believeth on me hath everlasting life". It is great to believe. This is the power of faith in a poor sinner's heart, and some of you have known that moment I do not doubt.

He preached unto him Jesus - but not only are ministers to preach the Person of Christ but they are to preach His blessed substitution. We have to say He is the eternal Son of God, yet,

"On wings of love the Saviour flies,
And freely left his native skies,
To take a human birth"

and that is a profound thought. Much ado may be made at Christmas time by some people but to some of the Lord's dear people it has been a very favoured season as they have felt an interest in the blessed incarnation of our glorious Messiah.

"He laid his glory by,
And wrapped him in our clay"

A profound thought this and a blessed reality.

Gospel ministers in the discharge of their ministry are to preach the atonement. This is all-important because "without shedding of blood is no remission"; there is no heaven for a law breaker apart from Calvary. Oh bless His holy name, there is a way from hell to heaven through His wounded hands and feet, that precious blood that He shed upon the cross. It is great to see a way to heaven for a sinner deserving hell through the blessed atonement. Here is our hope.

"It rises high, and drowns the hills;
Has neither shore nor bound;
Now if we search to find our sins,
Our sins can ne'er be found."

They are drowned in the atonement. Beloved friends let us keep close to this vital doctrine. It is all-important, it is the only way to heaven, for there peace was made through a suffering Surety.

"Peace by his cross has Jesus made;
The church's everlasting Head"

There is another point in the Gospel ministry and that is His blessed mediation. He rose again from the dead, death could not hold Him, and as you know some of His disciples saw Him go up into heaven

and He vanished out of their sight. Oh bless His glorious, exalted Majesty; He had not entered into a place made with hands but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us, a Mediator between God and men, between inflexible justice and a poor wretch in filthy garments and He can bring the two parties together on the ground of His own blessed merit and blood. How blessed it is to get a glimpse of Calvary.

Another point about this is that He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, and not just able to save for some people might be able to do things and not willing to do them but this glorious and blessed Redeemer is both able and willing, as the hymnwriter says, "He is able, He is willing, Doubt no more". He preached unto him Jesus.

Here then friends we have the foundation laid, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ", and He was laid there by the Father as we read in the prophecy, He has laid Him "in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation". Oh blessed Person is He. Here then he preached unto him Jesus.

Another point I want to notice is the effect of that preaching. He did not just go off and think nothing more about it. The effect of it was that he desired to follow the Lord in His ways. It says that "they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 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", and he baptised him, and what a blessed baptising it must have been, a never to be forgotten time. "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch and he baptized him". A sacred occasion it must have been and so it has been many times with the Lord's people. I would not say always, but even so it has been a favoured season many times. I believe it was in my own case because I was baptised in the warmth of my first love, if I may refer to myself for a minute or two. I believe the Lord blessed my soul, one Monday night, revealed Himself to me, and the next morning I wrote to my pastor and told him about it; on the Thursday morning he came to see me and he said, "You have had a

blessing". I said, "Yes, and I can tell you about it". He came indoors and I told him how the Lord had appeared to me, without any nervousness, I felt so free in my spirit. After I had told him he said, "Well we have a church meeting tonight and you must come". I said, "Yes, I can", and I went to the house of a friend and went with him to the church meeting. He said, "We have not heard anything about this", "Well, said I, Mr. Popham tells me I am to come tonight". "Oh well that is all right", he said. There were two old men joined that night that were an hour and a half giving their testimony and there was I waiting all that time in the vestry, but the Lord was with me and it was a sacred joy to follow the Lord in His ways. Pardon these personal references.

Our dear friend and brother Philip has long desired to follow the Lord in His ways and now we believe the time has come and we do hope that he may feel a sense of the Lord's approbation upon him in walking in the Lord's ways. It is not always so, and we cannot command it, but we trust it may be so with our dear friend, and we hope that his dear wife may feel it to be a sacred season as well, and many of us. Now I do not feel I can say much more. I do hope and pray that the Lord will be with us and that each may be helped and that we may have cause to bless and praise His holy name for His goodness to us. Amen.

At the pool

Dear friends we are gathered together here to observe the sacred ordinance of believer's baptism and we desire to bless the Lord for our dear brother who has felt led in his heart to walk in the Lord's ways and to unite himself to us as a little church and people. We shall not forget the night he came before us and related the Lord's dealings with him and he was warmly received in our hearts and I hope that we may be able to walk before him and with one another in the spirit of love and affection.

This ordinance dear friends, as you know, is not for carnal curiosity, it is an ordinance of faith, it is an open and public profession of faith. Our brother has witnessed a good profession before this church and we warmly receive him and hope and pray that his union may be blessed to us. Now my beloved brother Philip I do hope you may feel the Lord's favour and blessing in walking in His ways. It is what you have long desired and we rejoice that the time has come and hope you may feel the Lord's presence and blessing with you in it.

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