

A Profitable Endeavor

Acts 8: 5-8

Our text today deals with a time of great excitement for the early church, and yet there was great uncertainty as well. Stephen had been stoned for preaching the Gospel. Saul continued to persecute the church, scattering them throughout the world, but they continued to preach the Word, [vv.3-4](#). These had received something gracious and wonderful, and they were unable to keep it to themselves. They were compelled to tell others about Jesus!

People are often most attentive when they are faced with great need. The world around us would have us believe the Gospel is no longer relevant today. They assume it has run its course, no longer needed in modern times. The enemy works against those who are committed to sharing the truth of Jesus Christ with a lost and dying world. We must understand the great need in our day. Just as it was in the days of Philip, our world is hurting and searching for a means of peace and comfort. All will not receive the Gospel, but their lack must not be the result of our failure to share the Good News! Many today would listen, if someone cared enough to share.

The text reveals the formula and result of a genuine move of God. I want to examine the [details](#) of Philip's ministry as we consider: [A Profitable Endeavor](#).

I. The Reference to his Ministry (5) – [Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them](#). Experiencing revival is a hot topic in conferences, books, blogs, and conversation among church leaders. We are continually bombarded with the latest and greatest approach for growth. While I appreciate their hunger to see God move among His people, I fear we have over-complicated the matter. This single verse reveals the formula needed. Consider:

A. The Location – [Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria](#). I know this is hard to grasp, but we find that Philip went into the city of Samaria, where the people were located. At this moment in time, the majority of believers met in individual homes. They did not have large sanctuaries with flashing signs advertising their services. The Gospel message was relatively new within society. If they had any hope of sharing their faith, they had to go where the people were. Multitudes weren't showing up at their door; the church went out into the communities to seek out unbelievers.

- This has always been the biblical model. We were never commanded by our Lord to build a building, and sit and wait for unbelievers to come to us. I am thankful for the facilities we enjoy, but we cannot assume that our community knows where we are, and expect them to show up when we have services. Like Philip, we must go where they are, and engage them with the Gospel.

B. The Communication (5) – Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and **preached Christ unto them**. Here we find the method Philip employed as he engaged those who needed Christ. He preached unto them. This has the idea of “*heralding, proclaiming, or publishing, especially in regard to divine truth.*” As far as we know, this is the only method Philip used to reach the people. As he encountered those who needed Jesus, he preached unto them.

▪ I want to tread lightly here, because I fear being misunderstood. I am well aware of the need for other elements of worship and engagement while sharing the Gospel and reaching the lost, but our modern culture has abandoned the biblical model. I am aware that people don't enjoy being preached “at,” but we cannot deny the method Philip used to reach many. Modern culture declares that preaching has run its course. They claim we need a different approach to be effective. Countless other avenues are being pursued, while preaching is being minimized. I know God can and does use other methods, but we must never shun or abandon the preaching of the Gospel. (That doesn't mean the only time the Gospel is preached is when a pastor is standing behind the pulpit. We must be willing to proclaim the Gospel to a world that needs to hear!)

Matt.10:27 – What I tell you in darkness, *that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.*

C. The Distinction (5) – Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and **preached Christ unto them**. Here we discover the topic of Philip's message – he preached Christ to them. He wasn't running a rabbit trail about the difficulties suffered at the hands of the Romans. He wasn't seeking to incite their emotions with a message of fear regarding the persecution they currently faced. He wasn't promoting the First Church in Jerusalem. Philip simply, and effectively preached Jesus!

▪ I am well aware that pastors are charged to preach the whole counsel of God. There are times when particular needs must be addressed within a congregation. Believers need to be instructed in Christian living. There are times when it is necessary to reprove, rebuke, and exhort. However, we must never be guilty of neglecting the preaching of Jesus Christ, crucified, buried, and risen for the salvation of humanity! Many tactics are often employed to appeal to people's emotions and generate a large move during a time of invitation, and yet the Gospel may never have been presented. We are not called to appeal to emotions, but to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ in the Gospel message! If we desire to see a genuine move of God, Jesus must be proclaimed. **Rom.1:16 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.** **1 Cor.2:2 – For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**

II. The Reaction to his Ministry (6-7) – Here we discover the reaction within Samaria to Philip's preaching and ministry. Consider:

A. Their Attention (6a) – *And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake.* Bear in mind, these events happened early in the life of the church. The Gospel was a relatively new doctrine. Philip is preaching to a Jewish audience, steeped in tradition and law. They had been taught all of their lives an approach that was totally different from the Gospel of grace. Their reception is interesting – with one accord, in unity, they intently listened to Philip preach the Gospel of Christ. There was a genuine interest in hearing Truth.

▪ We have been sold a bill of goods from the enemy, and many believe no one is interested in hearing the Gospel in our day. While I admit our culture is rapidly changing, there are still those who would be open and receptive to the Gospel if someone cared enough to share. Thom Rainer did a study that was published on 9-15-2012. It revealed some interesting facts about our modern culture and its desire for the Gospel. These are sentiments his study revealed.

- 1) I would like to develop of friendship with a Christian.**
- 2) I would like to learn about the Bible from a Christian.**
- 3) I wish I could learn to be a better husband, wife, dad, mom, etc., from a Christian.**
- 4) I wish a Christian would take me to his or her church!**

B. Their Observation (6b) – *And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.* People paid attention to the work and ministry of Philip. His work, through the power of the Holy Spirit, impacted Samaria. They could not deny that something miraculous had happened in their midst.

▪ I realize Philip enjoyed gifts of the Spirit that have ceased in our day, but the principle remains the same. The world is much more observant than we realize. They are watching our lives, and they see the power of the Spirit at work. They sense our peace and joy, even in the midst of turmoil. They witness our patience and understanding during stressful times at work. They hear our excitement when talking of our church and relationship with Christ. They may never admit it, but many times they long to experience what we have in Christ. In fact, they may be anxiously waiting for us to share our faith or invite them to join us at church!

C. The Confirmation (7) – *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.* As Philip preached and ministered among the people, the Lord worked in miraculous ways. Unclean spirits were driven out, and many were healed of physical infirmities. There could be no doubt to anyone who had witnessed these events that the Lord was moving among them and lives were changed.

- While God still has power to heal afflicted lives, we don't experience events like this in our day. However, it does bear witness to the awesome power of the Lord we serve. Healing physical infirmities is wonderful, but a spiritual transformation is beyond our ability to express. One bound in sin, destined for an eternity of torment in hell, is set free, completely and eternally transformed in Christ. When the Lord begins to work among a people, changing lives for His glory, the results will be evident for all to see. His power remains today. He is not limited in our day. The Lord remains willing and able to provide for the needs of humanity!

III. The Results of his Ministry (8) – [And there was great joy in that city](#). Here we discover the results of Philip's faithfulness to the Lord and how it impacted Samaria. Philip had not brought such miracles, but God worked through an obedient vessel to change lives. Notice:

A. The Rejoicing – There was great joy in the city. As the people encountered a supernatural move of God, it brought rejoicing to their hearts. Unclean spirits were cast out, the lame walked, and most importantly, lives were changed by faith in Christ. This brought joy to their hearts.

- As the Lord begins to work in hearts and lives, joy is a natural result. One cannot encounter the risen, living Lord in a personal way and remain as they were. Hearts of fear and doubt are filled with peace and joy. Situations may not have changed, but the eternal outlook is forever changed. There is great joy in the Lord!

B. The Reach – The joy experienced was not limited to a few people. Such joy in the presence and provision of Christ resonated throughout the city. Countless people were affected by this miraculous move of the Lord. Samaria was fundamentally changed as the Lord worked through an obedient servant. It would have been difficult to find a family that had not been touched somehow through the power and presence of the Lord.

- This is exciting and challenging for me. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord would move in such a way that the entire city of Mount Airy was caught up rejoicing in the presence of Christ? We tend to believe it would never happen, but our Lord remains able. If we were willing to serve the Lord as Philip did, completely surrendering to His will and obediently following Him, we could see a great move of God in our day that would result in great rejoicing for countless homes and families. Our Lord is alive and well, and working in the hearts of people. Let's join Him in the work He is doing in our communities!

Conclusion: This is a powerful testimony to the faithfulness of our Lord for the needs of humanity. He used a willing servant to show Himself in mighty ways among a people in desperate need. Do you desire to see the Lord work in our day? Are you committed to obediently serving Him, while allowing the Lord to work through you for His glory and the good of others?

If the Lord has spoken to you about surrendering to His will for your life, come to Him in obedience today. If you are challenged regarding the needs of our day, come to Him for strength and guidance. If you are yet unsaved, come in repentance and faith for salvation!