



Gospel Encounters in Acts

Philip's Consistent Obedience

Acts 8:4-40

Context: Church Growth and Persecution

- Church in Jerusalem is founded as a result of Peter's bold proclamation (Acts 2).
- The church community is marked by fidelity to each other and the Word of God (Acts 2:42-47)
- Jewish council is angered by signs, wonders, and teachings to the point of threatening death (Acts 5:33).
- Church unity is threatened by internal disagreement over the distribution of care to widows, and thus the apostles choose men to serve in a deacon-like role to bring unity to the church (Acts 6).
- The gospel continues to increase in Jerusalem through Steven who filled with the Spirit proclaimed the gospel before the Jewish Council and was brutally martyred at their hands as a result. (Acts 6:7 – 7:60)
- On the day of Steven's martyrdom, a persecution breaks out against the church in Jerusalem and all but the apostles fled to the surrounding regions (Acts 8:1-4).

Context: Who is Philip?

- Was most likely a Hellenist, or a Greek-speaking Jew of the diaspora. (Acts 6:5)
- Was chosen as one of the seven that were to help bring peace and order to the Jerusalem church.
- Qualities:
 - Good reputation among the community (Acts 6:3)
 - Full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3)
 - Full of Wisdom (Acts 6:3)
- Content of his ministry seen in Scripture:
 - He is obedient to the call by the congregation to serve the church by meeting the practical and spiritual needs of distributing food. (Acts 6:1-6)
 - Philip goes out from Jerusalem to Samaria preaching, performing signs and healings, and baptizing new believers. (Acts 8:4-13).

- By the leading of the Spirit he engages with and witnesses to the Ethiopian about Christ and baptizes him. (Acts 8: 26-38)
- He is snatched up by the Spirit, taken to Azotus and continues to preach the gospel. (Acts 8:39-40)

What Kind of Obedience is God looking for?

- He is looking for hearts that recognize that he is worthy to be obeyed.
 - **Paul - Acts 9:3-8** *Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴ And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.*
 - **Peter - John 6:66-69** - ⁶⁶After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."
 - **Nathaniel - John 1:47-50** *Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."*
- In some cases, he doesn't wait for hearts to recognize his worthiness because he has ultimate power to bring obedience.
 - **Jonah - Jonah 3:1-3** *Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD.*
 - **Evil Spirits – Mark 1: 23-26** *And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, ²⁴"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." ²⁵ But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.*
 - **Wind and Waves – Matt. 8: 26-27** *And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there*

was a great calm. 27And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

- **King Abimelech- Genesis 20:6** *Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. **Therefore I did not let you touch her.** 7 Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours."*
- **All people and everything – Philippians 2: 9-11** *Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
 - **We want to be the ones who bow the knee willingly out of love for God.**
- He is looking for obedience that identifies with Him as His possession under his care.
 - **Jeremiah 7: 23** *But this command I gave them: 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'*
 - **Jeremiah 42:5-6** *Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act according to all the word with which the LORD your God sends you to us. 6Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God."*
 - Communion with God is a result of this kind of obedience.
- He wants obedience to His word and not our own version of truth or reason.
 - **1 Samuel 15:22-23** *Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.*
- He is looking for obedience that flows out of the faith that He himself has given you, therefore proving its strength and genuineness.
 - **James 2:14-18** *14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good[a] is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*
 - **Luke 6:46-49** *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? 47 Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the*

foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

How Do We See Philip Being Obedient?

I. Obedient in Serving the Church (Acts 6:1-6)

- Philip who was clearly full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom was seen fit by the church and was appointed by the church. There was a need and he was obedient to fill it.
 - **Acts 6:3-6** *Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.*

II. Obedient through Persecution, Spiritual opposition, and Uncertainty

- Philip was in Jerusalem and was pushed out of the city during the persecution that broke out after Stephen’s murder.
 - **Acts 8:1** *And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*
 - **Acts 8:4** *Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.*
- Philip was consistently obedient when put in many circumstances that required great courage and single-mindedness in his mission.
 - In opposition to the unclean spirits
 - **Acts 8:7** *For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.*
 - In opposition to the magic arts of Simon
 - **Acts 8:9-12** *But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. 10 They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the power of God that is called Great.” 11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. 12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.*

- In the uncertainty of what was ahead of him at the desert road.
 - **Acts 8:26 – 27a** *Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. 27 And he rose and went.*
 - **Acts 8: 29-30** *And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” 30 So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”*
- In the uncertainty of how he was “snatched up” finding himself in another city.
 - **Acts 8:39-40** *And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.*

III. Obedient to the Great Commission

- The commission that disciples of Jesus have is this:
 - **Matt. 28: 19-20** *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*
 - **Acts 1:8** *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*
- Philip is obedient in taking the gospel to Samaria.
 - There was historically bad blood between Jerusalem and Samaria.
 - **John 4:7-9** *7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Give Me a drink.” 8 (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) 9 “You are a Jew,” said the woman. “How can You ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)*
 - **Luke 9:51-53** *When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. 53 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.*

- Philip is seen consistently teaching and preaching Jesus to people unto salvation. He is also baptizing these new believers.
 - **Acts 8:5** *Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.*
 - **Acts 8:12-13** *But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.*
 - **Acts 8:25** *Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.*
 - **Acts 8:35-38** *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. 36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.*
 - **Acts 8:40** *But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.*

IV. Obedient to the Lord's Leadership and Redirection

- Philip was aware of and obedient to the Lord's leading through his holy angel and His Spirit, apparently two different ways.
 - **Acts 8:26** *Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place.*
 - **Acts 8:29** *And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot."*
 - Does the Lord using two different ways of communicating His will to Philip teach us anything about God's guidance?

VI. Applications for Our Evangelism

- Obedience looks different in different people's lives. What are some things God has given you to be obedient to? What is the Lord giving you to do to build his kingdom?
 - How has the Lord gifted you in making disciples of Christ?
- Consistent obedience happens when the Word of God is received rightly.
 - Do you read the Word of God as something to be obedient to or do you read it merely to gain knowledge?
 - Are you willing to listen to the Spirit speaking to you?
- Consistent obedience is fostered by church ministry structures.
 - The church sends Philip out. The church comes to support him in ministry.

- Don't allow the structure of church-based ministry to limit your obedience to the Lord in evangelism, letting church-sponsored moments be the only times you evangelize. Structures are meant to help spur you on, not be discrete moments of faithfulness.
- Don't compare yourself to others as a standard of obedience. Guilt isn't our motivator! However, God does use the church to push and guide our obedience.
 - **Hebrews 10:24** - *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...*
 - God uses leadership in the church to guide our obedience. Philip was obviously under church leadership (Acts 8:14-15), and received direction from them (Acts 6).
 - God uses structures and opportunities in the church to direct our obedience (serving teams, equip class, worship, giving, d-groups, community groups, prayer gatherings, members' meetings, outreach ministries, etc.).
- Consistent obedience to Jesus flows out of a heart that loves Christ.
 - It is clear that Philip loves Christ because he spoke of Him everywhere he went. In Samaria, in the chariot, and from Azotus to Caesarea.
 - When you do find yourself obedient to making disciples and evangelizing, does it flow out of a heart of love for Christ or obligation?
 - Is the command to make disciples a burden for you, or a joy? If a burden, why?
- Consistent obedience is not hindered by our circumstances (**Acts 8:40**).
 - God always gives a pathway to obedience. No matter what Philip's circumstance he was consistently obedient in evangelism.
- Consistent obedience may require stepping out of comfort zones (**Acts 8:26**).
 - **John 3:8** *"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*
 - **How does Jesus's words here apply to the Ethiopian?**
 - Philip was not used to being transported, he was not used to running up beside chariots and sharing the gospel!
 - Are you open to the blowing of the Holy Spirit wherever he wishes even though it does not fit into the "box" of your life?
 - The Lord has people all over this city and world he is working to save. Are you willing to move where the Spirit moves to speak the Word of God?