

Acts Week 25

Verses 26-38 Philip meets the eunuch, Faith and Believe

26 Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.”¹ This is desert.

27 So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, **28** was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. **29** Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.”

30 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

31 And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

Romans 10:4; How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?

We are called to be a part of God’s plan, if you think that believing is all God requires of us then please consider these verses. Let’s look at the word ‘works’ before we look at faith and believe since both words require belief and faith. There has long been a problem with the use of the word works, most think of it in a simple English understanding that diminishes the importance as God would have us use. People need to know and understand the terms in their proper usage and how they differ. Works of faith is not man’s work’s, that which he decides to do, but by works of faith, that which we are called and led to do.

¹ Gaza, Hezekiah defeated and pursued the Philistines to Gaza, but does not seem to have captured it. It was taken by Sargon in 720 BC, in his war with Egypt, since Khanun, the king of Gaza, joined the Egyptians and was captured at the battle of Raphia (Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, II, 142). It was probably destroyed (see Am 1:7). It was certainly dismantled by Alexander the Great in 332, when it dared to resist him. It was then exceedingly strong, verifying its name, and was most bravely defended, so that it took Alexander two months to reduce it. He put to death all the men and sold the women and children as slaves (Grote, *History of Greece*, XI, 467 ff). It was restored, however, and we learn that Jonathan forced it to submit to him (Josephus, *Ant*, XIII, v, 5; 1 Macc 11:62), and Alexander Jannaeus took it and massacred the inhabitants who escaped the horrors of the siege (Josephus, *Ant*, XIII, xiii, 3). Pompey restored the freedom of Gaza (*ibid.*, XIV, iv, 4), and Gabinius rebuilt it in 57 BC (*ibid.*, XIV, v, 3). Gaza is mentioned only once in the New Testament (Ac 8:26), in the account of Philip and the eunuch. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, it became a center of Greek commerce and culture, and pagan influence was strong, while the church rounded there was struggling for existence. Many martyrs there testified to the faith, until finally, under Theodosius, Christianity gained the supremacy (HGHL, 12th edition, 188). It fell into the hands of the Arabs in 634 AD, and became and has remained a Moslem city since the days of Saladin, who recovered it from the Crusaders in 1187, after the battle of Hattin. It is now a city of some 20,000 inhabitants, among whom are a few hundred Christians. Written by H. Porter

“Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip.” William MacDonald remarks. Note, it is the angel who called Philip, why didn’t the angel approach the eunuch himself? It was Philip not the angel who was called to go, however as we look at verse 29 we find it would now be the Holy Spirit who told him to overtake the chariot. We often fail to see how important it is to rely on the power and strength of the entire Godhead, all three are there to give us all we need to proselytize, so it is not of our power but all of God’s work. No, we are not His puppets as some say, it is through the affectionate relationship that God chooses who He does and calls us out to share the glory and promises He blesses us with.

It was Philip who was to sit with the eunuch, to share the gospel... to be an active participant in God’s plan. Man has a responsibility to act on faith, that wonderful gift of God. Some people including pastors brag about bringing people to salvation, “oh, we save thousands today,” others say we have nothing to do with it, it is all God’s power. The two understandings are in stark difference, which of the two would you say is the answer? Both are incorrect. As we go to verse 29 we find who it was that told Philip to overtake the chariot. It was not the angel of the Lord but the Holy Spirit, and it would be the Holy Spirit guiding Philip in word. David Guzik makes a good observation of all that is happening with Philip right now. Since he was doing such great things already where he was why would he ever think to leave. Guzik says, “If one heard the call to leave such a blessed, fruitful ministry, one likely would think it was the devil speaking and not the Lord. One might think, “Not now” or “Not me” or “Not there.”

John 3:16 says, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. This is where many people stay, never growing, never hungry for more of the word, never eating solid food. It is not up to us to decide who goes to heaven and who does not, our assignment is to share the gospel. Look here at how James views it, James 1:22; makes it clear, **“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”**

William MacDonald in Believers Bible Commentary addresses being doers of the word. “It is not enough to receive the implanted word; we must obey it. “There is no virtue in possessing the Bible or even reading it as literature. There must be a deep desire to hear God speaking to us and an unquestioning willingness to do whatever He says. We must translate the Bible into action. The word must become flesh in our lives.”²

There are two words used many times over and should be a requirement of all Christians to know. Faith and Believe are the very foundational words that all Christians should be able to explain, yet few Christians can tell you the deeper meaning of... or how faith and belief complement one another. Here is the manner in which “Believes” is used in John 3:16, the Greek is **Strong’s 4100, pisteuō**, give oneself up, to surrender to Jesus.

² MacDonald Willam, Believers Bible Commentary, Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, page 1585

Pisteuō, Believe, used 248 times in 67 unique forms, “very common; properly, to have a faith directed unto, believing or in **faith to give oneself up to, Jesus,** etc. (cf. Winers Grammar, 213 (200f); (Buttmann, 174 (151))): Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42 (R G L Tr text); John 2:11; John 3:15 R G, John 3:16,18,36; John 6:29,35,40,47 (R G L); John 7:5,(John 7:38),John 7:39,48; John 8:30; 9:35f; 10:42; 11:25f,45,48; 12:11,37,42,44,(John 12:46); John 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20; Acts 10:43; Acts 19:4; Romans 10:14; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 1:29; 1 John 5:10; 1 Peter 1:8;” Thayer's Greek Lexicon

Pistis, 4103, Faith, used 244 times in 6 unique forms. conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervour born of faith and joined with it. relating to God the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. **relating to Christ,** a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God. The religious beliefs of Christians belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same fidelity, faithfulness the character of one who can be relied on.

We also find Pistos, Cognate: 4103 pistós (an adjective, derived from 3982 /peíthō, "persuaded") – properly, faithful (loyalty to faith; literally, fullness of faith); typically, of believing the faith God imparts.

[The root of 4103 /pistós, "faithful" and 4100 /pisteúō, "faith," are the same (pist-), referring to persuasion.]

Look at how faith and belief work together, now add works and we find an act, deed, thing done, this calls for works of faith. We can see here that Philip is called to action... we are also called. A man with no works has little to no faith. When you love somebody you do things for them you would not do for everyone, for your spouse and your children you would die to save them, Jesus did that very thing because God so loved the world. Jesus died to remove our sin, it would be on Jesus to be obedient unto the Father, believing He would rise again. In faith He knew and trusted in the Father, and so He performed a mighty work there on the cross for you and me. **John 10:18; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."**

It is interesting how Paul uses faith in **Romans 4:16 KJV - Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,**” Last week we talked about how Old Testament believers were saved, if it is only Jesus' atonement on the cross that opened up heaven for all

who believe how then were they saved? Now as we look back to Philip we can see a man so imbedded not just in faith but also surrendering, believing in the power of our mighty Lord, he would risk all to share the gospel message. We find Philip traveling without a companion as we do not find with others. **Luke 10:1; After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.** Philip had success right where he was, he was exercising his gifts, he was changing hearts, he was proclaiming the gospel in power and conviction. Now all is changed, God will use him in another place for same reason but different people.

A life surrendered is a life that can face many challenges by believing in our Lord, the work of the entire Godhead. We find the use of grace here in Romans implying undeserved favor, it has nothing to do with man's works, it is God's choice to whom He extends grace toward. The Old Testament people are seen to have faith but it would be of grace that was extended to them in order to be saved. Early Rabbis taught that Abraham was able to keep all of the law before the law was given.³

And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch⁴ of great authority. Who is this man and what of his great authority? John Stott writes, "The man from that region to whom Luke introduces us was not only a eunuch but an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake... queen of the Ethiopians.⁵ Kandake is known to have been a dynastic title for the queen mother who performed certain functions on behalf of the king." We can see here this was a very important man, and how he was able to obtain a

³ <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/abraham-the-patriarch-of-three-faiths/>

⁴ Eunuch: International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia. u'-nuk (caric; spadon; eunouchos): Primarily and literally, a eunuch is an emasculated man (De 23:1). The Hebrew word caric seems, however, to have acquired a figurative meaning, which is reflected in English Versions of the Bible where "officer" and "chamberlain" are found as renderings (compare Ge 37:36; 39:1, where caric is applied to married men; Es 4:4). The barbarous practice of self-mutilation and the mutilation of others in this way was prevalent throughout the Orient. The religious disabilities under which men thus deformed labored under the Mosaic law had the effect of making the practice abominable to the Jews as a people (De 23:1; Le 22:23-25). The law excluded eunuchs from public worship, partly because self-mutilation was often performed in honor of a heathen god, and partly because a maimed creature of any sort was deemed unfit for the service of Yahweh (Le 21:16 ff; 22:24). That ban, however, was later removed (Isa 56:4,5). On the other hand, the kings of Israel and Judah followed their royal neighbors in employing eunuchs (1) as guardians of the harem (2Ki 9:32; Jer 41:16), and (2) in military and other official posts (1Sa 8:15 margin; 1Ki 22:9 margin; 2Ki 8:6 margin; 2Ki 23:11 the King James Version margin; 2Ki 24:12,13 margin; 2Ki 25:19 margin; 1Ch 28:1 margin; 2Ch 18:8 margin; Jer 29:2; 34:19; 38:7; compare Ge 37:36; 40:2,7; Ac 8:27). Josephus informs us that eunuchs were a normal feature of the courts of the Herods (Ant., XV, vii, 4; XVI, viii, 1). From the single reference to the practice in the Gospels (Mt 19:12), we infer that the existence and purpose of eunuchs as a class were known to the Jews of Jesus' time. There is no question with Jesus as to the law of Nature: the married life is the norm of man's condition, and the union thereby effected transcends every other natural bond, even that of filial affection (Mt 19:5,6).

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/Dictionary/viewTopic.cfm?topic=ET0001267.IT0003250.NT0001729.VT0000929.BT0001447>

⁵ Stott John, The Message of Acts, Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Il, page 141

copy of Isaiah is also a proof of his office and level of authority, not just anyone would have access to such documents.

We next find this eunuch was coming back from Jerusalem having been worshiping. The image here is that he was a believer of our Lord God, and of Jesus. I spoke last week of when the bible is silent then we need not put something there we cannot justify by Scripture. However as we go on we find it will be the gospel of Christ Philip is introducing to him. We are told the eunuch is reading from Isaiah chapter 53, verses 7-8. Philip asked the question of whom he was referring to, **So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?"**