

Preached at GBC on 8/27/23

"Preaching The Gospel"

Acts 8:26-38

Our Lord's final command to His Apostles, which in turn was His command to ALL that make up His true church in every generation was to "*preach the Gospel*" - "*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **PREACH THE GOSPEL** to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" (Mk.16:15,16) If you go back and search the four Gospels, or if you study and search the rest of the New Testament, you won't find any instructions in the entirety of God's word telling people to "share their testimony". One of the things I've encountered by making our church and our declaration of the Gospel available on the internet is a variety of people who write or call me, who invariably want to "share their testimony" with me. I can honestly say that almost all of those who have "shared their testimony" with me, always talk about the same things: They used to be bad people, e.g., drunks, liars, cheaters, womanizers, not attending to or even concerned with anything religious. Now they are still sinners, but they aren't the bad kind of sinners. They have quit drinking, smoking, lying, cheating, womanizing, now attend church regularly, and read their Bible religiously. **You know or encounter anybody like that?** Or if they don't tell me about those kind of things, they go on and on about something they have experienced or felt under what was in fact nothing more than natural conscience conviction. Sadly, almost all religions think this is "preaching the Gospel" to the lost, fulfilling the command of the Lord. Before the Lord opened our eyes to the truth of the Gospel, WE THOUGHT THE SAME THING! Those of you who were at Hico Baptist when I came there as "pastor", do you remember the times that instead of preaching, I'd set a microphone up front and let people come up and "share their testimony"? Here's the problem: **IT WAS THEIR TESTIMONY**, not the testimony of our Lord. **Listen to me carefully:** This **IS NOT** what God commanded His church to do! Paul declared in **I Cor.2:1,2** - "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the **TESTIMONY OF GOD**. For I determined not to know anything among you, **SAVE JESUS CHRIST, and HIM CRUCIFIED.**" This word "testimony" means 'WITNESS'. Listen to the way the Apostle John used this same word - "*And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; [and] he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."*(I Jn.5:8-12)*

So if "sharing your testimony" isn't "*preaching the Gospel*", what is the responsibility for those who have been brought to **TRUE FAITH** and **TRUE REPENTANCE** when it comes to "*preaching the Gospel*"? We've already seen the answer in Paul's words to the Corinthians - "*For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*" In our text this morning, we see Paul's words exemplified in Phillip's encounter with this Ethiopian Eunuch.

In Vs.26, we are taught an important lesson regarding our responsibility in preaching the Gospel - "*And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.*" I know that God no longer speaks in

audible voices like He did in the early days of the Church, **because Heb.1 teaches us this truth.** But I can glean from these words that when it comes to how we are to go forth with the Gospel, we should and must be **LED BY** and **SENSITIVE TO** the Holy Spirit's leadership. Phillip wasn't starting up a "Thursday night visitation" program. God didn't direct Phillip to a village, or a metropolis, or even to a congregation, but to **ONE** of His chosen sheep. **Let me be very clear:** God is pleased to use saved sinners to share His glorious Gospel with those who are the "**lost sheep of the house of Israel**". I know religion thinks it is their responsibility to share the Gospel with every single solitary person they encounter, either through their words or through their outward example. I also know they would accuse us of not being "evangelical" because we don't follow their same formula with their same zeal. While it is true that we should have a desire to reach all men with this Gospel, it is the Lord's will as to who and when we truly share it with others. The Scriptures make this very clear in **Acts 16**. Paul had a desire to preach the Gospel in Asia, yet the Holy Spirit stopped him from doing so – "**Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.**" (**Act 16:6,7**) I know from personal experience, you'll know when the Lord has opened a door of opportunity for you to preach and teach the Gospel. It's much more than getting people to make a profession of religion or join a church. We're talking about declaring in their hearing the "**testimony of the Lord**". **You can rest assured:** If God has an elect sinner He has determined to bring to a knowledge of the truth, He will by His Spirit bring that sinner into contact with His Gospel by the mouth of His sent servant - "**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? And how shall they preach, EXCEPT THEY BE SENT? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!**"(**Rom.10:14,15**) We don't ever want to go where God has not been pleased to send us.

Vss.27-34 show us those we are to approach with the Gospel. My attitude has changed so much in the past **20 or so years** regarding this. I used to be like a "bull in a china shop", just barging in and bullying my way into conversations with the Gospel. But then the Lord was pleased to bring to light this important Scripture - "**But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.**"(**I Pet.3:15**) **Always keep this in mind:** The Gospel call isn't something mystical or emotional. The Gospel call is a summons of God to **His children**, not a request that is offered for their acceptance or rejection. When God is dealing with one of His children, even though they might be entrapped in the darkness of religion and self-righteousness, He will graciously and mercifully move in their hearts, directing them to **ASK** "**a reason of the hope that is in you.**" **Turn over to Acts 16:14.** Remember Solomon's words: "**A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.**"(**Prov.16:9**) **We must be very careful here.** It's not just anyone that asks that we are to tell them of the **HOPE** of eternal life. **Listen to Peter again:** "**and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you WITH MEEKNESS AND FEAR.**"(**I Pet.3:15**) If they ask you about your hope with "**meekness and fear**", don't hesitate to tell them. This Eunuch is an excellent example of one who asked in "**meekness and fear**". He had been to Jerusalem to worship, and had left Jerusalem in the same religious darkness and depravity he was in before he went to worship. By a miracle of God's grace he was reading from **Isaiah 53**, having no understanding concerning what he was reading. He was like most folks we encounter - they read the Scriptures without a clue concerning **WHO** they testify of. But when God directed His servant Phillip to join himself to this elect sinner, and moved Phillip

to ask the Eunuch one question, **THIS SINNER ASKED** with meekness and fear - **Vss.27-34**. This Eunuch **REALLY WANTED** an answer. He wasn't seeking to debate and argue, but sincerely wanted to know the answer concerning this **PERSON** of whom he was reading. Another good example of God's grace working miraculously is seen in the Phillipian jailor - "**What must I do to be saved?**" He really wanted to know, asking in meekness and fear, so Paul preached the Gospel to him. Now if they don't ask in "**meekness and fear**", you'll find yourself "**casting pearl before swine**", and the end of that conversation will descend into argument and discord. So it requires some wisdom on our part to discern the difference, between "**meekness and fear**" and an attempt on their part to argue and debate. The Gospel isn't something that is open for argument and debate. It is a declaration of the truth about God, about man, and about salvation through a God appointed Substitute. That's not open to interpretation or the scrutiny of unregenerate, religious minds.

That brings us to **Vs.35**. When a sinner asks a question of you with a sincere desire to know, asking in "**meekness and fear**", it is your responsibility to "**be ready**" (**literally, be prepared**) to give them an answer, which is what Phillip did here - "**Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS.**" What graciousness and providential care our Lord showed in having this particular passage of Scripture conveniently in this elect sinner's hands. Phillip "**began at that same Scripture**", and "**PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS (Jehovah Our Savior).**" Phillip didn't testify concerning some great change in his own life morally or religiously. He didn't talk about keeping the Law or direct this man concerning shedding tears of remorse. He simply preached from God's Word concerning the **PERSON** and **WORK** of Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. What was true of Phillip's testimony or preaching the Gospel, should also be the method of our preaching the Gospel to those who ask. What is it to "**PREACH JESUS**"? Let me give you a list from Isaiah and we'll close. **First of all**, it is to declare the necessity of Christ's virgin birth, insuring His sinless Humanity - **Isa.7:14**. **Secondly**, it is to declare the fact that Christ was made "**under the law**", to redeem (**or buy back off the market-place of sin**) all the objects of His love. - **Isa.53:4**. **Thirdly**, it is to declare the necessity of Christ's sinless obedience to "**every jot and tittle**" of the law, **not for Himself**, but for every sinner He stood for as their Substitute and Surety. **Fourthly**, it is to declare how He suffered, bled, and died in our stead, bearing our "**sins in His body on the tree**", making perfect and complete satisfaction to God's law and justice for us - **Isa.53:5-8**. **Fifthly**, it is to declare how He brought in everlasting righteousness, actually obtaining our salvation by His obedience unto death - **Isa.53:9-11**. **Sixthly**, it is to declare **HOW** He was raised again for our justification, ascending and taking His place at the right hand of the Majesty on High, ever living to make intercession for all the objects of His love - **Isa.53:12**.

Let me say this in closing; In order to be "**ready always**" to faithfully and dogmatically be able to give these answers demand that we study the Scriptures diligently and prayerfully, asking our God to enable us by His grace to faithfully declare His truth to the ears of His appointed people in His appointed time.