

THE CHARIOT SERMON

I. Acts 8:1-8 Acts 8:14-17 & 25 Acts 8:26-40 Isaiah 53:1-12

A. Last Sunday we heard a powerful sermon by Stephen. It was the third sermon in a row delivered to the Sanhedrin as recorded by Luke. While Stephen held these Jewish leaders in the palm of his hand as he masterfully summarized the OT, when he turned his words towards the Sanhedrin, they were filled with rage. They seized him, drug him outside of Jerusalem, and stoned him to death. A Pharisee named Saul, a prized student of Gamaliel, gave hearty approval to Stephen's execution. Saul then launched a campaign of terrorism against the church.

B. Acts 8:1-8 Today another man of God, Philip, enters our narrative. A colleague of Stephen, Philip was among those driven out of Jerusalem by Saul's rampage.

1) V1-3 *"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. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison."* **(Saul was a vicious terrorist!)**

2) V4-8 *"Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. 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. So there was much joy in that city."* **(Those who fled Jerusalem did not scatter as poor refugees with woe-is-me attitudes. Most of them lost everything for the sake of Christ. They fled with Good News of Great Joy!)**

C. Acts 8:14-17, 25 Luke records what happens next: *"Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for He had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit... 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."* **(Philip heads to Samaria, preaches the word, and revival breaks out. Time to start a building campaign? Start a TV ministry? How will God use Philip next?)**

D. Acts 8:26-40 An angel sends Philip away from the revival down a desert road.

1) V26-28 *"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. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah."* **(Ethiopia [Sudan today] had it's roots in the Nubian Empire. This was a renowned African empire, on par with the Egyptians, and this man was a royal government official! He's a Gentile who reveres the God of Israel along with the OT Scriptures and he's headed down a desert road, back towards his homeland. He may be alone. Do black lives matter? You betcha!)**

2) V29-35 *"And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot.'" So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' And he said, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opens not His mouth. In His humiliation justice was denied Him. Who can describe His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth.'" And the eunuch said to Philip, 'About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus."* **(This Royal Official is reading Isaiah 53:7-8. He's reading about Jesus and doesn't even know it. Is. 53 is perhaps the clearest OT Messianic prophecy and it was written 750 years before Christ.)**

3) V36-40 *"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?'" [V37 only in some manuscripts] And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.'" And he replied, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 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. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea."* **(Philip's still there 20+ years later--See Acts 21:7-8..)**

E. Christians flee Jerusalem to escape Saul's rampage and Philip's among them. Revival breaks out in Samaria. Then on a desert road, he leads an African Official to Christ. Philip ends up in the coastal city of Caesarea, finds a wife, and raises four godly daughters. When the Apostle Paul (the former Saul) comes to town, bound for arrest in Jerusalem, he stays at Philip's house! God's roads may seem peculiar, mysterious, serendipitous, and full of

detours but they all lead straight to where He wants them. What a privilege to walk those roads together and share Christ with all who'll listen!

II. Communion

A. Isaiah 53:1-12, The Chariot Text, will take us to the Bread & Cup this morning.

B. V1-12 *"Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a Man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces He was despised, and we held Him in low esteem. Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. **(Absorbing God's wrath meant for us!)** **(The Bread & Cup remind us.)** But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed. **(The Bread & Cup remind us.)** We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away. Yet who of His generation protested? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the Lord makes His life an offering for sin, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand. After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge My Righteous Servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities. **(The Bread & Cup remind us.)** Therefore I will give Him a portion among the great, and He will divide the spoils with the strong, because He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many, **(We are among the many!)** and made intercession for the transgressors. **(The Bread & Cup remind us.)***

* Pray and serve Communion...

* Benediction Verse: Jude 1:20-21...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Acts 8:1-8 (ESV)

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. **2** Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. **3** But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. **4** Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. **5** Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. **6** And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. **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. **8** So there was much joy in that city.

Acts 8:14-17, 25 (ESV)

14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, **15** who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, **16** for He had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **17** Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit... **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 8:26-40 (ESV)

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. **27** And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship **28** and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. **29** 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?" **31** And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "*Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opens not His mouth. **33** In His humiliation justice was denied Him. Who can describe His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth.*" **34** And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" **35** 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?" **[V37 only in some manuscripts]** And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." **38** And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. **39** 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.

Isaiah 53:1-12 (ESV)

1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? **2** He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. **3** He was despised and rejected by mankind, a Man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces He was despised, and we held Him in low esteem. **4** Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. **5** But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed. **6** We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. **7** He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. **8** By oppression and judgment He was taken away. Yet who of His generation protested? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was punished. **9** He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. **10** Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the Lord makes His life an offering for sin, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand. **11** After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge My Righteous Servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities. **12** Therefore I will give Him a portion among the great, and He will divide the spoils with the strong, because He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Jude 1:20-21 (CEB)

20 But you, dear friends: build each other up on the foundation of your most holy faith, pray in the Holy Spirit, **21** keep each other in the love of God, wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will give you eternal life.

Film Clips & Other Links

The Book of Acts (Acts 5-6)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1TtiZASp1Q>

The Book of Acts (Acts 7-8)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dm2SsoX5tqQ>

The Persecution of Christians

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuBsOggmw7E>

It Might Take Persecution - John Piper

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_lqJY8b0os

Suffering and Glory (Acts 7 Stephen's Stoning) - Tim Keller (Full sermon)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuZHYPd3qY0>

Bonus Stuff

Martin Lloyd-Jones on Supernatural Guidance

"Here again is a most extraordinary subject, and indeed a very fascinating one, and, from many angles, a most glorious one. There is no question but that God's people can look for and expect "leadings," "guidance," "indications of what they are meant to do." There are many examples of this in the Scriptures and I take one at random. You remember the story in Acts 8:26 of how Philip the Evangelist was told by the angel of the Lord, "Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert"... Now there are leadings such as that... If you read the history of the saints, God's people throughout the centuries and especially the history of revivals, you will find that this is something which is perfectly clear and definite—men have been told by the Holy Spirit to do something; they knew it was the Holy Spirit speaking to them, and it transpired that it obviously was his leading. It seems clear to me that if we deny such a possibility we are again guilty of quenching the Spirit."

- Martin Lloyd-Jones, *The Sovereign Spirit*, pp. 89–90. M. Jones was the pastor and expository preacher at Westminster Chapel in London, 1939 and 1968. He believed in the full authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures while affirming the Holy Spirit's active guidance in the life of the believer.

Theological Note on Samaritans, Acts 8:5

Reformation Study Bible

Acts 8:5 Samaria: Samaritans, thought to be descended from intermarriage between Israel's northern tribes and pagan peoples relocated by Assyria, revered the five books of Moses but not the rest of the OT Scriptures, and combined devotion to idols with formalistic service to the Lord (2 Kings 17:24-41). Relationships between Jews and Samaritans were strained at best and hostile at worst (John 4:9). Jesus reached out to Samaritans in grace, even as He categorized them as outside the covenant people (Acts 4:22; Luke 17:16, 17). By preaching Jesus as the Christ to Samaritans, Philip carries the gospel not only across geographical boundaries but also across a vast religious and racial divide.

- Theological Note on Acts 8:5, Samaria, *Reformation Study Bible*, Reformation Trust-Ligonier Ministries, p. 1927.

Theological Note on Eunuchs, Acts 8:26-27

ESV Study Bible

Acts 8:26-27: Gaza was the last watering place before the desert on the road from Jerusalem to Egypt. Ethiopia was the ancient Nubian Kingdom, south of Aswan on the Nile. The designation *eunuch* could have been a mere title (for "treasurer" or trusted royal servant), or could refer to his having been emasculated. Since he has been to *Jerusalem to worship*, the eunuch was probably a "God-fearer," a Gentile who worshiped Israel's God but had not become a full convert ("proselyte"). As eunuch, he would have been barred from the inner courts of the temple, which makes reading "the prophet Isaiah" (v. 28) especially significant. Isaiah held out the promise that God would grant devout eunuchs a heritage "better than sons and daughters" (Isaiah 56:3-5).

- Theological Note on Acts 8:26-27, *ESV Study Bible*, Crossway, p. 2097.

Deuteronomy 23:1 (NKJV)

1 He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the Lord.

Isaiah 56:3-7 (ESV)

3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely separate me from His people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." 4 For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, who choose the things that please Me and hold fast My covenant, 5 I will give in My house and within My walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 6 "And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be His servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast My covenant-- 7 these I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

Acts 21:7-9 (ESV)

7 We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and sisters and stayed with them for a day. 8 Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. 9 He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

Man of Sorrows

By Jill Phillips

Man of sorrows what a name,
For the Son of God who came,
Ruined sinners to reclaim,
Hallelujah what a Savior.

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood,
Sealed my pardon with His blood,
Hallelujah what a Savior.

Guilty, vile and helpless we,
Spotless Lamb of God was He,
Full atonement can it be?!
Hallelujah what a Savior.

Lifted up was He to die,
It is finished was His cry,
Now in heaven exalted high,

Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!

When He comes our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we'll sing,
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Hallelujah what a Savior.