

SOME TIMES LITTLE TURNS OUT TO BE BIG

I. Acts 8:1-8 Acts 8:26-40 Isaiah 53:4-8

A. Let me set the stage for today's text: Just before Jesus ascended to heaven following His resurrection, He told the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then He told them they would carry the Gospel from Jerusalem, throughout Judea, Samaria, and the utter most parts of the earth. The Holy Spirit fell on Pentecost and 3,000 people were saved following Peter's incredible sermon. From there, the church continued to grow, howbeit pretty much inside Jerusalem. Then Stephen preached an incredible sermon and was summarily stoned to death, even while a young Pharisee named Saul looked on...

B. Acts 8:1-8 (ESV) picks up the narrative from there...

1) **V1-4: 1** *And Saul approved of his (**Stephen's**) 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. (**Persecution leads to the spread of the Gospel.**)*

2) **V5-6: 5** *Philip (**a close colleague of Stephen's--they oversaw the ministry of feeding widows.**) 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. (**Jesus had been there before. Remember the woman at the well? Now they're hearing that this same Jesus really was the Messiah and had died on the cross for their sins!**)*

3) **V7-8: 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. 8 So there was much joy in that city.*

C. If you read Acts 8:9-25, you'll read more about the Samaritan Great Awakening and likewise about a magician named Simon. But I'll leave that to your own study.

D. Acts 8:26-40 (ESV) is the continuation...

1) **V26: 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. (**Philip is smack dab in the middle of a revival. People are getting saved, healed, and delivered. The Holy Spirit is moving with power. Then God sends Philip elsewhere.**)*

2) **V27-33: 27** *And he rose and went. (**No sign of any argument. Philip knew he was only a conduit, a vessel and a voice, and that God Himself was in charge.**) And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. (**Treasure Secretary of Ethiopia**). He had come to Jerusalem to worship (**Probably had converted to Judaism**) 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." **(So at the moment Philip runs up beside the chariot, the Ethiopian is reading Isaiah 53, perhaps the clearest and most powerful prophetic description of who the Messiah would be and what He would accomplish as the sacrificial Lamb of God.)**

3) V34: 34 And the eunuch said to Philip, "About Whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" **(Luke doesn't say Philip was smiling at this point but my bet is he was!)**

4) V35-39: 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?" **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, **(i.e. He was transported; taken elsewhere in a flash; beamed 20 miles up the coast; Scotty eat your heart out!)** and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. **(While not verifiable, tradition says this man took the Gospel to Africa...)**

5) V40: 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. **(Philip settled in Caesarea where he raised four devout daughters and where he eventually would host Paul, formerly Saul, the one who'd chased him outta Jerusalem all those many years before...)**

E. I love how Philip embraced God's call to spread the news about Jesus. I especially love how it didn't matter if he was called to minister to a big crowd or to only just one. He was faithful with a little (waiting tables); then much (taking the Gospel to Samaria just as Jesus commanded); and then to a single Ethiopian official traveling down a desert road. We see *big* and *small* one way, God sees them another. We look at outward appearances, God looks at the heart. We see through the glass darkly, God sees things crystal clear. We can barely see the hand in front of us, God see all the way to the end of the road and far beyond...

F. Sometimes *little* turns out *big*. Sometimes small actions loom large. A widow's little offering of two copper coins turned out to be big, so said Jesus. A boy's small lunch was enough to feed thousands. A smidgeon of oil and a handful of flour sustained a poor widow, her son and the prophet Elijah throughout a drought and famine. A shepherd boy slew a giant with a sling & stone...

G. Let me tell you about a small church and a young man named Charles: During a brutal Sunday snowstorm in Colchester, England in January 1850, a young man named Charles was headed on foot to a church. The snow was so bad he went down an alley and came upon a small Primitive Methodist Church. Only 10-12 people showed up and even the preacher was

snowed out. A layman got up to speak. His text was Isaiah 45:22: "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." That lay preacher set his gaze straight upon young Charles and practically demanded he yield his life to Christ. The Holy Spirit moved upon him powerfully and he was saved. His name was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon went on to preach 3,600 sermons to an estimated 10 million people, pastoring Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, leading thousands upon thousands to Christ.

H. Let me share another little story: It was 1858 in New England. Edward Kimball was just a humble Sunday School teacher. God laid on his heart to share the Gospel with a Boston shoe clerk. Outside the shoe store he was nervous. Finally he summoned the courage, went inside, and found the clerk in the storage room. He shared Christ with the young man and he believed. His name was D.L. Moody. Moody became a renowned evangelist and led thousands to Jesus. Hearing Moody, another nationwide ministry was birthed by famed English pastor, F.B. Meyer. Meyer led a man named Wilbur Chapman to Christ who in turn hired former baseball great, Billy Sunday as an evangelist. Some businessmen in Charlotte, NC heard Billy Sunday preach a revival there and launched their own crusade under the leadership of Mordecai Ham. One night as Ham preached, another young man received Christ. His name was Billy Graham. And that chain of events all started with a nervous yet courageous witness named Edward Kimball back in 1858. **Sometimes little turns out to be big. Sometimes small actions loom large. "It only takes a spark to get a fire going..."**

I. So let's go back to that desert road with Philip and that Ethiopian. Let's go back to Isaiah 53. These are the words of God, originally for Israel, then for all who would become God's people, then for a single Ethiopian, and now just for you...

J. Isaiah 53:4-8 (NIV) is from our Lord to you: *4 Surely He took up **your** pain and bore **your** suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced for **your** transgressions, He was crushed for **your** iniquities; the punishment that brought **you** peace was on Him, and by His wounds **you** 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.*

* Close with Prayer...

[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 8:26-40 (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?" **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 53:4-8 (NIV)

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.

Bonus Goodies

Little Things - Jon Jorgenson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1gvrvtGyM>

The Greatness of Smallness - Ann Swindell

<http://www.annswindell.com/2015/03/02/the-greatness-of-smallness/>

Small Things God Uses (Excellent Scriptures)

<http://bible.knowing-jesus.com/topics/Small-Things-God-Uses>

The Disproportional Response - Adam Scott (The Gospel Coalition)

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-disproportional-response-responding-to-hurt-in-2022/>

[More Verses, Quotes, Excerpts, & Extras](#)

[Acts 6:1-7 \(ESV\)](#)

1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. **2** And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. **3** 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. **7** And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

[Acts 8:9-25 \(ESV\)](#)

9 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. **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. **18** Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, **19** saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." **20** But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! **21** You have neither

part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. **22** Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. **23** For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” **24** And Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.” **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.

Luke 4:1-4 (ESV)

1 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, **2** and He saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. **3** And He said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. **4** For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

2 Timothy 1:7-10 (NIV)

7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. **8** So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me His prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. **9** He has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, **10** but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Romans 1:16-18 (NLT)

16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes--the Jew first and also the Gentile. **17** This Good News tells us how God makes us right in His sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”

1 Corinthians 1:18 (AMP)

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness [absurd and illogical] to those who are perishing and spiritually dead [because they reject it], but to us who are being saved [by God’s grace] it is [the manifestation of] the power of God.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NLT)

13 Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. **14** And do everything with love.

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point."

Quote by John Calvin

"Let us not cease to do the utmost, that we may incessantly go forward in the way of the Lord; and let us not despair of the smallness of our accomplishments."

Quote by D.L. Moody

"Small numbers make no difference to God. There is nothing small if God is in it."

Quote by Oswald Chambers

"All of God's people are ordinary people who have been made extraordinary by the purpose He has given them."

Quote by Ann Swindell

"Greatness is smallness, servanthood, humility. It is not power, ideas, and influence."

Quote by Phillips Brooks

"The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is."

Sermon Excerpt by Charles H. Spurgeon

The great difference between Stephen and Saul, however, lies in this—Stephen is defending the cause of Christ at the cost of his own life and Saul is opposing him with all his might. Even in a congregation like the present, there may not be many, yet there may be some who are opposing the Gospel. There may be some here who, although they would not stone Believers, yet would make a jest of them—perhaps they have been making merry today over those Christian Brothers [Moody and Sankey] who have of late been prominent in the matter of revivals—some foolish jest they have perpetrated about them—and done their best to lower them in the esteem of their fellows. Ah, dear Friends, beware what you are doing, for the Lord of Hosts says concerning His people, *"He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye."* Nothing brings the color into a man's cheek sooner than any ill-treatment of his children! And if any of you want to provoke God to speedy and sudden judgment against you, you have only to join in treating, in a cruel manner, those who are really His children. May God keep all of us from such a shameful sin as that!

- Sermon Excerpt by Charles H. Spurgeon, *"Stephen and Saul"* Sermon No. 2948, delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington in London, Thursday Evening, May 13, 1875. To read full sermon, go to: <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols49-51/chs2948.pdf>

To read about D.L. Moody and David Sankey, go to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moody_and_Sankey

Courage During The Boxer Rebellion

John MAcArthur

During the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1900), extreme nationalist Chinese fomented a campaign of terror against officials of foreign governments, Christian missionaries, and even Chinese Christians. After they surrounded a certain mission station, they sealed all exits except one. They placed a cross in the dirt in front of the opened gate and told the missionaries and students that anyone who walked out and trampled the cross would be spared. According to reports, the first seven students who departed trampled the cross and were sent on their way. The eighth student, a young girl, approached the cross, knelt down, prayed for strength, carefully walked around the cross, and was

immediately shot to death. The remaining 92 students, strengthened by that girl's courageous example, also walked around the cross to their deaths.

- John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*. Chicago: Moody Press.

H.P. Hughes vs Charles Bradlaugh

Author Unknown

The strongest argument for the Gospel of Christ is the personal testimony of someone whose life has been changed by it. Charles Bradlaugh, an avowed infidel, once challenged the Rev. H.P. Hughes to a debate.

The preacher, who was head of a rescue mission in London, England, accepted the challenge with the condition that he could bring with him 100 men and women who would tell what had happened in their lives since trusting Christ as their Savior. They would be people who once lived in deep sin, some having come from poverty-stricken homes caused by the vices of their parents. Hughes said they would not only tell of their conversion, but would submit to cross-examination by any who doubted their stories. Furthermore, the minister invited his opponent to bring a group of non-believers who could tell how they were helped by their lack of faith.

When the appointed day arrived, the preacher came, accompanied by 100 transformed persons. But Bradlaugh never showed up. The result? The meeting turned into a testimony time and many sinners who had gathered to hear the scheduled debate were converted.

We Need More Edward Kimballs

Charles Stanley

You do not have to be famous, clever, or rich to affect the lives of others. All you must do is walk in the good works which God has determined for your life. You can have an eternal impact when you do. Edward Kimball did. Like those who listened to Christ in his day, Kimball was an ordinary man. A Sunday school teacher, he was impressed one day to share the good news with a Boston shoe clerk. After nervously pacing outside the store several times before entering, he found the young man in the storage room. Kimball shared God's love, and the clerk received Christ as his Savior. That was 1858, and the clerk's name was Dwight L. Moody, who God greatly used as a Bible evangelist and teacher. But the story does not stop there. Several years later, a pastor named Fredrick B. Meyer was stirred by Moody's teaching and launched a nationwide preaching ministry. After listening to Meyer, a college student named Wilbur Chapman accepted Christ. Chapman later employed former ballplayer Billy Sunday as an evangelist while Chapman worked for the YMCA. Following a campaign conducted by Billy Sunday in Charlotte, North Carolina, a group of enthusiastic businessmen (who attended Sunday's revival) sponsored a crusade under the leadership of Mordecai Hamm. In that audience one night, a young man received Christ. His name was Billy Graham. It all began with a simple witness of a little known Sunday school teacher, Edward Kimball. - Charles F. Stanley, *In Touch Ministries*.