



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 6

May 19, 2019

No. 20

Philip the Evangelist

by David Watson

Philip (Acts 6:5) is easy to skip over because we usually focus on the people he dealt with—Simon the magician and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). But there are 3 things I want us to notice about Philip and his work that will inspire us to become better Christians.

First, Philip is a great example of loving our neighbors. Due to Saul's persecution, Philip leaves Jerusalem and goes—of all places—to *Samaria* and starts proclaiming Christ to them (Acts 8:5)! Most Jews wouldn't be caught dead with Samaritans (John 4:7-9; 8:48; Luke 9:51-56), but there Philip is, preaching the good news and baptizing men and women (Acts 8:13). That shows us what the gospel of Christ will do for us—it will open our eyes to the value of a soul. It will raise us above racism and bigotry and prejudice. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Let's fix that worldview into our minds—that each person around us (friends, family members, complete strangers) has a soul! Like Philip, I should be willing to share the gospel with anyone as an act of love.

Second, Philip shows us the power of the gospel. He is later called "the evangelist" (Acts 21:8). Evangelist means "one who declares the good news." After declaring the good news to the Samaritans, Philip preaches Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39). Many religious people today teach that in order to understand and accept the gospel and be saved, the Holy Spirit has to miraculously affect you in some way ("irresistible grace").

But notice that's NOT what happened here. Interestingly, you have an angel (v.26) and the Holy Spirit (v.29) directly involved in the conversion of the Ethiopian, but what did they do? They got the preacher of God's word connected to the person in need. That's what happens all through the book of Acts—preachers present the evidence and build a logical case for Christ—sometimes reasoning and explaining things over a period of weeks and months and years, and as a result of that, people believed and obeyed. That's what Philip did for the Samaritans (Acts 8:5, 12) and what he does now for the Ethiopian (Acts 8:35, 36). Christianity is not based on blind faith or on a subjective feeling in my heart. It's based upon the inspired word of God! No wonder Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). May we learn to trust in the power of the gospel!

Third, Philip shows us that we can grow older without growing bitter. Acts 8:40 mentions that he ends up in Caesarea. He disappears from the record until a brief reference in Acts 21:8-14, where Paul and his companions stayed with him for several days. It is here in the record where he's identified as Philip the evangelist (one who declares the good news), about 20 years after the events of Acts 8. Let's appreciate that Philip is still at it years later. It's one thing to start with a bang, and maybe to have a zeal fueled by the events in Acts 7-8, but what about when the newness wears off? Philip's longevity serves as a great example to us. Can I do that? Can I live for Christ through the years?

But even more than his longevity, notice that Philip has not grown bitter during this time, even though he had plenty of reasons. Remember that Stephen was one of the seven men chosen in Acts 6:5. Thus, if Philip didn't know Stephen already, he surely got to know him as they worked together. Then Stephen is stoned (with Saul's approval, Acts 7:58), and it's very likely that Philip was one of men who buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him (Acts 8:2). And then Saul continues the persecution, which is the reason Philip gets run out of Jerusalem to begin with (Acts 8:3-5). And then lo and behold, 20 some-odd years later, who knocks on the door wanting to spend a few nights at Philip's house? Saul, now called Paul. Imagine that! Imagine what feelings Philip could have harbored! "You killed my friend,

Stephen! You threw my brothers and sisters in jail! You ran me out of my home city!" If Philip had been harboring hatred and planning revenge all these years, now was his chance!

But no, he's not called "Philip, the grouchy old man who gripes all the time about how he was treated poorly and cheated out of a life in Jerusalem and all his friends were killed or thrown in prison." He is Philip the evangelist. Philip, the proclaimer of good news. In fact, he is probably included in the "local residents" trying to keep Paul safe (Acts 21:12). Let's follow his example. Are you an old curmudgeon? If somebody does you wrong, are you going to be sure that everybody and their dog is going to hear about it for the next 20 years? Instead of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, do you spend your time developing traits like irritability, grudge-holding, gossiping, revenge, and bitterness? Lots of bad stuff happened to Philip, too, but he didn't spend his life in his rocking chair plotting revenge. He became Philip the evangelist—Philip the proclaimer of good news!

May we imitate Philip, whose love for souls caused him to spread the good news about Jesus to whoever he could for as long as he could.



Show Me Your Friends...

- by Andrew Roberts

The Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes wrote, "Tell me what company thou keepest, and I'll tell thee what thou art." Cervantes was not a prophet, he simply understood the strong influence friends exert over our lives. You can tell a lot about a person by the company they keep. Scripture brings this truth to light.

Show me your friends...

And I'll show you your religious convictions. David wrote, "*I am a companion of all who fear You, And of those who keep Your precepts*" (Ps. 119:63). Our companions will help or hinder us in letting our light shine, doing good works, devotion to God and in getting to heaven. We ought to be concerned if we realize all our close friends are either godless or involved in false religion.

And I'll show you your favorite activities. Proverbs 23:19-21, "*Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man in rags.*" We do things with our friends. Obviously, we do not choose friends so we can AVOID them. We want to spend time with them and generally pursue common interests. Are you involved with the party-hard, drunken, drug-using crowd? Well, guess what that makes you.

And I'll show you how you value wisdom. "*He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed*" (Prov. 13:20). Your friends encourage you in the direction they are heading. The company you keep is commentary on your current values and a variable in future decisions. Thus you want to be with those who show wisdom and set goals for their future. Don't be with those who can't see past the weekend.

And I'll show you your feelings about proper speech. "*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise*" (Prov. 10:19). Some people's mouths are a hotbed for sin: gossip, profanity, anger, criticism. Let us remember, "*Evil company corrupts good habits*" (1 Cor. 15:33).

What do your friends say about you?