

# Prepared Instrument

by Carl Armerding

---

*The sermon explores the extension of Pentecost to Samaria and the sending of the gospel into Africa through the ministry of Philip.*

**Duration:** 39:58

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 10:19, Isaiah 6:10, Isaiah 53:1, Matthew 6:33, John 12:40-41, Acts 8:35

**Topics:** "Vessel"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the theme of being a prepared soul and instrument for God's message. He emphasizes the importance of reading and understanding the Word of God. The speaker also reflects on the stories of individuals who have hit rock bottom and found redemption through the gospel. Additionally, the sermon touches on the extension of Pentecost to Samaria and the sending of the gospel into Africa.

---

## Transcript

And now, shall we turn again to the Book of the Acts? Tonight we'd like to look at Chapter 8. Acts, Chapter 8. You remember last night we were talking about the martyrdom of Stephen, the wonderful way in which he went home to meet the Lord. He's one of three in that previous chapter who had a vision of God. We find in the opening verses of this chapter a reference to the man who witnessed the whole thing.

It says here in Acts, Chapter 8, "...and Saul was consenting unto his death." And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church, which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering through every house, and hailing men and women, committed them to prison.

Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them, and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the

greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

And to him they had regard, because of a long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also, when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

And now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

This chapter really has three subjects in it. The first one, which I would call the extension of Pentecost to Samaria. The second has to do with Simon the sorcerer, which we shall not consider tonight.

And then the third, which I want to look at also briefly before the hour is up, is the entrance, or rather the sending of the gospel into Africa. These are three wonderful subjects, but it is of the first and the last that I want to speak of particularly. You will notice that I refer to this as the extension of Pentecost rather than its repetition.

This was not a repetition of Pentecost, as evident when you read the verses that describe what took place in Samaria. For example, there is no coming of the Spirit like a mighty rushing wind. There is no evidence of him setting himself upon them in cloven tongues of fire, and neither is there any speaking in tongues here.

But on the other hand, we find that somehow through the persecution of the Church they were led to carry out the commission which the Lord Jesus had given them right in the first chapter of this very book, when he told them that they were to be his witnesses in Judea and in Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Sometimes it takes just that, to see that we get out and do the job where the Lord wants it done. I am told, in fact I think I have read it in the history of the China Inland Mission, now known as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, that Hudson Taylor for years had prayed that the gospel might go out in that string of islands that surrounds the coast of China from Singapore right on up to Japan.

Well, of course they were very busy putting the gospel out in the interior of China. But then came the days of the evacuation. They had to quit China.

And here the field opens up, for which Hudson Taylor himself had prayed. And so now these islands from Singapore right around up to Hokkaido in Japan are hearing the gospel, some of them for the first time. It is remarkable how God works in this way.

And so we find that here is a man, Philip, Stephen, the first man of that Christian businessmen's committee that we looked at in chapter 6, had been taken home to glory. And Philip was the number two man in that list. And he moves up to place number one.

And so the Spirit of God lays hold on Philip, and he goes down to Sumeria and preaches the gospel with wonderful success. And the news of it goes up to Jerusalem. And now Peter and John come down to see what's really happening.

And you'll notice that it says here that they prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit. You'll notice that as we were reading it. Verse 15 of our chapter, who when they would come down prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost.

This of course is again different from chapter 2. Nobody there was praying for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. He just came upon them. But here we find that prayer is offered, that the Spirit of God might come upon them.

Now when you take into account the antipathy that there was between the Jews and the Samaritans, this was an act of real triumph and grace. For these Jews to come down from Jerusalem and to pray that the Holy Spirit might come upon the Samaritans, I repeat, that was a triumph of grace. Do you remember that the Samaritan woman said to the Lord Jesus that Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans? On the other hand, it might be that the Samaritans had to learn that they too were in some sense dependent upon the Jews.

And so in addition to this prayer on the part of Peter and John that the Samaritans might receive the Spirit of God, we find that they had to lay their hands on them. You'll notice it says here in verse 17, that they then laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost. This again is peculiar to what we have here.

We come to chapters 10 and 11 of this book where the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit. There was nobody praying that they might. There was nobody laid hands on them.

The Holy Spirit just fell on them as he did on the Jews in the beginning. But here there was a real reason to break down this prejudice that was between these two groups of people. And so we see the Spirit of Pentecost, the blessing of Pentecost, is being spread out into Samaria.

And then out of this grows the next subject that we want to talk about a little bit tonight, and that is the sending of the gospel into Africa. And I want to give most of my time to this this evening, so let's come down, please, to verse 26 of our chapter. 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.

Now this is something else again, to ask a man to leave a wonderful revival up there in Samaria and go down into what the Holy Spirit himself describes here as desert. And what was he going to meet down there? He didn't know. But here is an illustration of how sometimes the Lord calls one away from that which is succeeding very much, and asks us to do something else.

Because after they had fulfilled that step, that the gospel was going into Samaria, now the next thing was to see that it goes to the uttermost parts of the earth. And so we read in verse 27 that he arose and went, and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Tennessee, the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship. Returning and sitting in his chariot, he read Esaias, or Isaiah the prophet.

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired, Philip, that he would come up and sit with him. And the place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb done before his shearers, so opened he not his mouth.

In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him, Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water.

What doth hinder me to be baptized? The next verse is generally omitted in the better texts, so I continue reading at verse thirty-eight, And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, but the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus, and passing through, preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

This entrance of the gospel into Africa, at least this is potentially so, to me is very interesting because it antedates the entrance of the gospel into Europe. And yet with what different results. We wonder sometimes if there was some failure on the part of the brethren in Jerusalem that they did not send a representative into Africa.

Because here Philip reaches this man in Gaza, the country of the Philistines, and he has yet to make his way back to Ethiopia. But you don't read that any one of the twelve ever went. And I'm wondering if this is the reason why Islam, that's what we sometimes call Mohammedanism, wonders sometimes whether this was the reason why this gained such a foothold in North Africa, even to this very day.

This is the scourge that the missionary has to meet. And the interesting thing is that this scourge is being handled on the part of those who heard the gospel in Europe. Men like Raymond Lull, for example, going across from Spain into North Africa to preach the gospel there.

And others coming in from the South through the Cape of Good Hope and bringing the gospel up in this way. But to think of this, that here was a man, one man, to whom the gospel was preached. And we may be sure that his own joy would effervesce and boil over to the point where he certainly would talk about it when he got back there to Ethiopia.

We like to believe that there was some entrance of the gospel at that time. But I'm raising a question in your minds and mine, just why is it that we find such different results in Europe? Paul goes into Europe, and we find the gospel spreads without the hindrance of such things as Islam. It spreads rapidly to the North and the West.

And so it had spread to the East, if we may trust history, that St. Thomas went to India. But, of course, there we also see that Islam had quite a bit of success, as is evidenced today by the population of India. But these things, I think, are good for us to consider as we think of the commission given by the Lord Jesus in the beginning, and wondering whether if these men had literally taken the Lord Jesus at His word and had gone into the uttermost parts of the earth, whether Islam would ever have taken hold the way it has taken hold in North Africa.

I'm just wondering about that. I haven't any answer to the question. And by the way, somebody will be coming up after the meeting asking me whether I believe Simon was saved.

I don't know. So there's your answer. I won't have to answer that one after the meeting.

I have a standard answer for a lot of questions, and that's one of them. One three-word answer, I don't know. But I do have some thoughts about the passage which I'm talking about here tonight.

But then I'd like to see how the Spirit of God really used this man, and what kind of a man he was. You notice it's not a down-and-outer that he's choosing here. So many of our stories, especially those that I heard in my boyhood days about the success of the gospel, they were collections of stories about people who had really gone down to the bottom--right down to the bottom.

In fact, so far down as one of Mel Trotter's converts used to say, he was so far down, he had to reach up to touch bottom. And then those of us who had grown up in Christian homes, we wondered about this. And there's one hymn to this day that I can't sing.

I can't sing the second verse of it. All my life was wrecked by sin and strife. I can't sing it, because it wasn't.

My life wasn't wrecked by sin and strife. The Lord graciously preserved me from this. And I have no hesitancy in criticizing it, because after all, it's only a human production, you see.

Probably true of the man who wrote it. But here is a man whose character evidently is above reproach. And you'll notice again and again the Lord chooses this kind of people.

Nicodemus, for example, was a man like this, wasn't he? Nicodemus must have had a good reputation at home. I dare say he was a man respected by the community. The Lord Jesus doesn't pinpoint any sin like drunkenness or adultery or robbery or anything.

He simply says to Nicodemus, you must be born again. You must be born again. Without this, you can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God.

But you'll notice he doesn't charge him with any infractions of the law or anything like this. And here's a man, I say again, honorable in his position. He was an honorable man.

He was a great man with his mistress, the Queen of Ethiopia, Candacy. Yes, he had charge of all her treasure. And evidently he was a seeking soul, because he was reading the prophecy of Isaiah, and he had been up to Jerusalem to worship, from which we gather that he was probably a proselyte to Judaism.

There was something about this that attracted him, for I do not think of him as being a Jew. He may have been. We're not told about that.

But I rather think that he was an Ethiopian and outside the pale of Judaism, but attracted by what he saw there. And it's interesting as one reads, for example, the life of Dan Crawford, that wonderful Scotch missionary to Africa, especially in his second book, which is not so well known. The first book, Thinking Black, is probably better known, although it's also an old book now.

But the second book, Back to the Long Grass, in which Dan Crawford shows the influence of Judaism coming down into Africa itself, even to the choice of terms and customs. Some of the things that they did in Africa could only be explained on the grounds that they were founded upon some Jewish practice. Take, for example, this story, which comes to me from John Alexander Clark, who labored for a long time in Africa as a missionary.

He told how one night he heard unearthly cries outside of his cabin. He went out with his lantern to see what was going on, and he found two or three Africans beating another African, and they left him supposedly dead. After they had gone, John Alexander Clark went over to the man and found that he was still alive.

And so as best he could, he dragged him into his cabin and administered restoratives, and by morning light the man was back to consciousness. So he said to this man, he said, Why did these Africans beat you up? Well, he said, I don't belong to their tribe. He said, Our tribe and their tribe were at war, and I was taken as a prisoner.

And he said, I did something which offended my new master, and the result was I got the beating that I got last night. Well, said Mr. Clark, couldn't we redeem you? Couldn't you be redeemed rather? Yes, the African said, I could be redeemed. Well, he said, What would it cost to redeem you? Well, he said, I suppose a bolt of cloth or a gun.

Oh, said Mr. Clark, I'd be glad to give both, both a bolt of cloth and a gun to redeem you. The African shook his head. He said, No.

He said, You can't do it. Oh, yes, he said, I'll show you. Oh, he said, I don't question that you have these things, but you can't do it.

Well, why can't I do it, said Clark? He said, Because according to the custom of my people, it has to be one of my own race who redeems me. Where'd they get that idea? You read about it in the book of Ruth, don't you? About the kinsman-redeemer. So this thing was spilling over into that land, even before the Christian era, probably.

You see? But now this eunuch was riding back on his chariot, reading the prophecy of Isaiah. I'm going to imagine that at this point, instead of being intercepted by a man called Philip, he's intercepted by one of our modern theologians. Says, Good afternoon, sir.

I see you're reading a book. May I ask the title? And the eunuch says, Yes, the title of this book is a prophecy by Isaiah. Oh, yes, yes, he said.

We studied about that in seminary. You know, of course, that that book was not written by a man called Isaiah. It's probably the work of at least two, if not more, authors.

And it's all, they're all gathered together under the same name, Isaiah. Well, but, says the eunuch, how do you arrive at this? Well, he said, you'll see when you read through the book that there's a tremendous difference between the first part of the book and the second part of the book. He said, they couldn't possibly have been written by the same man.

The man who writes in the first chapter that nothing, nothing sound in them from the crown of their head to the sole of their feet, nothing but wound bruises and putrefying sores. And then in chapter 40, he says, Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people. He said, you can see the tremendous difference.

And then he said, you know, our scholars have investigated the text, and they found out that some of these words were current in the time before the exile of Israel to Babylon. And there were some that became current after they got into exile. And then some of these terms are clearly post-exilic, and, oh, we can put them on the terms.

But, you know, then the eunuch says to him, yes, but I'm interested in this man about whom he's writing. This man that's mentioned in the twenty-fifth, fifty-third chapter. Of course, there weren't any such chapter divisions in those days, but we're using our own text now as our illustration.

And he says, this man who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, he said, I'm interested in this man. Oh, well, says our theologian, you know, that man is probably just a symbol. He probably stands for the nation of Israel who is being punished for the sins of the Gentiles.

I've actually heard that. That isn't fiction. Oh, says this man, that doesn't get me anywhere.

And just about that time, the Lord says to Philip, you go and join this chariot. Isn't it wonderful how the Lord sends somebody in at that particular moment? You know, this is a good moment, isn't it? To go and join himself to this chariot. And Philip, ignoring the theologian with all of his Ph.D., D.D.'s, T.H.D. degrees and everything else, he says to this eunuch, do you really understand what you're reading? Well, I suppose the eunuch, if he really had such an experience as I've described, which, of course, is purely fictional, but possible, he would have said, yes, I was just talking to a man who got me all mixed up.

Perhaps you can come up here and help me. And how wonderful that he had reached the very point where Philip had a ready-made text. You know, this is tremendous.

You know, the more you believe in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the more you see the beauty of this, that God takes into account not only the occasion, the moment when these two men get together, but also the fact that he was reading the Scriptures. And what if Philip had not been conversant with this Scripture? What if Philip had said, oh, let me see that again. What does it say? Oh, yes, I'm sorry, I've read the Bible through lots of times, but I've never seen this.

Wouldn't that have been terrible? You ever find yourself in a fix like that? I'm putting it up to you tonight, beloved. Are we sufficiently conversant with the Word of God, so that when a thing like this, a text like this, which I'm sure every one of us here ought to know, could we begin at this same Scripture and preach unto Him Jesus? You know, to me, this is a moment that shows to me that Philip was a man who was saturated with the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit of God could use him to do this thing at this particular moment. I lay it upon your hearts, beloved.

I'm speaking to you tonight as if I were speaking to myself. Oh, to be so thoroughly saturated with the Scripture that no matter where someone takes it up, we can answer his question concerning it, or at least give some explanation of it. You know, people come to you sometimes with the most unlikely text, don't they? Yes.

A man said to me one day, he said, doesn't the Bible say somewhere that money answers all things? I said, it certainly does. He said, I didn't think you'd agree with that. Well, I said, it's in the book.

Money answers all things. Well, he said, how about your gospel then, when you tell me that it's free and this? He said, the money answers all things. I said, wait a minute, brother.

Where does it answer all things? I said, have you read the book in which that text is found? I said, if you have, you'll find that the characteristic phrase in it is, under the sun, under the sun, under the sun. Yeah, money answers lots of things under the sun. You can find that in the highest circles, can't you? Yes, if you really want to get to the top somewhere, if you've got the money, you can get there.

Yes, if you get there. Money answers all things. And this was written at least a thousand years before Christ.

So this is no new idea. It doesn't belong to the twentieth century. But this is just another little sample of how one can be faced with a text at some time or other.

And how wonderful was this text. To understand the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here pictured as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, as an animal that doesn't open its mouth when it's going to be slaughtered. What a picture.

I'm sure that the eunuch probably recognized this immediately, but never connected it with a certain man called Jesus. And yet John the Baptist had proclaimed, as you remember, we did this a week ago, yesterday morning, when he pointed them out and said, Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And Peter takes up the text in his epistle and says, He's a lamb without blemish, foreordained for the foundation of the world.

He led as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb. He opened not his mouth. Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself or some other man? Of whom? What a wonderful thing to introduce people to Jesus as simply as that.

Just as simply as that. And friends, when you do this, you're doing something that you can't do with any other great religious leader. No Mohammedan would ever, no Muslim would ever understand you if you said that Mohammed was led as a lamb to the slaughter.

No Confucianist would ever think of using such a figure concerning Confucius. No Buddhist would ever think of using such a figure of Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. This seems to be a figure which is reserved for one and one only.

This is unique. It comes back to some of those things we started talking about at the beginning of last week. The uniqueness of our Christian faith, the uniqueness of our Lord Jesus, led as a lamb to the slaughter.

I was forcibly brought home to me some years ago. My dear father-in-law, who is now in glory, he was a cattleman. And one day in Chicago, he said, I would like to go down to the abattoir, which of course is the French word for the slaughterhouse.

So we went down to the south side of Chicago, and through a friend who was a veterinary surgeon inspecting animals there for the United States government, Dave Eggers, Dave got his permission to go in. Well, we were introduced where they were killing the hogs, and there was lots of noise, lots of noise. They were squealing almost until the last drop of blood was out of their bodies.

They were squealing. Where they killed the steers, that wasn't too bad either, because they struck them a blow on the head, and they fell unconscious, and then were hoisted up, and their throats cut, and their blood ran. We took all of this.

We got where they were killing the sheep. All we could hear on the pavement was the pitter-patter of their little feet as they were going up to be killed, and not a sound out of them. And my father-in-law, a veteran cattleman, turned to me and said, Carl, let's get out of here.

Couldn't take it. Couldn't take it. Friends, there's something pathetic about this, and sometimes when I find I'm in what's known as a backslidden state, and who doesn't get there, I feel the need to read again the closing chapters of one of the four Gospels, to have my soul moved afresh by the sufferings of this one who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and a sheep before her shearers is done.

Oh, my blessed Savior, Lamb of God, what a name! A name that God preserves even in the book of Revelation. And this is an interesting thing about the word lamb in the book of Revelation. It is always in the diminutive, in the original language.

Always in the diminutive. Not because it wants to belittle the one, but rather to express that feeling of affection which people in other countries have when they use the diminutive. I remember how I was surprised by this in Central America as a missionary.

I was accustomed to being called Don Carlos. But when they started calling me Carlitos, which is the diminutive of my name, I said to my companion, Mr. Knapp, I said, what are they trying to do, belittle me? Oh, no, brother, he said, they've just begun to love you. This is it.

So this is the lamb. And the eunuch receives it. He doesn't argue.

He doesn't say to Philip, now, who wrote this, the first Isaiah or the second Isaiah? He could have gone back to the twelfth chapter of John, and that's a good passage to go to, since we've been talking about that. Let's do that for just a moment. John chapter 12.

And here's the Lord Jesus talking about this very prophecy. In John 12, in verse 37, I read this. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him, that the saying of Isaiah's the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? That, of course, is the first verse of chapter 53 of Isaiah, isn't it? That then would be in the second part of Isaiah, right? Verse 39, Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again.

Well, this means we're going to have another saying by the same person. This time he quotes from chapter 6 of Isaiah. He says, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

That's out of the first part of Isaiah. The first is out of the second part, this is out of the first, and it's the same person saying both things. The Lord Jesus is telling us what? That the book of Isaiah has one author.

And verse 41, Mustn't be omitted. These things said Isaiah when he saw his glory, and spake of him. So, Philip is on solid ground in taking this very text and preaching unto him Jesus.

And how wonderful it is that after Philip had baptized him, Philip's work was done, and so well done, that the Spirit of God could take him away, and apparently he was never missed. Oh, friends, if there ever was a prayer, that one needs to pray as a servant of the Lord Jesus, just this, that when you've done your work, you could drop behind the pulpit and you'd never be missed. This is exactly what happened.

But coming back to what I believe is the theme for us here tonight, in this chapter, first of all, a prepared soul, reading the word of God, prepared for the message, and a prepared instrument to tell him what that word meant. And beloved, to you and to me tonight, who know the Lord Jesus Christ, this should be the

burden of our prayer, Lord, make me that kind of an instrument for thee. Let us turn in closing to hymn number 344.

344, out in the highways and byways of life, many are weary and sad, carry the sunshine where darkness is right, making the sorrowing glad, tell the sweet story of Christ and his love, tell of his power to forgive, others will trust him if only you prove true, every moment you live. Number 344. Shall we rise? Out in the highways and byways of life, prepared for the very job that, and the heart prepared to receive the message, oh Lord, give us something of the joy of dealing with people like this eunuch, searching for something and wanting to know the man who could, oh Lord, we thank thee, we know thee as that man, the man Christ Jesus.

We thank you, Lord Jesus, that thou art most willing to become a man in order to do this very thing. And so we pray that thou wouldst bless this portion of thy word to us, as we continue to meditate upon it, may we be moved to go out and do likewise. These things we ask as we commit ourselves now into thy hands again for another night, in Jesus' precious name, amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/8/SID8017.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/carl-armerding/prepared-instrument/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**