

A Man Sent

by Major Ian Thomas

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a sent one, exercising authority derived from God, and fulfilling the responsibility imposed upon us by the one who sent us.

Duration: 1:01:38

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of knowing the truth about Jesus in our hearts and sharing his story without any gimmicks or procedures. He references the story of Philip and the eunuch, highlighting the eunuch's question about baptism when they come across water. The speaker then moves swiftly through various verses in the Gospel of John to underline the claim of Jesus as the sent one from the Father. He emphasizes that Jesus was not sent to condemn the world, but to save it, and that our lives should reflect the same mission. The sermon concludes with the encouragement that despite feelings of failure, the prospect of a glorious future awaits those who embrace the good news of the gospel.

Transcript

We've talked a little bit in the couple of sessions in which it's been my opportunity to share Christ with you, as to what it means to be sent of God, a God-sent man. I made very brief reference last evening to the person of the Lord Jesus, and I'd like to do so again in relation to that mission for which he was sent, and his claim as man on earth to be a sent one. I mentioned it briefly, but I thought it might be valuable just to look at it and see with what relentless consistency the Lord Jesus adopted in the perfection of his humanity - this relationship to his Father.

Because remember, at all times, the Lord Jesus, in terms of his relationship as man to his Father as God, was introducing us to that relationship for which man was made, and to which, by his redemptive work upon the cross, he seeks to restore us. A relationship which exclusively is the secret of true fulfillment, because true fulfillment derives only from man restored to his true humanity, whereby we actually, from God's point of view, become functional to that end for which he made it. Turn to the third chapter of John's Gospel, and for about five minutes, we'll engage in a sort of treasure hunt, and as we do so, see if you can follow the scent, like a pack of hounds on the trail.

If you can keep up with me, it would be good to follow it in John's Gospel, though I shall move pretty swiftly, because I don't want this exercise to be tedious, but I want it to underline that claim of the Lord Jesus, remember, which was vindicated by the authorship of what he did and said and was, at all times,

as the sent one, the Father in the Son. The secret of his life then as man, as the Son in us, must be the secret of our lives now, for as the Father sent him, so sends he us. In the 17th verse, God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

Verse 34, for he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God. Chapter 4 and verse 34, Jesus saith unto them, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and finish his work. Chapter 5 and verse 23, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life. He shall not come into condemnation, he is passed from death unto my life, unto life.

Verse 30, I can of mine own self do nothing, as I here I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me. Verse 36, I have a greater witness than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me. Notice that again, would you? The works that I do bear witness of me that the Father has sent me.

In other words, my claim to be who I am, a sent one, is vindicated exclusively by the authorship of what I do. The works that I do, bear witness that I am under another jurisdiction. The Father himself, verse 37, who hath sent me, hath borne witness of me.

Verse 38, you have not his word abiding in you, addressing himself to the scribes and the Pharisees, for whom he hath, for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Chapter 6 and verse 19, or verse 29, I beg your pardon. Chapter 6 and verse 29, Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent.

For, verse 38, I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And verse 39, this is the Father's will, who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, verse 40, that everyone who sees the Son and believes on him may have everlasting life.

I'll raise him up at the last day. No man, verse 44, can come to me except the Father who hath sent me. Draw him.

I'll raise him up at the last day. Verse 57, as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. Jesus answered, verse 16 of chapter 7, my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

He that speaketh of himself, verse 18, seeketh his own glory. But he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true. No unrighteousness is in him.

Verse 28, then Jesus cried in the temple as he taught, saying, you both know me, and you know whence I am. I am not come of myself. He that sent me is true, whom you know not.

But I know him, verse 29, for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Verse 33, then said Jesus unto them, yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Verse 16 of chapter 8, if I judge, my judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

Verse 18, I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me, beareth witness of me. Verse 26, I have many things to say, and to judge of you, but he that sent me is true, and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. Verse 29, and he that sent me is with me.

The Father hath not left me alone. I do always those things that please him. Verse 42, Jesus said unto them, if God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God.

Neither came I of myself. He sent me. Verse 4 of the next chapter, 9, I must work the works of him that sent me.

Are you able to follow the scent? Chapter 10, verse 36, do you say of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemous, because I said, I am the Son of God. Chapter 11, and verse 42, Father, I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people who stand by said it, that they may believe, that thou hast sent me. Chapter 12, verse 44, Jesus cried and said, he that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

That's a remarkable thing, isn't it? He that believeth on me, doesn't believe on me. Almost all your life you've said, you've been told you must believe on the Lord Jesus. Lord Jesus immediately says, when you believe on me, you don't believe on me.

Did you ever come across that? Does it underline your Bible? When you believe on me, said the Lord Jesus, you don't believe on me, you believe on him that sent me. And next verse, he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. In the next chapter, verse 20, verily, verily I say unto you, he that receiveth, whomsoever I send, receiveth me.

He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth whomsoever I send, who by this sent one relationship, interprets my mind, my will, my purpose, receives me. And when you receive me, you receive the one who's sending me, sends me by what I do say and am, to interpret what is in his mind, his will and his purpose.

You can't, in other words, receive one whom I send without receiving me, and you can't receive me without receiving the one who sent me. Total identification. Total identification.

This is what is involved in being a Christian. In the 14th chapter, and the 24th verse, he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings. The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's, which sent me.

Next chapter, verse 21, all these things will they do to you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. Chapter 16, verse 5, now I go my way to him that sent me. None of you asketh me whither goest thou.

And in the third chapter, the 17th, third verse of the 17th chapter, in the prayer of the Lord Jesus to the Father, this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Sanctify them, Father, in the 17th verse, through thy truth, thy word is truth, as thou hast sent me into the world. Even so, I have also sent them, Father, into the world, that, verse 21, they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

I, verse 23, in them, in the same spiritual identity, and thou in me, as you, Father, are in me, sharing your life, clothed with my humanity, so I in them, sharing my life, Father, clothed with their humanity. I in them,

thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me. O righteous Father, verse 25, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

If there was one thing more than another that the Lord Jesus wanted you and me to know about him, what would you say it was? Sent. He was sent from God. He came from the Father, and he went back to the Father, but he walked this earth as a God-sent man.

If somebody came excitedly banging on the door of your home, and you were to answer the door, and an excited boy were to say, I've been sent, what would be your first question? Who sent you? The moment he says, I have been sent, it takes your attention instantly off him, and focuses it upon the person who sent him. If he says, I've been sent, you know at once that he is a means of communication between somebody else who, through him, wants to communicate something to you. In other words, you won't really want to hear his opinion about anything.

If he's been sent, whose opinion will you want to hear? If he's been sent, it won't be his information that you expect to receive, it'll be the information that somebody else is communicating through him. If he's been sent, then it won't be his instructions that you obey. If he brings instructions, it will be the instructions of the one who sent him.

A small boy may say to his older brother, mow the yard. How do you think his older brother would react? Well, you've probably been an older brother. I was always a younger one.

But if a small boy were to say to his older brother, mow the yard, his brother would say, who do you think you're talking to? He says, I'm talking to you, Dad sent me. Does that make any difference? It makes quite a lot of difference. You see, as the sent one, a small boy, he's simply exercising a derived authority.

And I chatted with one or two of you about this yesterday, and said I might refer to it, and I think I will again. For this was the authority that the Lord Jesus always exercised. It's the fantastic authority of being a sent one.

So long as you know the one who sent you, and are unshatterably confident of his right to exercise that authority, that is his representative, you now exercise. And this was the authority that the Lord Jesus exercised. I talked yesterday about a derived life.

Part of the derived life that you and I possess, with the Lord Jesus himself, the origin of that life that derives, is authority. Part of our derived life, sharing his life, he in us, as the Father was in him, part of that derived life is a derived authority. It's the only authority that you and I have the legitimate right to exercise.

In the 10th chapter of John's Gospel, John 10, said the Lord Jesus, verse 37, John 10, 37, if I do not the works of my Father, believe me not, and that's pretty frightening, if I do not the works of my Father, if my humanity does not demonstrably clothe my Father's activity, his point of view, his mind, his will, his purpose, don't believe me. Whatever I may say, even though what I say may even be true, I don't have the right to say it, nor even though as truth it comes from my lips, you have the right to believe it. That goes right to the heart, the very substance of our faith, that your authority and mine derives from our submission to the authority of the Lord Jesus in us, as his authority then derived from the authority of his Father in the Son.

You see, normally we evaluate a man's authority on the basis of who he is and what he knows, those are the things we try to find out, how much notice need I take of what this person has to say, and we seek to evaluate the measure of their authority on the base of who they are and what they know, so you ask all kinds of subtle questions to discover who that person is, or who he thinks he is, and then you ask a few other subtle questions to discover how conversant he is with his subject, or under whose auspices he operates, who has given him recognition, and by various means you discover who he is and what he knows, and then you evaluate how much attention you're going to give to what he has to say. Does he, in other words, actually have the right to say it? Now, if ever there was a man who walked this earth, who had the right to exercise authority on the basis of who he was, that was the Lord Jesus, he just happened to be God, the God who threw the universes into space, the God who threw the stars in the far corners of the night, the God who at this very moment upholds all things by the word of his power, the eternal timeless God who inhabits eternity, the Lord Jesus. If ever a man who walked this earth had the right to exercise authority on the basis of what he knew, that man was Jesus Christ, in whom, we're told, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge.

Who was in the beginning with God was God by whom all things were made. As he walked this earth as man, there was not anything upon which his eye fell that he didn't think up, except sin. That's what amazes me about the Lord Jesus.

As the creator of the universes and thought up electricity, he was prepared, though God the creator, to go to bed by candlelight. He was the God who thought up those rules that govern aerodynamics and space travel, and yet incarnate in that particular generation, he was content to ride around the back of a donkey. Incredible.

Knowing what he did as God incarnate, he must have thought people pretty stupid to go around on donkeys when they could travel by jet. I mean, supposing you had been he, could you have kept your mouth shut? I couldn't. If I'd been he and known what I did, about all the fantastic potential in his creation, I'd have blabbered like anything.

He never said a word. He was prepared to come and be born of a humble girl in a little village, in a conquered nation, with the march of occupying troops sounding in the streets. Wasn't even booked in at the Holiday Inn when he was born in a manger, in a stable.

You see, that shows how big God is. God is so big, he never has to prove anything. It's only little people that have to prove things.

If you hear somebody really blasting off, the chances are they're very small. It's never all that difficult, finally, to get into the office of the president of a vast international corporation. All you've got to do is knock on the door and you'll hear a friendly voice, come in.

The person you find greatest difficult to get by is the porter on the door. You see, he's right at the bottom of the ladder, he's got to prove he's important. That's one of the reasons why they give him a uniform, to make him look important, because they know he isn't important.

You see, the smaller you are, the more you have to prove. The bigger you are, the less you have to prove. The more you know, the less you have to prove.

God doesn't have to prove anything. That's why, by and large, it's a waste of time to prove to anybody that this is the inspired word of God. It is the inspired word of God.

Use it. You don't need to defend it. You don't need to prove that Jesus Christ is God.

He is God. He didn't spend an awful lot of time proving it. You could count on fingers less than of one hand the occasions when you referred to his identity, I and my father are one, we read one.

Other times, he didn't have to prove it, he knew it was true. So, let God's words loose, and let God's Son loose. They'll take care of themselves.

But as man, the Lord Jesus deliberately so submitted himself to his Father's authority that he had the right to exercise that authority that derived from his Father's authority. He never once exercised the authority, as man, of who he was. He never once exercised the authority, as man, of what he knew.

He simply said, if it isn't demonstrably obvious that I, by my Father, am being told what to do, and I, as his Son, as man on earth, am doing as I am told, don't believe me. That's incredible. You'd have thought he'd have swung around and said, you've got to believe it, I'm God.

He never said it. He said, you've only got to believe it if it's demonstrably obvious that I am man, as I, as God, created man to be. The kind of man who'll let God be God in the man.

That's the only genuine spiritual authority that a mum or dad can exercise in their kids. That's why, where there's no genuine reality in the relationship between mum and dad and the one whom they call their God and Saviour, there's not likely to be too much impact upon their children. But given the imperfection of us all, where there's some reality between mum and dad and the Lord Jesus, the God whom they serve, the chances are to rub off, and kids will recognise they have the right to believe what they can see behaving.

On the other hand, said the Lord Jesus, if I do, verse 38, if my flesh and blood genuinely clothes my Father's activity, if you can trace the authorship of what I do to the one who makes me what I am, in the sinlessness of my humanity, allowing my Father in me to reveal the perfection of Deity, if I do, though you believe not me, though you may, humanly speaking, remain a little unconvinced in virtue of the fact that you knew me, nursed helplessly by my mother in her arms as a baby, because you knew me, as many of them did, romping in the streets with my kid friend, because you saw me as an apprentice learning my trade, because I just happened to be the craftsman who came and fixed your door when it jammed, I realise your problem in identification, though you believe not me, believe the works. Recognise the authorship of what I do by the quality of what is done, God in the man. Without my Father, I can do nothing.

My Father who lives in me, he does the work, and when that is demonstrably obvious to you by what I do, believe the works, that you may know that a very unique relationship exists between me as man and my Father as God. Believe, he said, know and believe, verse 38, that the Father is in me, and I am in you. And by virtue of that relationship, recognise the authenticity of what I'm doing, and on the basis of the authenticity of what I'm doing, recognise the validity of my claim to be who I am.

That's my authority. Sent, I'm sent. The obvious obligation of one who is sent is to fulfil the responsibility imposed upon him by the sent one.

And when you and I are prepared to live in this spiritual relationship with the Lord Jesus, that with joyful expectation gets up at the dawn of every new day, no matter what the situation you may know you have to be confronted with, of opportunity, temptation, danger, threat, problem, complexity, you can relax. Not because you think you're a smart aleck and can handle everything, but simply because you've got an unshatterable conviction that somebody shares his life with you and he is God, and therefore no situation will ever take his breath away, will never leave him nonplussed, and you can enter into the same peace, the same rest, and exercise that authority that will derive from his authority in that situation. That saves you from ulcers, that allows you to sleep, no matter how threatening your circumstance.

It's thrilling when you enter into that relationship and in the measure in which we know it personally ourselves, we can share it with others. And this is part of the joy of knowing personally the Lord Jesus for yourself, and always imperfectly, but at least in measure, communicating that relationship to others. Because the Holy Spirit, he doesn't bear witness to us, he bears witness to the Lord Jesus in terms of our relationship to him.

This is what I again have found so exciting, in being available to the Lord Jesus, whether by word or in the printed word, if only what we say is right and we're looking in the right direction. A true witness. A missionary came to me just a few weeks back from the Southern Baptist Convention.

He came specifically over to greet me, which was very gracious and very kind of him, I appreciated it. He said, I was a missionary in Uganda under the blood spilling dictatorship of that wicked, evil, malicious dictator Idi Amin, and under immense political pressure, seeing the wickedness, the heinous crimes being committed, the bloodshed that was involved, my wife and I came under immense pressure, so much so that we were fit to quit. But he said, I want to thank you for the message of one of your books, *The Saving Life of Christ*, because when we were crushed beneath the load, in seeming hopelessness and helplessness, we rediscovered the Lord Jesus as the one who not only died for us two thousand years ago to become the object of our activity now on earth as missionaries in Uganda, but who rose again from the dead to live in us and become the origin of our work as missionaries in Uganda.

They discovered the difference, you see, between Christ being the object of your activity and Christ being the origin of your activity. That's been underlined for me again and again, and I'm grateful that the Holy Spirit in Uganda was able to minister through the pages of that book to a man and woman who in their deepest need, needed to rediscover the illimitable resources that have become theirs by virtue of their relationship to a living risen indwelling Lord Jesus. He said it transformed our lives, and only by virtue of that rediscovered relationship were we able not only to survive and just keep our heads above water, to become a means of ministry and hope in that hopeless situation.

Saint, this is our authority, it's yours and mine. And remember, God's chosen the weak, the base, the nothing. You don't have to be smart, you just have to adopt an attitude, a disposition that allows the Lord Jesus now to be to you, in you, all that by his disposition he allowed the Father to be to him, in him.

Saint. In the last few moments, I'd like you to see how this is illustrated in the history of the early church, because remember for three solid years the disciples failed to grasp the principle involved, they didn't even understand the cross, they didn't want it, tried to avoid it, tried to prevent it, said Peter not so Lord, that can't happen to you, when he foreshadowed that he going to the city of Jerusalem would fall into the hands of wicked men, be done to death, but the third day rise again from the dead. They didn't believe in the resurrection, and that's why for all their sincerity and devotion and personal attachment and

unchallenged affection for the Lord Jesus, they were such abysmal failures.

But you see, you and I graduate out of despair, we graduate out of failure. It isn't that we must fail and must graduate that way, it's simply that we're that stupid, we usually do. That was certainly true in my own case, and still is.

I'm constantly reminded by my own weakness of his strength, of my own, by my own stupidity of his wisdom, and we never get out of that school, I'm happy to say, until maybe when we see him face to face, and we'll be delivered finally, not only from the penalty and the power, but from the very presence of that sin principle that always clenches its fist in hostility to the claims of the only one who has the right to monopolize our humanity, our creator God. Turn to the book of the Acts and chapter 8, and please recognize that those whose stories you read now in the book of the Acts, in those three years when the Lord Jesus was with his disciples, were numbered amongst those who were such pathetic failures. That's what's so exciting about it.

Never imagine that because you feel, perhaps deep down your heart, somewhat of a failure now, that that's the end of the story. That isn't the end of the story, that's just the beginning of the story. The prospect is glorious, every horizon is heavy with blessing, it's beckoning you on, out of your despair, into a full enjoyment of all that God has in mind for you.

This is the beauty of the good news of the gospel, that's why the gospel is good news. It isn't God coming around with a club with rusty nails, he's presenting you with a fantastic proposition, and he's just on tiptoe to demonstrate the reality of it, but cannot, will not, and does not, except in response to that disposition in our hearts that the Bible calls faith, that disposition, that attitude that simply lets God do it. That's why normally we have to be on our back before we let him, because there are always reservations in our minds about our own incompetence, because the very nature of the fall is that man was persuaded to believe then that he could get by without God, and it still lingers in your heart and mind.

As for Saul, it says, verse 3 of chapter 8, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, hailing men and women, committing them to prison. That was Saul of Tarsus. He was a pain in the neck for the early believers, he was the thorn in the flesh, he was the person to be avoided at all costs, he was the one who stood by consenting to the death of Stephen, saw his blood running in the gutter, heard his bones snap as they stoned him to death.

He made havoc of the church in the purpose and true economy and wisdom of God, because it prevented them from getting too comfortable, getting institutionalized in Jerusalem. There wasn't much chance for the church to get institutionalized with a man like Saul of Tarsus around. He made havoc of the church, that's why nearly always in areas of deep persecution the church flourishes, as in so many communist countries, Eastern Germany.

In all probabilities the door is now opening in China, as it is in the goodness of God, we're going to be in for some very pleasant surprises. We're going to discover that because the door to us was closed, the door to God wasn't closed, because wherever there's a boy, girl, man or woman, that vast population in the continent of China who's prepared to open the window, the dove will fly in and he'll vindicate his presence. Now we may not be able to discover that for the next few months or years, but when we get in we'll discover that Jesus Christ was on the job, that we're not indispensable to his timeless ends, he's always indispensable to us.

I've ministered twice throughout Ethiopia, Mark was there for a year, and when the Italians came in before the Second World War, it looked to the missionaries as though the door had closed and the curtain fallen, and they came away lamenting the fact that there was no longer any possibility of ministry in Ethiopia. God said, I've got news for you. When they came back, about three years later, they found where they left one small church, there were a hundred, where there was a little group of a hundred believers, they found a thousand, because the Ethiopians, in the absence of the missionaries, made the great discovery that the same Jesus Christ that lived in the missionary lived in them, and for the first time they let him loose and do the job.

We need to rediscover that principle, that we're not indispensable to the Lord Jesus, he is essentially indispensable to us, as he allowed the Father, in the sinlessness of his humanity, to be indispensable to him. Without my Father, I can do nothing. It's called the mind of Christ, and let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Being in the form of God, not considering it robbery, claim, total equality, in that form, yet he emptied himself, made himself of no reputation, made himself nothing, all that he knew a man to be without God. He was made that way. So we need a few souls around, now and again, not too many, but just enough to disturb our tranquility, keep us on the move.

Therefore, therefore, because Saul made havoc of the church, therefore, wherever you find therefore in the Bible, say wherefore the therefore. What's the therefore therefore? It's the conclusion of an argument. Because the arch enemy was making havoc of the church, which they might reasonably suppose they could lament, therefore, for that very good reason, they were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word.

So countless people were the beneficiaries of their discomfort. That's what God had in mind. When you feel in a position of discomfort, a position of disadvantage, just look into the face of the Lord Jesus and say, thanks Lord Jesus, this hurts a bit, but I thank you for the blessing it's going to bring to somebody else, for the good it's going to do, and I'm prepared to suffer whatever apparent disadvantage it may have to me, if only through it, you can bless somebody else.

It'll transform your outlook upon life. You'll learn that in everything we're to give thanks. Not for everything, but in everything.

Give thanks. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerned. Don't quench the Holy Spirit.

Credit him with enough intelligence to know where he's going and what he's at. Philip was among them, it says, in verse 5. He went down to the city of Samaria, and he preached Christ to them. A synonymous term, of course.

In verse 4 it says they were preaching the word. In verse 5, particularized, it says Philip preached Christ. You can't preach the word without preaching Christ, otherwise you haven't preached the word.

And of course, you haven't preached Christ unless you preach the word, otherwise you'll be preaching the wrong Christ. And there are lots of wrong Christs being preached today. Jesuses who are not the Jesus of God, the Jesus of human figment and imagination, the soulish Jesus, the go-high Jesus, everything except that Jesus who's related to the Remember, there's no dichotomy between the word and Jesus.

When you preach the word, you preach Christ. When you preach Christ, you must preach the word. Where you preach the word and it doesn't preach Christ, you've got your wires crossed.

Where you preach Christ, but you can't relate him to the word, you've got the wrong Christ. The only valid exegesis of God's word focuses upon the person of God's son. And the only Jesus that you can preach who is valid is the one of whom you read in the revelation that God has given to him.

What can't be substantiated about your Jesus in God's word is illegitimate. And it says there was great joy in that city, verse 8, as they responded to the preaching of the word, the preaching of Christ. God, the Holy Spirit, honored God's son.

And the hearts of men, women, and boys responded in faith to the Lord Jesus, and they entered into the good of all that he did and all that he was. And when they had testified, verse 25, and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem. And then there they preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritan.

So in addition to the city-wide crusade that Philip conducted in Samaria, the subsidiary missionary and evangelistic programs that took place in the villages of the Samaritans. And Philip's name began to make news. When folks heard that Philip was around, they flocked out to hear the preacher.

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, verse 26, Arise and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. God's word came to this man and said, Go. They might have started arguing with God, as you and I often do.

He was the city-wide crusader, and God said, Go. Get onto a donkey and go for a ride and head for the desert. Now, you see, if his authority had derived from the fact that he was a well-known city-wide evangelist, he'd have said, But I have no authority in the desert.

There'll be no crowds there. Nobody knows my reputation. The goats won't be impressed.

Whom am I going to preach to? But you see, he was a man who was filled with the Holy Spirit. That simply means that he was a God-sent man. He had learned the secret of being sent.

He realized that his authority that he exercised wasn't that authority that derives from a little bit of popularity as a city-wide preacher. He knew that his authority, if it was to be valid, would derive exclusively from his submission to that divine authority, that of Christ, under whose direction, as a member of his body, he was now to He was wise enough at this stage to know that he could major upon his reputation as a preacher and organize, maybe by promotional means, another city-wide crusade in some other city, other than Samaria, and try to exercise that authority that derives from his past success, or his reputation as a preacher. But deep down his heart now, he'd become convinced that there is no authority in that, only in obedience.

So he did a very smart thing that tells you what it was in verse 27. He arose and went. When God says go, and a man went, he's sent.

He's a God-sent man. And if he knows who sent him, God, he knows who put him, God. Because as I've told many of you before on other occasions, when you're sent and went, you're put.

And you see, when you're sent and went and put, nothing can frighten you, so long as you know who sent you. And it's God who sent you. He was sent.

He was a God-sent man. And because he was a God-sent man, he could not help but be in the desert, the place of no human prospect, a God-sent to somebody. To whom did God intend that Philip should be a God-sent? Well, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, under Queen Candacy of Ethiopia, a man of great authority, who with a hungry heart for God had gone all the way to the city of Jerusalem to find the truth, and all he found was sterile religion.

And he came back, heavy of heart, with only a copy of the prophecy of Isaiah, part of the scriptures, that he was unable to understand. But you see, if a man seek, he'll find. Let him only ask, he'll receive.

Let him only knock. Let only God hear that timid knock, the door will open. And God doesn't leave a man in the lurch, who takes all the trouble to go to Jerusalem to find God for himself, who's disappointed by those who were the professionals, seeking bread, he receives only a stone, clutching a part of the scriptures in his hands that he can't understand.

God doesn't leave a man like that in the lurch. He looks around for any member of his body who is available that he might be sent, and be the voice. All that that man in the desert needed was a voice, and Philip had the fantastic privilege of being the voice, for no better reason than the fact that he was sent and went.

He didn't have to be smart, he didn't have to go to seminary, he didn't have to learn some special techniques, he didn't have to have a whole bunch of literature, all he had to be was available. That's the secret of the Christian life, restfully available, instantly obedient. That's what I expect of the members of my body.

I don't expect them to be demonstrating their enthusiasm the whole time, wouldn't that be inconvenient? It'd be very trying to other people. Supposing my hands all the time I was preaching, mind you they do quite a lot of it, but supposing my hands all the time wanted to demonstrate they were on the job. You'd probably come up to me, as some of you may even want to, and say, excuse me, would you mind keeping your hands still? It distracts me.

Supposing one leg keep, you know, demonstrating, I'm on the job, I want you to know that whenever you want to go anywhere, I'm ready to go. How would you get on with a body like that? Supposing your fingers sat in committee every morning under the joint chairmanship of the thumbs to decide what they were going to do all day in your best interest. How would you get on if at half past nine when you wanted to blow your nose they decided to scratch your back? You see, it isn't activity that God is looking for, it's relationship.

It'll demand activity by virtue of that relationship, but activity won't produce the relationship, the activity has got to derive from the relationship. The relationship allows him to be the author of the act, the origin of your activity. Philip was sent when? He just went for a donkey ride, in the right direction.

God organized the rest, he couldn't have organized it. The Spirit of God said to Philip in verse 29, go near, join yourself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him and read, heard him read the prophet Isaiah.

Understandest thou what thou readest? He said, how can I except some man should guide me? Reading aloud, Philip there on the ground heard that man read those amazing words, the gospel according to

Isaiah. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, verse 32, like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, who shall declare his generation? His life is taken from the earth.

The gospel according to Isaiah, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the cost of our peace laid upon him. Here was a man with a hungry heart for God, reading the very message that could lead him to reconciliation to his maker, the joy of sins forgiven, the knowledge that God would send his son one day and be wounded on his behalf. But he didn't know what it was all about.

Oh God, if only I knew. The eunuch answered and said to Philip, I pray you, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Is he talking about himself? Is he talking about somebody else? All he needed was a voice. Would you say he was hostile? Would you say you'd have to twist this man's arm to get him saved? Well, I wouldn't.

What do you think Philip said? Excuse me, I'll have to have an all-night of prayer. I want to agonize on your behalf to get you saved. Was that necessary? You see, the Christian life, when it's genuine, is so leisurely, it's so restful.

It may involve hardship. It may involve a donkey ride into the desert. It may involve being thrown in jail as Paul was, and Silas, and an earthquake thrown in to get a jailer converted, you see.

But they didn't organize the earthquake. It was just part of the flowing purpose of God. They were just there in the timeless purpose of God who knew what he was at, and Philip was in the place of a divine appointment.

All he could say in his heart was say, thank you, Lord. Thank you. I had 10 other different options that I could have got involved in today, but I'm thankful that I was sensitive to your directions, got on that donkey and went for a ride, and I hadn't a clue what you had in mind.

But somehow, deep down my heart, I credited you with enough intelligence to know what you were at. I'm so glad for the privilege of being a healthy member of your body. Thank you for the privilege of being a man sent from God.

And I want you to know, Lord Jesus, I'm still looking in your direction, and as you enable me, on my lips will be that word of testimony to you, the light that will lead this man out of darkness. So it says in verse 35, Philip did another smart thing, opened his mouth. If you're going to say something, it's the first thing to do.

Open your mouth. But make quite sure when you've opened your mouth, you've got something to say. He opened his mouth, and he began at the same scripture, and preached unto him, Jesus.

Do you want to know how to be a witness? Well, maintain your relationship to the Lord Jesus, have an unshatterable confidence that he, according to his promise, by his Holy Spirit, is going to direct your paths. Have no preconceived notions as to what he's going to do, or how he's going to do it, even if it's a donkey ride into the desert. Go where you're sent, and know that you're put.

And then as God graciously orders your circumstance, gives you the opportunity, looking in the right direction, open your mouth, and tell the truth, in all its sublime simplicity, about God's dear Son, the Lord Jesus, who in sinless humanity revealed the perfection of his Father as God, allowed him to credit him

with the guilt of a fallen race on the cross, bear the consequence in suffering a death like theirs, that they now, in response to their faith in his faithfulness, might enjoy a resurrection like his. Just tell the truth about the Lord Jesus. Don't worry about the gimmicks, or the procedures, just know in your own heart the truth about Jesus, how real he's come to you, to be to you, as your Redeemer, the one whose life you share, and just tell the story.

Tell it like it is. And you'll be surprised. As surprised, I imagine, as Philip was.

As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, see, here's water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? So quite obviously, Philip, in the course of his discussion, had said, you know, it's a very lovely way in which we picture this relationship, our identification with the Lord Jesus, when he suffered a death like ours, we go beneath the water, it's a very simple picture that God has given to us, an outward evidence of an inward work of grace, and it's a marvellous thing, when we evidence to other people, as we go beneath the water, that we consent to God's judgment as to what we deserve, we obviously could deserve no less than what happened to the one who took our place, he was sentenced, executed, and buried. So, in baptism, I simply go beneath the water, to simply tell the world, I want you to know that I agree with God's verdict upon what I am as a guilty sinner. I'm deserving of nothing more nor less than what happened to the Lord Jesus.

But I'm so grateful that he was willing to take my place, in infinite compassion. And when you come out of the water, Philip probably explained to this man, when you come out of the water, it's just a very beautiful, lovely picture, that he having suffered a death like yours, and identified you with him in that death, so God can accept his death on your behalf, you then share a resurrection like his. You come out of the water, knowing that he, who died in your place, being risen now from the dead, has come to live in you, and share that life with you.

Isn't that a beautiful picture? I expect Philip said to the eunuch, isn't that beautiful? That's how we, that's how when we become Christians, we tell the world, I'm crucified with Christ, down beneath the water, nevertheless I live here, not I, Christ lives in me. He suffered a death like mine, I'm now sharing a resurrection like his. And I expect the eunuch said, hmm that's lovely, I understand.

And then they suddenly saw water, and the eunuch said, well look, why can't I be baptized? And Philip said, if you believe, with all your heart, you may. Well he answered, I believe. All I've been waiting for is a voice in the desert.

That's what I went to Jerusalem for, I wanted somebody there to tell me this. But nobody told me, so I was on my way home. I just want to thank you for passing my way.

How thankful Philip in his heart must have been for that donkey ride. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, they went down, both into the water, 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, he came by donkey, went back by air. The eunuch saw him no more, he went on his way rejoicing. So just like John the Baptist, Philip lost his congregation.

But deep down in his heart, he had this conviction. He's living with Jesus. I know where he's gone.

He's living with the Lord Jesus. And I know now, the Lord Jesus lives in my heart, is living in Ethiopia. Because he's living in the heart of that man whom it was my privilege to point to him in the desert.

A man sent from God. No fast, no trumpets, no showmanship. He was sent and went.

He was put. God took care of the consequence. That's encouraging, because we all qualify the moment we're redeemed.

The weak, the base, and the nothing. So that in our weakness, his strength can be made perfect. Let's pray.

We're so grateful, dear Lord Jesus, for those who in their day were that humanity with which you clothed your quest in seeking us. I want to thank you for that kid at 13 years of age, who was the first in whose humanity your love was clothed with a desire to reach me. Took me to that camp.

I thank you for those who in that camp, with the means as members of your body, clothing your love and your quest with their flesh and blood, exposed me to the glorious truth of your redeeming work upon the cross. I thank you that somebody told me then, as a kid in that camp, what Philip had the privilege of telling the eunuch in the desert. And we realized this morning, Lord Jesus, that as we've responded all undeservingly to your love and have received you into our hearts, it's so that you now may clothe yourself with us, so that you in us may be to others what you in others once had come to mean to us.

Help us not to be unfaithful, or to live in that self-imposed poverty that denies us the fantastic privilege. Prepare our hearts, dear Lord, for any kind of donkey ride that'll spell blessing to some little boy or girl or man or woman who needs so desperately to hear what you have to say through our lips and in your own dear and precious name. Amen.

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