

Forging Faithful Followers — Acts 8:26-40

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Introduction.

The book of Acts stands as the sole historical book in the New Testament. As we know, found in these pages is the early history of the Church as it strove to do exactly as Jesus desired, to take the gospel message from Jerusalem, to all Judea, to Samaria, and ultimately to the end of the earth. Consistent with this spread of the gospel, Acts is accurately viewed as the book of conversions — Acts being the only place in the New Testament where actual conversion experiences are recorded.

The passage before us is rightly viewed as containing the conversion of an Ethiopian Eunuch and is worthy of detailed study as to what was said and done in bringing this man to the obedience of the faith. Fortunately, there is more here than a simple conversion account; we also find solid principles for the building of productive Christian lives.

The theme of this year's symposium is "ACTS in Action" — mining the treasures of this great historical narrative in practical and productive ways. The narrative of Philip and his interaction with the Ethiopian Eunuch models timeless principles for us to be faithful followers of Christ. We'll seek to apply these principles in two specific areas of our Christian life, namely every day (consecration of ourselves) and evangelism (conversion of the lost).

I. EVERYDAY (vv 26-30, 40).

(1) Selection.

The text opens with the words, "Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip..." I must confess that when I read these words I'm taken off guard. Why Philip? The selection of Philip surprises me. Knowing the rest of the story, one can tell this is an important event. An individual who is certainly beyond the geographical boundaries of Judea and Samaria is going to be

baptized into Christ. Presumably he will return to his native land to take up the mantle of preacher and further spread the good news of Christ.

Surely such an important work should be assigned to one of the apostles. After all it was to them that Jesus said, “you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8) and it was to them that Jesus said, “He [speaking of the Holy Spirit] will guide you into all truth.” So I would expect to read that an angel of the Lord spoke to Peter, or to John, or to James. No... an angel spoke to Philip. Philip is God’s man.

On a very practical level, what’s in this for us is that God can indeed use you, me or anyone He desires to accomplish His will. Did you ever notice - I think this is funny - in Acts 6 the Hellenist widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. So, they complained to the apostles. The apostles acknowledged that the complaint was valid but stated it was not desirable that they should leave the word of God and serve tables. Now, understand, there is nothing wrong with serving tables. It’s just that the apostles had a much greater role to fill. So, the apostles commanded them to seek out seven men for this role of service, so the apostles would, in their own words, “give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Yet, what do we read next? Stephen, one of the seven, is preaching a magnificent and powerful sermon before Jewish leaders. Then we read of Philip traveling down to Samaria where a great revival takes place as a result of his preaching. After vowing to give themselves to the ministry of the word, it’s not the apostles that are seen and heard sounding forth the gospel message, but Stephen and Philip.

God using lesser known and unexpected figures to accomplish His work is nothing new, however. Gideon’s clan was the weakest in Manasseh and he was the least in his father’s house, yet God used him to deliver Israel from the Midianites and Amalekites. Ruth was a young Moabitess, yet ends up being in the direct lineage of Christ. Jeremiah balked when called by God, claiming, “Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth.” God simply directed Jeremiah to speak whatever God commanded him and

promised Jeremiah that He would deliver him. As we know, Jeremiah went on to be one of the greatest of the prophets. When Haman launched his sinister plan to annihilate the entire Jewish people, it was Esther who God raised up to deliver His people. Over and over in the Scriptures we see God's selection of individuals to do great works as surprising, at least to us.

We all need to recognize that God can and will use us for His glory and the advancement of His kingdom. For us, the challenge is to simply trust Him — “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.” — Proverb 29:25.

(2) Submission.

Philip models not only the selection of the Lord's servant, but also submission to the Lord's will. As surprised as we were to read “to Philip”, it is equally surprising to read what the Lord desires him to do. The Lord dispatches him on a journey down a lonely road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza, to an area which is specifically described as “this is desert.”

First, I note the surprise. Surprise as in what God expects. As we have already noted, Philip has a very successful ministry going up there in Samaria. Now the Lord uproots him and directs him on an unspecified journey to Gaza. Plus, this is no simple task — it's 50 miles from Jerusalem to Gaza and some 68 miles from Samaria to Gaza. This journey will take Philip some time and effort.

Isaiah 55 tells us that God's ways are not our ways. Like Joshua marching around Jericho for seven days, sending Philip on an expedition south and west of Jerusalem doesn't seem to make much sense — at least not from our finite perspective. But as we know, God does indeed know what He is doing.

Let's pause just long enough to note that Luke's description of this region as “desert” is designed to impress upon us that Philip was being sent away from a populous, fruitful region to an area that is basically uninhabited. The word picture is not one of the dry barren Sahara or sun

scorched Death Valley. Rather, we are simply to understand that Philip is heading to a comparatively unpopulated section of the country.

Next, I note the simplicity. Yes, what the Lord demanded on Philip was surprising, but it was also simple. Nothing hard or heroic is being demanded from Philip. He is simply to go and travel along the road.

God's will is most often this way — surprising, but equally simple. It was for Joshua. All he and the Israelites were to do was march around Jericho in complete silence for seven days. It was simple for those servants in the kitchen at the wedding in Cana of Galilee in John 2 when Jesus told them to fill the waterpots of stone with water. It was simple for Gideon when they attacked the Midianites armed with torches, pitchers, and trumpets. It was simple for Peter in Luke 5 when he was told to “launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

To us — or at least to me — none of these things make sense. Marching around the city. Water when wine was needed. Trumpets and torches to take on 135,000 mighty Midianites. Fishing during the day in deep water. I love what the Bible says about Abraham in Hebrews 11:8, “and he went out, not knowing where he was going.”

Surprising, yet the simplicity of it all. Philip is just to head out and travel the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Nothing complicated about that.

Last, I note the sketchiness, or step-by-step nature, of Philip's mission. When we observe the text closely we see that all Philip was initially told was to go south along the road. That's it. He, like us today, doesn't know the end from the beginning. It's only after he “walks by faith” that he will receive further instruction.

A preacher friend of mine used a great illustration once. He said that if you wait until all the traffic lights are green to get going you would never get started. My wife is a retired Air Force LtCol and we were stationed in the Tampa, FL area once. The route home from MacDill went right through downtown Tampa. There was a stretch of city blocks and each had a traffic light. I vividly remember taking the left turn onto this downtown stretch and

you could see almost every light — and almost every light was red. But a funny thing happened. As you drove through this stretch — at the posted speed limit of 35 mph — the lights were perfectly timed and would turn green. I'd end up driving this stretch without stopping as each light in turn changed to green.

In my judgment, some things in the Bible are easy to understand but not so easy to put into practice. Paul's admonition that "we walk by faith, not by sight" in 2 Corinthians 5:7 is just such a phrase. What does walking by faith look like? It looks exactly like what Philip is doing here. Philip promptly obeys the voice of the angel — doing precisely what God says — without knowing who or what he will find along the way. John says, "this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith." Philip simply did what he was told, leaving the details to God. His actions echo the actions of Joshua — the walls of Jericho were God's problem; Joshua's was to obey.

(3) Scenarios.

Since the theme of the symposium is ACTS in Action, let's pause to make sure we're meeting this objective. When the entire passage is seen, it's clear that Philip is on an evangelistic mission to preach the gospel of Christ to an Ethiopian Eunuch. However, the behavior modeled by Philip in these early verses could be applied to any aspect of our Christian lives.

The Lord sent Philip to a lonely road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. I doubt very seriously if that is what He expects any of us to do! What exactly does the Lord expect from us? Let's take a look at some scenarios.

Family — Ephesians 5:22-6:4.

Friends — Romans 13:8-10.

Foes — Romans 12:17-21.

Function [i.e., work or occupation] — Ephesians 6:5-9.

Fullness [i.e., of life] — John 10:9-10.

Fight — Matthew 10:27-31.

Fulfillment [i.e., of Great Commission] — Mark 16:15; Matthew 19-20; Ephesians 3:20-21.

Forgiveness — Ephesians 4:32; Hebrews 12:14-15.

There are some scenarios where the Lord has clearly revealed His will, and I'm sure you could add to the list. Let's put ACTS into Action just as we see Philip doing. Selection — like Philip, God has selected each of us. Submission — like Philip, doing what we are told, even if we don't know all the details.

(4) Swift.

See the immediateness and exactness of Philip's compliance with what the Lord directed. There are four imperatives or commands in this passage. They are 'arise,' 'go,' 'go near,' and 'overtake.'

Philip was to arise and go. We read that he 'arose' and 'went.' Arose and went are the same verbs as arise and go. The same verbs are used underscoring Philip's doing exactly what the Lord directed. The precise meaning of the words speaks to us also. 'Arise' means 'to get up, to rise up, to initiate action.' Philip did just that, he initiated an action; he immediately put the Lord's word into action. 'Go' means 'to pass from one place to another.' Again, this is exactly what Philip did; he immediately executed what the Lord has commanded, traveling steadily along the specified road.

Again, Philip was commanded to go near and overtake. 'Go near' means 'to approach, to near, draw near.' When told, Philip did just this; he closed in on the objective of God's will. Lastly, 'overtake' means 'to glue, weld together, to attach one's self to, unite with, to be closely associated with.' Again, this is exactly what Philip did as he joined himself to the Ethiopian's chariot. I fear we're getting a little redundant, but I want to emphasize Philip's continued precision with which he obeyed the voice of the Lord.

As Philip is an example to us in being swift to the Lord's work, he is just following the Biblical pattern. Abraham obeyed God's command for circumcision that same day; Joshua 'rose early in the morning' to engage Jericho; Esther immediately went into action; Paul immediately preached Jesus as the Christ (Acts 9:20) and immediately sought to obey the Lord's command (Acts 16:9-10).

(5) Study.

Sometimes it's so easy to get engrossed in the Bible story that it becomes a challenge to make a personal application. In this particular text, one can almost see and feel Philip sprinting up to the chariot and exclaiming, "Do you understand what you are reading?" We think, yes, does the eunuch understand?

Well, perhaps for us today, a better question might be, do we understand what we are reading? Before we investigate if the Ethiopian understood, let's pause, look at ourselves in the mirror, and ask, "Do you [pointing at yourself] understand what you are reading?"

Practice. Paul told Timothy to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God... rightly dividing the word of truth." It takes an earnest effort, a striving to properly understand God's word.

Problem. It's critical for us to expend the effort to understand, for Paul testified of the Jews, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God." -- Romans 10:2-3. Similarly the Proverbs testify to how critical it is to properly understand, "There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." -- Proverbs 16:25.

Peril. I have long held the position that perhaps the most sobering verses in all the Bible are recorded in Matthew 7. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord,

have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” -- Matthew 7:21–23.

As related to Salvation — Do we truly understand baptism for the remission of sins and other nuances of the doctrine of salvation?

As related to Sanctification — in light of Paul’s words to the Thessalonians, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” do we truly understand God’s revealed will as related to our sanctification, our daily Christian living?

(6) Satisfied.

We’ve attempted to examine the first section of our passage from the perspective of EVERY DAY — how the passage models for us actions we can take to be faithful followers of Christ. We’ve seen Philip’s: Selection, Submission and Swiftness. In addition, we’ve explored several scenarios and briefly touched on the importance of Study.

One last item as related to our everyday Christian living seen in Philip is this — Satisfied with the Lord’s assignment. From Samaria, to the desert region, to Azotus, to Caesarea, Philip is a model of one who just blooms where he is planted. Never complaining, never questioning, we see in Philip a truly remarkable disciple who is satisfied to serve wherever the Lord plants him. Paul would demonstrate the same admirable characteristic, just before answering the Macedonian call in Acts 16.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that, “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.” God knows what He is doing — if the Bible teaches nothing else, it teaches this. Your local congregation needs you; the local eldership needs your faithfulness and support. The Lord, who is in the midst of the golden lampstands, knows what He is doing. Be satisfied with where you are — bloom and flourish, satisfied with the Lord’s assignment.

Forging Faithful Followers in Everyday Christian life — Selection, Submission, Scenarios, Swift, Study and Satisfied.

II. EVANGELISM (vv 30-39).

As mentioned earlier, contained in the passage before us are the details pertaining to the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. We applied the early verses to our everyday Christian life or sanctification simply because we could. When Philip departed from Samaria to venture out, travel, and make the almost 70-mile journey from Samaria to Gaza, he had no idea what he would encounter. He had no way of knowing what the Lord had in store for him.

As his journey providentially intersects with the Eunuch, however, it becomes clear, both to him and to the reader, exactly what God has orchestrated. Philip is on an evangelistic call, if you will, to present the gospel of Christ to a single man traveling home from Jerusalem.

Philip not only models principles for everyday life, but also principles for effective evangelism.

(1) System.

We examine first the system the Lord uses to bring the gospel message to those outside of Christ.

Providence. Obviously, the first thing we observe is the providence of God. Here, as in other places in the Word, the Bible doesn't specifically say that God's providence was at work to bring Philip and this Ethiopian together. But to what else can we attribute this encounter? Perhaps it's just a chance encounter — but much better is to see God's invisible and divine sovereignty actively at work behind the scenes.

Many times in the Biblical narratives we see God providentially working on behalf of His divine will and on behalf of His servants. God appearing to Abimelech in a dream to rescue Abraham; a lowly Midianite soldier recounting his own dream to encourage and embolden Gideon;

Nabal's wife Abigail happening upon David to turn him from his ill-conceived plan to avenge himself on Nabal; Mordecai overhearing the scheme of Bigthan and Teresh to lay hands on King Ahasuerus; the messengers from Cornelius arriving at the door just as Peter wondered within himself what the vision of the unclean creatures on the sheet might mean; and on and on we could go.

When an individual is truly seeking to understand the things of God, especially as related to Jesus as the Christ, we can rest assured that God's providence will be active behind the scenes.

Proclamation. Perhaps more critical to our study and time today is the method employed by God in the proclamation or presentation of the gospel message. The conversations recorded in our text are enlightening indeed. Notice that the angel of the Lord was sent to and spoke to Philip, not the Ethiopian. When all is done, this event is clearly for the benefit of the Eunuch, so why not just send the divine messenger directly to him. But, strange as it might be to us, while the Ethiopian is on the journey heading south out of Jerusalem, the angel descends to the north to Samaria and appears to Philip.

Then the Spirit, and this must be the Holy Spirit, spoke to Philip, not the Ethiopian. Again, observe how the Holy Spirit began to work for the conversion of this man. Did the Spirit work directly upon the heart of the sinner? No. Did the Spirit engage in direct communication with said sinner? No. Like the angel of the Lord, the Spirit begins with the preacher.

This entire conversion would have been much easier and convenient if God had simply sent the angel to talk to the Eunuch, or at least sent the Spirit to engage the Eunuch. Without question God is at work in the conversion of this man. However, the labors of God are to bring the preacher and the lost man face to face.

We simply cannot miss, and it needs again be impressed upon us that unless man does his part in the work of evangelizing the lost, all the work done by both the angel and the Spirit is to no avail. Faith comes by

hearing and hearing by the word of God. Until a man speaks God's Word to a lost man; until a lady opens her mouth and presents God's Word to a lost soul; until an individual speaks the message of God's salvation in Christ to a wayward soul, the conversion of a lost soul will remain out of reach.

(2) Size Up.

This passage is rich with attention-getting and thought-provoking phrases. Verse 30 states that Philip ran to him and "heard him" — after running to overtake the Eunuch's chariot, Philip paused to accurately evaluate his subject. Philip, rightly, is seeking to determine exactly where the Eunuch is spiritually.

That's the purpose and brilliance of his question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" At first glance this question may seem harsh or rude, but upon further reflection, is entirely reasonable and proper. One of the first things to be done whenever a prospect is met is to find out, to ascertain, precisely where they are on the road to salvation. The best way is seen here with Philip — to listen and learn.

Obviously, Philip did not know this man. Therefore he had no way of knowing whether he was a fellow disciple or an unbeliever. Philip's simple and straightforward question was designed to draw out the religious position of this man. Through the vehicle of this one question, Philip will determine how to proceed further.

If the Ethiopian was an unbeliever he would not be able to tell the meaning of this well-known prophecy from Isaiah and connect it directly to Jesus. On the other hand, if he could explain the meaning, this would clearly indicate the man was a fellow believer who properly understood these predictions of the suffering of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

As we actively participate in the evangelism of the lost, there are a number of phrases we can use in addition to "... what you are reading." Do you understand... the bodily resurrection; do you understand... the

necessity of the virgin birth; do you understand... salvation by grace apart from works of law; do you understand... the purpose of baptism; etc. All these can be employed in a practical way to size up a potential candidate and allow us to determine the best way to proceed further.

(3) Sure.

We now arrive at the meat of Philip's presentation of Jesus as the Christ. The Eunuch's question in verse 34 is a very natural one, for there is nothing in the immediate context of the book of Isaiah which would help a reader to determine to whom the reference is made.

Composition. Luke records that Philip "opened his mouth." This phrase appears several times in the New Testament including Matthew 5:2 where Matthew introduces Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The idea behind this phrase seems to be or imply something like a set discourse; a sort of standard message where certain points are emphasized. Peter will later write that we are to be "always ready to give a defense..." Especially for topics related to the doctrine of salvation we must stand ready — possess compositions — so that we too can "open his mouth" and sound forth the truth of God's Word.

Choice. Next, I can't help but focus on a phrase we all love from this text, namely "preached Jesus to him." I'm not sure about you but these are the kinds of Bible phrases that get me to thinking. I ask myself... well, what else could he have preached? He could have preached:

God — Paul did exactly this in Acts 17 in the midst of the Areopagus where he proceeded to proclaim to the Athenians "the One whom you worship without knowing."

Duty to man — Jesus did this in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Duty to God — Joshua did just this in his address to the nation of Israel in Joshua 24.

Yet, as we have already noted, because Philip did such a masterful job of sizing up the Ethiopian Eunuch, he knew spiritually where the Eunuch stood and thus how to proceed further. Because he had “heard” the Eunuch he preached precisely what the man needed to hear — Jesus. Jesus — it was Jesus and no other who offered up His life as a sacrifice for sin; it was Jesus who took upon Himself to bear our iniquities exactly as had been written centuries before on the Suffering and Obedient Servant.

Content. Another favorite and attention getting phrase is “beginning at this Scripture...” To be effective in evangelistic work we must be sure of the content of God’s Word. Philip knew this passage, known to us as Isaiah 53, referred to Jesus and with this passage as the background told the Eunuch the good news about Jesus. Philip would have showed how Jesus of Nazareth exactly answered the description made by Isaiah centuries before.

The challenge for us is to be able to start with “this Scripture” and present Jesus. While it’s probably not possible to find Jesus literally on every single page of the Bible, at a minimum we should be able to relate the basic divisions of the Bible to Him. I’m not sure about you, but I’ve been asked about the genealogies found in Scripture, I’ve been asked why I should care about all those kings found in the Old Testament, I’ve had sincere folks ask me what am I to do with those Old Testament prophets.

Old Testament. When we examine the Old Testament, what do we see or find?

Pentateuch. Promise. If I could put one word on the opening five books it would be promise. As early as Genesis chapter 3 in the immediate aftermath of the fall, Adam and Eve’s sin, God made a promise of One who would come and destroy Satan, the old serpent. Abraham was specifically told that “in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3, 22:18). This promise was repeated to Abraham’s son Isaac (Genesis 26:4) and to Isaac’s son Jacob (Genesis 28:14). Of course, many other lessons are taught in these opening books, but when dealing with a

lost individual we must remain focused on Jesus as this promised seed and His coming as the Christ.

Historical. Program. These historical books trace God's program to bring His Christ into the world. Presents the history of Israel, God's servant nation; shows them conquering and dwelling in the land promised to Abraham. Found here is the promise to David that it would be through him that the ultimate establishing of the kingdom would come. Records them being punished for the unfaithfulness and sent to the Babylonian captivity only to them returned to complete Israel's mission to bring God's Christ into the world. So if one were to ask, what do I do with all these kings, they show Israel as the focus of God's Program to bring forth the Christ — God's chosen vehicle through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Wisdom. Philosophy. The wisdom or poetical books provide the means for one to develop a sound philosophy for life. Israel's wisdom was founded upon the fundamental concept of "the fear of the Lord." This fear, awe and reverence for God served to orient all of life. The wisdom books teach God as Creator, God as the source of wisdom, and the moral responsibility of man to live righteous or upright in the sight of God. When we turn to the New Testament, we find all these concepts ascribed to Jesus. He is the Creator, in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and it is Jesus, that in all things He may have the preeminence and that all will one day appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; He is Lord of all — in Jesus one finds a sound philosophy for life.

Prophets. Prophecy. The 17 books of prophecy provide distinct, identifying, marks or characteristics by which the Messiah, the Christ, could be recognized. The magnificent Isaiah 53 passage the Eunuch was reading is perhaps the zenith of all the prophetic utterances.

On a practical level — ACTS in Action — we need to, through systematic teaching and training, be able to "open his mouth" to relate the various Old Testament divisions to Jesus.

New Testament. Similarly, when we examine the New Testament, what do we see or find?

Gospels. Promise. If you had an outline with blanks, most of you would have filled this in ahead of time with the word Person. But I've chosen to use the same words for the divisions of the New Testament as I did for the Old Testament. Promise — in the gospel accounts, we find God revealed in human flesh. We see word pictures of Jesus, God's only begotten Son. The closing words of chapter 20 of John's gospel inform us as to the purpose of his gospel writings: that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ... The gospel accounts without question confirm that Jesus is indeed the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David.

Historical. Program. Found here in the pages of the one New Testament historical book, is God's New Testament or New Covenant program. The launch and spread of the gospel message — of salvation through faith in Christ. Acts shows the good news of Christ spreading from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and ultimately to the end of the earth.

It's also very important for us to note that here in the book of Acts we find real world, real life conversion accounts or experiences. Here and here alone, we find recorded what actually happened when a sinner made the decision to follow Jesus. What is found here in these historical accounts — belief, repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit — is the divine pattern for us today.

Epistles. Philosophy. What we find in the contents of these many letters is what Christ expects from His disciples; the conduct of the Christian life. From doctrinal matters, to moral expectations, to church polity — the philosophy of life with the standards set by the exalted Lord.

Revelation. Prophecy. In this final book of prophecy, it's not of Jesus as the Suffering Servant to come as the Eunuch was reading in his chariot, but rather a prophecy of the Reigning Lord overseeing all things under His sovereignty; one day to return as the Kings of Kings.

Again, the content of the Scripture. Each of us should be able to “beginning at this Scripture” — at least beginning in any basic section of the Scriptures — preach Jesus to someone.

Connection. Ultimately, we must make sure that we connect the message about Jesus to the sinner proper. An examination of the passage shows that Philip indeed did just that.

The Ethiopian Eunuch’s exclamation in verse 36 is one of the strangest in all the Scriptures. “See, water...” Why this response? What a bizarre response from this man riding in his chariot? How do we account for such a verbal outburst?

In the end, this is not complicated. Preaching Jesus must include instruction on what to do to become a Christian. A question expressing a desire to be immersed into Christ would not have occurred to the Ethiopian unless he had been previously instructed concerning the ordinance of Christian baptism. We simply are forced to conclude that what the Ethiopian now requested, to be immersed, he had learned from Philip’s teaching.

I like what another has said, “No inspired preacher of the gospel ever preached Jesus without preaching the baptism that Jesus commanded; no gospel preacher today can preach Jesus without preaching the command to be baptized.”

Verse 37, which I acknowledge is not in all the manuscripts, is also very instructive. Having expressed a desire to be immersed, all that’s left is for Philip to determine if the Eunuch is indeed a suitable candidate. Consistent with the New Testament pattern and teaching, the Ethiopian Eunuch confesses that, yes, he believes that Jesus is the Christ.

Having heard the Eunuch’s confession of his personal faith in Christ, Philip baptizes this man into Christ. Then, and only then, the Ethiopian goes on his way rejoicing. The Bible narrative is silent as to whatever became of this man... but I can’t help but be confident, especially given his

great authority, that he returned to his native land and became a mighty force in the Lord's Kingdom, boldly proclaiming Jesus as the Christ.

Conclusion.

The theme for this year's symposium is a good one — ACTS in Action. From day in and day out Christian living to the very specific topic of effective evangelism, Philip models principles for us today. As we strive to be faithful followers of Christ, let's resolve to walk in the footsteps and faith of Philip and trust the Lord that we too can do great things for the Lord's Kingdom.