

# RADICAL OBEDIENCE

Dean Hudson 27/8/17

I want to start this sermon by recapping a little bit about Phillip and what his background was before this passage. Phillip, in Acts 6 v 2-5, was chosen with six others to assist the apostles, to reach more people with the good news of Jesus. He was chosen by the people because he was filled with the spirit of God and wisdom. I find it very interesting that Stephen was also chosen at this time. Both men were such fantastic witnesses in a time where persecution was rife. Through persecution their faith grew immensely. If we were in the same kind of position would we have been the same? I'd like to think that I would, however I feel like I might have been more like Gideon.

Gideon was a young man who was afraid of the Midianites, who were stealing from the Israelites and terrorising them. Gideon was in a winepress threshing his wheat to save it from the Midianites, when an Angel of the Lord appeared to him. In Judges 6:11-18, it shows Gideon not wanting to do what God asked of him, even though God spoke through an Angel the same as with Phillip. I feel like Gideon sometimes, as I question whether I am good enough, or is God really asking me to do that? It is not God that brings fear about - but the Devil actively working against God. This is the struggle I am sure we all share at one time or another. I have struggled with God over complete obedience even with this sermon. I have found I have struggled to know what exactly I needed to say and whether I had the boldness to say it. I know that I am not the most articulate person in the world nor do I know the Bible enough but God has called me to speak about obedience that is so radical because it is offensive to those who do not believe. I feel this is because to be obedient almost seems like a negative thing, as it involves giving everything to be a servant of Jesus.

In Matthew 16:24-26, Jesus gives a clear message to his followers, to deny themselves - in other words to give up everything and follow him to "pick up your cross and follow me". In order to be obedient, we must also die to our former selves and become born again into the kingdom of the Lord. I myself struggle with giving everything to the Lord, and I know this gets in the way of what the Lord wants to do in my life. The more I prayed about this radical obedience, these more four aspects kept coming back to me so I would like to briefly talk about them. My four points are FAITH, POWER, BOLDNESS and LOVE.

## FAITH

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Phillip had an immense faith in Jesus. This is seen earlier in the chapter in verses 4-8. Phillip went to Samaria to proclaim the good news of Jesus. This was after he had seen Saul put his friend Stephen to death. I don't know about you but I would have been very scared. I probably wouldn't have gone somewhere proclaiming Jesus after this horrible event. It is however a testament to his complete faith in Jesus to protect and guide him through this really turbulent and testing time. He didn't give up - he went out. Phillip was not afraid and full of hatred. He performed miraculous signs and baptised people. This boldness and faith is what I want in my life every day. He does not question the Angel in verse 26 of Acts 8 when the Angel asks him "go

south on the road, the desert road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza". In the next verse, it states "so he started out". He goes where he is told straight away without knowing the fine details and therefore he has no control over what happens next. This is because he believes something will happen. He is expectant that God will move and his spirit will go before him. There are other examples of extreme and radical obedience in the Bible. Such as Genesis 22 verses 1-3 where God calls Abraham to sacrifice his son on a mountain and he obeys unconditionally without question, because he has the faith in God to know it will all turn out for good. Now if that was me I would have flat out said no to the Lord as I would want to know why it was happening, but God is looking for obedient servants.

## POWER

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The power of the Lord needs to be present to equip you to do the task that God has set on you. God gives us unique gifting's to do the work he has set before us - it is up to us what we do with them. This reminds me of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. The master gave the servants talents, one received five and made five more. One received two and made two more and the master was pleased. One servant who received one talent buried it and the master was angry with this servant. This tells me that we need to use the talents/gifts God has given to us to further the kingdom - not to bury them. Phillip needed God's spirit to reveal to him the Ethiopian that he was to meet. He did not go out of his way to find this person but God placed him into his path and pointed him out saying in Acts 8:29 "go to that chariot and stay near it". To me this is Gods power at work directing both Phillip and the Ethiopian to the exact same location at the same time. The power of the Lord falls on the Ethiopian later on in verses 36 to 38,

when the Ethiopian gets baptized by Phillip. The Ethiopian comes out of the water and the spirit falls on him but Phillip is taken away as his job is done. He had obeyed Jesus. It is important to note that the Ethiopian went away rejoicing God and so did Phillip. When we obey God, everybody is blessed. God has shown me that without the power of the Lord we cannot fulfil our calling and we go out in our own strength and fail because God has not gone with us. We need his anointing daily to help others. Many times, I have wondered why things I have tried in the name of the Lord have failed. I believe it is because I have gone on my own and thought, I was strong enough to do what God had called me to do without his power on me. This is wrong in our weakness his strength is perfect.

## BOLDNESS

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Phillip must have had a lot of boldness to approach a Eunuch who, we are told, was very powerful where he came from in verse 27. He was in charge of the treasury, and had come back from worshiping something or someone else. This is true today of many people who worship other things/people instead of God. I would have felt out of my depth here but Jesus gave Phillip boldness, to not only approach the Eunuch but to challenge him too. In verse 30, the Eunuch is reading Isaiah 53:7-8 so Phillip asks the Eunuch "do you understand what you are reading?". The Eunuch tells Phillip he can't because no one has told him. We need to tell people about Jesus but it also needs to be the right time for that person to hear about God. This was the right time for the Eunuch and God had placed Phillip there to help him.

We need the boldness to see people come to know the living God. We need the supernatural courage to project the Gospel everywhere we go. Something I have been thinking about lately is the presence of God being like a perfume and it needs to flow off us and onto other people like in John 12:3. "Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume". I know this perfume would still have been on Jesus for a long time so it would have lingered in the air and people would have known it came from Jesus. My favourite example of boldness was Stephen in Acts 7:59-60 he declared the Gospel even though he knew he would be killed. Then, when they were stoning him he asked God's forgiveness for them, that is true boldness and courage. We need this boldness in order to be radically obedient to God. I know I have been praying a lot recently to be bolder and more courageous about how I love others.

## LOVE

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Most importantly for me in this story is love. Phillip loved the Lord with all his heart and soul. He had been bringing joy to Samaria earlier on in Acts 8 he had been healing people because he loved them. He told the Eunuch about Jesus because he loved him and longed for him to know Jesus. It becomes easier to obey God in everything when we love God in everything - even if we have to sacrifice things in order to be obedient. We have all done things that are wrong but Jesus came down to Earth. He was obedient to death so that all our wrong things could be forgiven for good. The Ethiopian was reciting a passage in Isaiah 53:7-8, this was all about Jesus being sacrificed for our wrong actions. This was the ultimate act of love over us. In verse 40, Phillip is sent to the city of Azotus and then went on to carry on preaching the good news in many places because he loved Jesus completely and with all of him surrendered to God and his will on Earth.

## WHAT DO WE NEED TO BE RADICALLY OBEDIENT?

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We need FAITH, POWER, BOLDNESS and LOVE.

We need all four of these elements to be able to be radically obedient. If one is missing, it all falls apart. We are too scared, or we don't want to, or we don't believe it, or we lack the power to change things. We need to be radically obedient to see change in this city or this nation or even the world. We can change the whole atmosphere but we have to be completely obedient, I know that it is a tough road, and that sometimes I have lacked boldness, or love or faith or the power. It is in those times however that the Lord reveals his glory and leads us on and grows us. We cannot grow in the classroom - we have to get out into the field which is the world around us.

This is therefore my challenge to you be radically obedient in not only the big things but the little things too. Heal the scars of this world - one act of kindness at a time. Keep close to the Lord and he will speak to you.

The two things I would most like you to take with you if you take nothing else from this sermon are:

- **When we obey God everybody is blessed.**
- **It becomes easier to obey God in everything when we love God in everything.**