**Obedience**

***26****Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ac+8&version=ESV#fen-ESV-27191d)*] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place.****27****And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship****28****and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.****29****And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.”****30****So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”****31****And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.****32****Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:*

*“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter
    and like a lamb before its shearer is silent,
    so he opens not his mouth.****33****In his humiliation justice was denied him.
    Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”*

***34****And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”****35****Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. (Acts 8:26-35, ESV)*

 Obedience to God advances the growth of the Church. Greetings in the Lord as we continue to lift up our prayers to God and declare the truth of the Word of God as our spiritual nourishment, despite these difficult days for our compatriots on the other side of the world in Armenia and Artsakh. God in this text is showing us the importance of obedience. Philip’s ministry had already been quite fruitful, and this episode presents to us yet another picture of God’s plan through the work of the church. If there is one truth that we can all take from this passage, it is that God expects obedience from His people, so that His plan for humanity would advance through us. Therefore, let us talk about obedience and the affect it has on the Church and her ministry. Again, it is obedience to God that advances the growth of His church. Let’s look at this truth in a bit more detail…

 The leading of the Holy Spirit is effective when we obey His commands. This truth is very simple. What is spoken and done need to correspond to each other without doubt or wavering getting in between the two. For example, we see in the passage that the Holy Spirit spoke to Philip to go to the road headed to Gaza. The word was given, and we see that Philip got up, meaning he set aside his comfort and stopped what he was doing, and went in obedience to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit did not say what would happen, only that Philip should “go.” After Philip got on the road, the Spirit did not say whom Philip would meet. Rather, when the member of the Ethiopian court was passing by, He told Philip to join the chariot. The Spirit did not say what Philip would hear – only that he should come close to it. Again, the evangelist, in obedience, ran to the chariot without any questioning. If you notice, however, the Spirit only brought him closer- the conversation was up to Philip to have. Subsequently, Philip already had the necessary knowledge to explain and bring forth the good news of Jesus to the eunuch. He obeyed the Spirit, he used his faith without asking a thousand questions before he obeyed, and God used him to bring the message of salvation to someone of a different race, contributing ultimately to the growth of the church.

 The Scottish theologian Forsythe has said the following about obedience: “The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but its Master;” (in other words,) to find not independence, but God Himself, and to obey Him.

 Today, the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ declares Jesus of Nazareth as Lord in every church. What does it mean, however, when we declare that truth over our own lives? Have we realized that having the Lord in our life means obeying the Lord? The Scriptures say that mankind must be free from the slavery to sin and to subject itself to the slavery or service of God’s love. In other words, if we are not obedient to Jesus Christ – if we are not obedient to God’s Word, then we are automatically going to be obedient to another lord, whether that lord is ourselves, the devil himself, or an idea or person from this world.

 Therefore, if we are the Lord’s servants, then we are to obey the Lord. Otherwise, our service will remain superficial, and the plan and fruits from God will not be visible in our lives.

 So, how are we supposed to obey? With faith, trust and humility before God, of course. No, we cannot obey by making ourselves look great, or by praising ourselves, or by glorifying ourselves. No, rather we obey God by working hard, by being patient, and by being careful to heed his Word. Whatever God says, that and only that is what we are to do – and what things God says are very clear in the Bible.

 Again, the leading of the Holy Spirit is effective and becomes helpful to us when we obey His commands - when we follow His directions. Obedience to God advances the growth of the church.

 May God give us that spirit of obedience, so that we can be the obedient servants of God willingly and lovingly. The Lord bless you all. Amen.