

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

WHAT KIND OF PREACHER WAS PHILIP?

There was one follower of the Christ named Philip who was an apostle (Luke 6:12-13). There was a different disciple by that same name that was not a disciple (Acts 8:1,4,5). The Holy Spirit describes him (the non-apostle) as "Philip the evangelist" (Acts 21:8). While Philip the apostle is indirectly mentioned numerous times in the book of Acts when the Bible records the activities of the apostles, God's word actually gives us more specific information about Philip the evangelist. What kind of preacher was this man Philip?

Philip was a preacher who had a good reputation in the church. Is it possible for someone to be held in high esteem even though his heart is not right in the sight of God? (Acts 8:21). It is. Yes, people can be deceived into praising a renegade. Philip, however, was no renegade that pulled the wool over the eyes of the unsuspecting. When the apostles decided that seven men were needed to serve neglected widows, the instruction was given for the disciples to choose "men of honest report [good reputation, NKJV], full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). The selection of the seven, including Philip, was based on their character. No preacher of the gospel can be effective unless he sets forth "a pattern of good works" (Titus 2:7). He may be a splendid orator, but unless he has a well-deserved reputation as a man of godly character, he will be a dead weight to the local church and its efforts to evangelize its area.

Philip preached the right message. In Samaria, he preached the Christ (Acts 8:4). Since the Samaritans received his preaching, and the Bible says they received "the word of God" (Acts 8:14), then it is plain that (1) Philip did not preach his own ideas, but rather God's word, and (2) to "preach the Christ" is the same thing as to preach the word." That is the Holy Spirit's charge to everyone that wants to be a true evangelist: "Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). I have heard first-hand accounts of people attending a congregation and over a five-year period of time never hearing a lesson on marriage and divorce or the evils of immodest clothing and man-made religions. Some preachers are reported to have the speaking skill to hold an audience in the palm of their hand. If so, they are blessed with a powerful ability. But, what good is that if they will not preach the whole counsel of God? (Acts 20:27). Philip preached the right message.

Philip preached the right message even when "the big boys" were not around. Because of an intense persecution, except for the apostles, all the disciples were forced to leave Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). Philip was one of the scattered ones that went preaching the word (Acts 8:4,5). When he first went to preach in Samaria, there were not apostles there. He was not preaching the truth in order to please or impress them. He was preaching the truth because that is what true preachers do, regardless of which "big name" preachers might be present or absent. There is way too much preaching for show that goes on in the church today. It smells.

Philip was willing to go teach one person. Philip's preaching in Samaria had resulted in conversion, including Simon the former sorcerer (Acts 8:12-13). Surely it would have been pleasant to stay there and keep it going, but the Lord had other plans. He sent this word to Philip: "Arise, and go toward the south..." The next verse says, "And he arose and went..." (Acts 8:27). Philip was willing to go to a desert place to teach on precious soul. God's preachers need to be able to step out of the pulpit and into people's living rooms (or chariots, as in the case of the eunuch, Acts 8:29-31). No, it is not "the preacher's job" to conduct every private Bible study, but if you run across a preacher that is not comfortable being in close contact with people and is not interested in teaching one-on-one, he is not akin to the evangelists of the first century. He certainly does not resemble Philip. Or Paul. Or Timothy. Or Jesus.

Philip literally ran to his next preaching assignment. He may not have done so on other occasions, but the Bible says that he "ran" to where the eunuch was (Acts 8:30). Don't you love the excitement he had because of the chance to teach the lost? We need evangelists that are on fire to preach the word! We need gospel preachers that live in order to preach rather than preach in order to live.

GOT JOY?

Text: _____

I. Joy Is Found In _____

Notes:

II. Joy Is Found In _____

Notes:

III. Joy Is Found In _____

Notes:

IV. Joy Is Found In _____

Notes:

A CHRISTIAN CENSUS

Text: _____

I. By What _____ Are You Called?

Notes:

II. Where Do You _____?

Notes:

III. What Is Your _____?

Notes:

Was Philip perfect? No way. But he did demonstrate some qualities that all Christians, especially gospel preachers, need to emulate. May God give us more evangelists like His servant Philip.

-Roger D. Campbell

WHAT I OWE MY HOME CONGREGATION

I am under solemn obligation to help the church of my Lord at every locality to the extent of my ability; but unto my home congregation I am under special obligation.

I want my home congregation to radiate a wholesome influence in the community. Therefore, I owe it the example of a good life. I must "live soberly, righteously, and godly" (Matthew 5:13-16).

I want the strangers who enter the door of the meeting-house to feel at home, to learn to love us, to return from time to time. They are our guests. I owe it to them and to the church to show myself friendly (Hebrews 13:2).

No congregation can make progress without faithful and efficient leaders. To a certain extent, members of the church make or break their leaders. To the end that our leaders may be stronger and more efficient, I must give them my support. I must pray for them. I must protect their reputations. "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses" (1 Timothy 5:19).

My home congregation has financial obligations which are due at regular intervals. Whether I give or do not give, these obligations must be paid. If it is right for my home congregation to pay its obligations each week, it is right for me to give. Though circumstances may cause me to be absent at times, my contribution should find its way to the treasury of the church (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

I know that the very existence of my home congregation depends upon the attendance of its members. For this reason, I must attend the services. I would not have it said that my home congregation perished because I would not attend the meetings (Hebrews 10:25).

I want my home congregation to grow, to multiply in members. Therefore I must set myself to the noble work of winning souls for Christ. This I can do by preaching and persuading; this I can do by persistent effort; this I can do by bringing others to our meetings (Proverbs 11:30; Psalm 122:1).

My home congregation cannot thrive in a frigid atmosphere. I must not allow the church to become a place where hearts are chilled. I must make it a place where hearts are warmed. I owe it my heart, the warmth of my life. I must forgive and forget.

Wishing to be honest, I must meet obligations to the best of my ability. I must, with the help that God gives, play my part in the incomparable work of building up the body of Christ, which he purchased with his own precious blood.

-Frank Cox

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

If you're like me, it has happened to you. You see someone. You know you know them. They look just like someone you've met. After some thought, you walk up to them, stick out your hand, say "Hi," and call them by name. The only problem is they turn and politely say, "Hi, but I'm not who you think I am!" Once the shock and embarrassment begin to wear off you stop and begin to realize how little they actually looked like the one you had in mind. Do not feel bad. It was just a case of mistaken identity. It happens to the best of us and often happens because of people that should be quite recognizable. Even the One who should have been the most recognizable figure throughout the history of the world was once the victim of mistaken identity.

It really was not uncommon, in some capacity, for people to not recognize the true identity of Jesus. Once, when He met His apostles in Caesarea Philippi, He asked them who the people thought He was. The thoughts of his identity were varied. They replied, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (Matthew 16:14). The wonder of His works, teachings, and very presence was so very different than anything with which they were familiar. All they could do was compare Him to some of these great identities of the past. The Jews, on a mass level, never truly accepted His genuine identity. Jesus came proclaiming Himself to be the Messiah for which they had long awaited. Even to this day, though, they did and do reject that fact. One of the less familiar cases of mistake identity, however, is one that is rather surprising.

John records that the Sunday following the crucifixion of Jesus that:

"Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away" (John 20:11-15).

How could Mary, who had spent such a considerable amount of time with the Lord not have recognized Him? She was aware of His promise to come out of the grave. She knew of the power He had already displayed over death and the grave (John 11). It was not a case of lacking faith. It likely was just a case of shock and awe. However, for Jesus to have been a victim of mistaken identity by one who otherwise knew Him so well invokes some surprise and even a little humor.

However, it was not to be so for long. All it took for Jesus was one word to open Mary's eyes to the identity of this "strange man" in whose presence she now stood. In response to her pleas, Jesus simply said, "Mary;" and immediately she recognized who this was and respectfully and reverently replied "Master." Is it not an amazing thing when the eyes of a wandering and discouraged soul are opened and they are filled with life once more?

Three things stand out about Mary's case of mistaken identity:

1. **Mary had gone looking for her Lord.** It had been three days since she had last seen Him. Her life had been fuller when He was present. And even though she thought He was dead, she knew her life would again be made full by being able to serve Him in this capacity (preparing His body for interment). Many are unconcerned about the presence of Jesus in their lives, but the truly committed cannot go long without Him.
2. **Mary accepted the evidence.** Yes, she originally mistook Him. But upon His revelation she immediately submitted herself. The evidence abounds just as much today as it ever has. Yet so many not only fail to, but refuse to accept the clear and present truth. How foolish would Mary have been to doubt the evidence Jesus provided? How foolish are we to do the same?
3. **Mary went and told others.** The news was just too good to keep to herself. This was not information of little consequence. This was life altering news! This event had been 4,000 years in the making, and she was the first to have seen Him. Mary did not just go home and think about this to herself. She immediately ran to the other disciples and let them know what had happened. Jesus had come out of the grave! How could she keep it to herself? And yet many times don't we?

Yes, it might have begun as a case of mistaken identity, but it ended as being the most glorious news the lips of man could ever utter. The true identity of Jesus is still mistaken in the minds and lives of so many, but one day it will be revealed and known to all (2 Timothy 4:1). Please do not let your soul be lost, but especially do not let it be lost because of a case of mistaken identity!