



## **Gospel Advance-Part 8**

### **Courage to Be Identified with Christ**

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We've studied the Book of Acts. I'm sure at times you've thought about what it must have been to be there and to be a part of the Church as it was growing from a small group of 120 to 3,000, 5,000, I mean, 10,000 if you count families. It must have been something to have been a Christian in either Antioch or Jerusalem there in the early days of the Church. But it was a much different reality in the third century in Rome, when Diocletian, the emperor, was bloodthirsty and on a rampage against Christians. That was a whole different kind of experience. If you think back recently in the 20th century, living somewhere in the Bible Belt, it was one thing to live the Christian life out there when the culture was very affirming, but it's another to live here in Southern California in the 21st century when culture is ramping up its rampage against what we are and what we believe.

There are always going to be times like that in Christian history where you're going to have difficulties, where Christians necessarily need to work harder at counting the cost of following Christ and being resolved to count that cost and to say we're going to pay it, whatever it is. Because if we are not willing to do that, if we are afraid, if we are gripped by timidity or cowardice, then we're going to go underground, we're going to retreat, we're going to be quiet. We're going to sit down and we're going to shut up when God has asked us to stand up and speak up. And that is going to make us altogether inadequate and it will make us practically useless to accomplishing all that Christ has set us in our generation to do, to advance the gospel, to advance the cause of Christ in our generation.

We can't let that happen. Thankfully, God has given us many good examples and there are plenty of them, and we think about them, the three Hebrew slaves in the book of Daniel, Daniel himself in the lion's den, even Peter before the Sanhedrin. But many people miss a very powerful character here who is an example to us. It's an emboldening kind of example here in Acts Chapter 8, as we reach the end of our series, the Ethiopian eunuch. We don't even know his name. But if you really think about what it took for him to do what we're about to read that he did, this was huge. I mean, he was the kind of person with everything to lose, rich and powerful in the nation of Ethiopia. And he had everything in that position given to him in terms of privilege and power. And he risked all of that to stop everything to say, "No, I'm going to stand with Christ."

In contrast to the not quite as rich young ruler who Jesus encountered, who, when he counted the cost, wasn't willing to follow. Here was this Ethiopian eunuch who was willing to follow if no one else was going to stand with him. And frankly, by the end of our narrative here, in the last verses of Acts Chapter 8, he is by himself and there is no one else. God takes Philip away. We have an incredible reminder that would be helpful for Romans in the third century or Americans in the 21st century to help us get through our week and the rest of our Christian life as things get very difficult for us.



So I want you to look at this text with me in Acts Chapter 8. We're going to look at the end of this chapter we've been working through. We reached verse 36. I want to show you the enthusiasm as you remember the context as Philip has been called into the chariot to explain the messianic overtones of Isaiah 53. And after it says there in verse 35, "Philip had opened his mouth, beginning with this Scripture," Isaiah 53, that he was reading, "he told him the good news," the gospel, "about Jesus." Verse 36, "As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?'" Verse 38, "And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing."

"Philip found himself at Azotus," which is the Old Testament city of Ashdod. It's about 20 miles north from where they apparently were, about a half day's walk, if you're hoofing it. "And he passed through and he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea." So he's moving up the Mediterranean coast to Caesarea, where we find him several chapters later. Apparently, he takes up residence there. It's about 50 - 55 miles further north than Ashdod or what was now called the New Testament times, Azotus.

I want to use this example that I do think takes probably more courage than we would imagine to say, "Stop the chariots. I've come to the realization that Jesus is the Christ. I recognize my need to be cleansed and washed, as the Old Testament prophet said in Ezekiel, from my sin to be made clean. I need that. I'm going to repent and I'm going to follow the truth of the gospel of Christ." And he was willing to do that in front of all of his colleagues, in front of all of his servants, in front of all of those who were his bodyguards, all those who were guarding the treasure of the caravan and say, "I'm going to go down into this water here with Philip and I'm going to be... I'm going to come out soaking wet, I'm going to take off my royal robes and I'm going to stand with Christ. Philip's going to be gone. I'm going to continue on into northeastern Africa." And as the historians tell us, he had an impact there sharing the gospel among his national colleagues. He made a difference for the missionary advance of the gospel in the continent.

It's important for us, I just put it down this way if you're taking notes, number one, for us to be "Quick to Identify with Christ." Because how quick can that be? He gets to the place of getting the good news, apparently responding well to the good news and he says, "I'm ready. I'm going to stop, get everybody to watch me. I'm going to go down and do what Christ said. I've been made a disciple, and disciples are to be baptized in water," and he identifies with Christ. Now, baptism in water is one specific expression of identifying with Christ. But I just want to think just generally about the idea of being identified with Christ. I think some of us have been afraid, much like those in John Chapter 12, who believed what Christ said, but I don't really know that I want to be identified with Christ.

Matter of fact, let me read this to you. At the end of John Chapter 12, Jesus said, there are a lot of people there that are believing the words, he'd just gotten done teaching, but they were afraid, John writes, to confess it. They were afraid to profess it. They were afraid to tell people



because they were afraid they would be put out of the synagogue. Now, here is the divine commentary on that in John 12:43. He said it's because "They love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God." Wow, that's a painful diagnosis of the problem. That I'd much rather have the glory or the applause or the adulation or the approval of the world, of people in this world, than I would of God. That's not a good diagnosis.

That's a bad thing, particularly when you recognize who you're comparing your concern with. You've got people, that's, I don't know, seemingly important, it could affect my job, it could affect my relationships, it could affect my day, my week, my year, it could affect the rest of my life. Or God's approval. The reason that a lot of us are timid and frankly, to use a biblical category, to be cowards before our generation is because we care very much about what they think. Jesus says, well, that's a natural thing. You should care what people think, but you ought to care a lot more about what God thinks. I know a lot of you think I want to hear at the end of my life, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I'd like that to be God's commentary on me.

Well, I'd like that, too, but I know that's not going to happen if I care more about what people think of me. And frankly, we've just got to get down to the place where we say, why does it matter so much to us? Why does it frankly matter more to us what people think than what God thinks? And I suppose because if your relationship with God is one that puts everything out there in some ethereal, distant, you know, faraway place to where God and the reality of his coming kingdom is no big deal to you, at least it's no real deal to you, then, of course, you're going to default by saying if this doesn't advance my adulation, applause and acceptance and approval in the world then I'm not going to do it. Even though I know somewhere in the distance in some foggy imagination of mine, I have a sense of being approved by God and I'd like that when I go to church on the weekend, I think about it, but I don't know. It's not a big deal.

It should be a big deal because here's what Jesus taught about himself. One day the Son of Man is going to sit on his glorious throne. He's going to gather the people before him and he's going to separate the nations and the peoples the way that a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He's going to say to those here on his right that he calls sheep, "enter into the kingdom," right? The kingdom of my Father, "prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Here it is. All the blessings, all the good. Here, you get to go in. And he'll say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you accursed ones into the eternal fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels."

That's a hard truth but I didn't say it and I didn't come up with it. Jesus said it and he said, you ought to think about who really has the power here, whose glory do you care about, whose applaud and approval do you care about? Because when it comes down to it, the world has no real power. I know they think they do, but for you to please your cultural trendsetters or the politicians or the people in culture who have some kind of sway over the things you tweet online really doesn't matter, because one day every leader, every cultural elite is going to have their forehead to the ground, bowing before Christ and confessing with their mouth that Jesus is Lord. At that point, it'll be too late for them to enter into the kingdom, but everyone's



going to confess it. "Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess, all of them in heaven, on earth and under the earth."

The picture of those who are saved and those who are not saved, it won't matter. Every demon will confess it and everyone will confess it, Satan himself will confess it. And he has the power to separate us into two groups and he's got the power for us to enter into the kingdom without any reference to our sin, with complete forgiveness. I'd like to be on the side of that person because he has all the authority, all dominion, all power, and he'll have all riches, honor, talk about glory, he's got all the glory. I care much more, I should at least, about the one who has that kind of power than the ones who only have temporal power in my life, and so often we're so fearful about what people think.

I say it all the time. But if you want to be on the right side of history, you got to think past the next 10, 20 years. You got to start thinking about 2,000 years from now. If you want to be on the right side of history, you'd better bow the knee to Christ and you ought to say unashamedly, I'm standing with him. And speaking of that, let me create a little axiom that's created in other areas of the Christian life when it comes to being ashamed or not ashamed. We'll read First John for instance, where it says that "we love because he first loved us," and that's a good thing. It's a motivating thing to think Christ loved me. I need to love him and his children. That's a good thing. It's a motivating thing.

Let me recommend to you, here's an axiom for you, that you ought to not be ashamed of Christ in this world because he was not ashamed of you. That's a biblical principle. Hebrews Chapter 2 says "he was not ashamed to call you his brothers." And that's why the Son of Man put on human form and dwelt among us because he was going to be identified with you and he was not ashamed of that. Before we get out of the book of Hebrews by Chapter 11, the Father now is depicted as one who says he's not ashamed to be called these people's God. "I'm your God and I'm not ashamed of that. I'll be called your God." I have the Father and the Son in the book of Hebrews clearly saying, I'm not ashamed of you. And I would say this: if he wasn't ashamed of us, we should not be ashamed of him.

Well, ashamed, ashamed, it sounds like you're quoting Scripture here. Well, I am, but the verse that you think I'm quoting, I don't want to quote because it's not a fun verse to quote. And that is between the two bookends of thinking about a Christ who came who was not ashamed and a God who's not ashamed of the people he redeems and sets his love on, it is something for me to live my life without shame. But I know this: he said to me very clearly, "Listen, if you are ashamed of me in this sinful and perverse generation, well, then the Son of Man is going to be ashamed of you." No guarantee of the fact that he won't be unless I am willing to in this generation say it doesn't matter. The damned generation that I live in, the damned generation that I am a part of, the damned culture that I'm a part of. Right? If I'm willing to say I'm not going to be ashamed of Christ in this generation and his word and his truth, well, then he's not going to be ashamed of me.

But I want to say it's important for us to see that there's no room, no place for cowardice, timidity in the Christian life, and even pastors can fall under that conviction, as Paul says to



Timothy, a pastor in Ephesus, a big city, a cosmopolitan place, "Listen, God didn't give us a spirit of timidity. It was a spirit of power, discipline, love, a sound mind." We ought to have that discipline to be able to stand up and say, "I'm going to be resolved no matter how tough it gets to stand with Christ." I'm going to be quick to do that. In a month where everyone's talking about how prideful they are and how proud they are of their sexual preferences, think about it. They want to lead with stuff like that. Think about it. We as Christians, of all people, should be proud of the God who made us and the Christ who redeemed us and be able to say, "Hey, we're the people who have something to be proud of."

We ought to be much more proud of the fact that we stand with the crucified Christ. I'm not talking about the Christ of your imagination or the Christ of liberal denominations that neglect the picture, the clear picture of Christ in the pages of Scripture. I'm talking about being proud of the Christ who exists, being proud of the God who is. That means that you and I got to eschew this kind of timidity, this cowardice. There's no place for that among Christians. It was a lot easier when you lived in the Bible Belt in the 20th century. It wasn't so bad when you were among this big converted crowd of thousands of people in the first megachurch in Jerusalem or this big enclave and subculture in Antioch in the first century. But what about the third century? What about so many successive generations where people were persecuted for their faith? Well, we're ramping into that, as we often remind ourselves, as though we need to, that make it hard for you to identify with Christ. But I'm telling you, you cannot in the face of the pressure back down.

Just think of how much this man had to lose to go back to Candace, the queen of Ethiopia, and say, "Hey, I'm a follower of Christ now. All the pagan religions of North Eastern Africa, I reject those. I've been reading Scripture. I've been going to Jerusalem and reading about the Jewish messiah. I'm now a follower of the Jewish messiah." That is an amazing claim for him to make and it was going to cost him. We can only guess and there's some speculation about what happened to this man. But he's my hero and he should be yours. "If no one else is going to stand with me, I'm going to be there. I'm going to stand with Christ. I'm not going to wait to see how many people in my entourage are going to follow this Christianity thing. I'm going to follow Christ." That's a good thing, an important thing.

Back to our text. Look at verse 37. Take a look at verse 37. Zero your eyes in on verse 37. Look hard at verse 37. Verse 37. If your Bibles aren't open and you wonder why people are giggling, you should open your Bibles and look at verse 37. It's not that it's a funny verse. It's just the people are having a hard time finding it. It'll be quick to identify with Christ that I'm going to say this and then try to explain it to you. Number two if you're taking notes. I have a little exclamation point next to verse 37 if you have the printed worksheet here or the digital worksheet. Can you write this down? "Be Thankful for Honest Bible Translations." Be thankful for honest Bible translations. You say, "Well, it doesn't seem like I have an honest Bible translation because I know what number comes after 36 and it ain't 38. There's a 37 in there somewhere and it's missing." OK.

If this doesn't worry anyone, I wouldn't talk about it. But it worries some people. So let's talk about it. I'm going to say a few things, number one. Though I use the word Bible translation





because we're all sitting here with a book we call a Bible translation, and that's the way we talk about it in the parlance of English and our idioms. Bible translation. Can I say this about why verse 37 is not in your Bible? It is not a translation issue, this is not a translation issue. This is not a translation issue. Let me try and say this clearly. This is not a translation issue. Translation, you know what translation is, when I take one language and I turn it into another language. That's translation.

People talk about, dumb people talk about, ignorant people about, "Well, the Bible's been translated so many times." Well, it's been translated a lot of times, but a good translation comes from the original languages of the Bible. The Old Testament Jewish text is in Hebrew and parts of it in Aramaic, and then the New Testament written in Koine or common Greek of the first century. So we have Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Those are the languages of the Bible and when you translate it into Spanish, how many times has that been translated? Once. When you translate into English, how many times has that been translated? Once. When you translate it into Latin, how many times has it been translated? Once. All your Bibles are translated once. Right?

There are rare exceptions, but no one takes those seriously. We slide it aside and finally find one that is translated once. We translate it one time and translation issues, maybe, you know, an issue of whether you call something "to dunk" or "submerge" versus "Bapitzo" in transliterating. That's a translation issue. This is not a translation issue. This is what we call a transmission issue. It has nothing to do with your car. But a transmission. How did this text transmit its way in the original language of the Greek New Testament to where then we translate it? Because someone's got to translate Acts Chapter 8 and so I'm looking at how do I get from what I have in front of me in the Greek New Testament and translate it one time into English? Well, how did I have this text that either has verse 37 or it doesn't? That's a transmission issue.

Example. Do you have any pictures of your grandparents? Do you have any pictures of your grandparents? Do you have any pictures of your grandparents? Yes, some of you have pictures of your grandparents. On the patio when we're having donuts could you show me a picture of grandparents? Probably some of you could. You pull out your phone. "Here's a picture of my grandma or grandpa." If I said, well, is that really a picture of your grandparents? I mean, when the photons of the sun bounced off your grandparent's face and went into that lens and stamped itself on that negative. Right? And then it was taken to the five and dime and it was then processed and then it was now in the development, it was put on to some kind of photographic paper and then that photographic paper we had that and grandma carried it around and then it went to your mom and then it went in her shoebox in the attic and then you got it.

And then it was like you were the first in the family to get a scanner. So you get stuck scanning all the pictures. And so in the 80s or 90s, you scanned it and then it went into some now-defunct, I don't know, service like Flickr or something. You thought, well, now I'm into Google. So then it went from the Flickr cloud servers into the Google cloud servers and then it went down into your phone. Matter of fact, it's not even in your phone yet. You have to



download it from the cloud and then it's on your phone. And then those little digital things you shove in my face and you say, "Here's a picture of my grandparents." I go, "That ain't a picture of your grandparents."

It's a reproduction of the picture of your grandparent because the picture of your grandparents really goes all the way back to that negative. Do you have the negatives? Do you have the negatives?" You say, "No, I don't have the negatives." "Where are the negatives?" "Well, I don't know. I don't know. My mom probably got rid of them when she put them in the... I don't know where the negatives are, I don't have negatives anymore." But this was taken originally on some film. Right? And so it was a negative inside of a camera. You don't have that. "Well, I don't know if I can trust that." "No, no, no, you can trust it."

"Well, yeah, but in the process, did it lose anything?" "Well, sure, there was compression in the software and put in the cloud, but more than that, actually, when I went through the scanning process, I did a lot of things like I was eating Cheetos while I was watching TV and scanning on my flatbed scanner. And so a couple of times I got fingerprints on it, actually covered part of my granny's skirt. And so, you know, I do have parts of it. And my hair came across and I didn't clean the thing very often. So, yeah, the transmission of that from the photons impressed upon that negative that got all the way through all that process to my phone, yeah, you'll see some parts where maybe even the photograph that I scanned, it was cracked and there's a little piece missing or torn off. So yeah, what I have on my phone is a picture of my grandparents, but it's a transmitted picture of my grandparents. And through the process, I know I lost a little something, but there it is. It's a good, clear picture. It's just, I mean, it's not perfect, but it's a good picture of them."

That's transmission. And the question is now, what's going on here? It looks like there's something on this photo that shouldn't be there or something on the photo that got taken off. What's going on? If it's a transmission problem, an issue, then it's not really an issue about the mechanics or software or coding, it's about the people who did it and the people who did it are human beings and they're called copyists. Or if they were really professional at it, they were called scribes and they had to copy these things by hand because Kinko's was just getting going back then. So they had no way to do it but by hand. So that's the issue. What happened with the copyists? What happened with the scribes?

Example. I leave church, get in my car, get hit by a bus. I'm not dead, mostly dead, not fully dead, a lot of things inside are dying, my head still good, my right arm's still good. I get put in the hospital and they tell me you only got a day to live. You're going to be dead by the end of the day. So I say, "Well, you know, I don't have any grandkids yet, so it would be a good thing for me... I'm going to write a little note to all my grandkids." So I take out a yellow steno pad and take out my pen and I write by hand, the other arm's all messed up, my insides are dying, but my brain's working and I write out a full page to my grandkids. OK? I write, I don't know, a full page. It's like, I don't know, 39 sentences of stuff. And I tear it off and give it to my wife and say go take it to the waiting room where my kids are, I got three kids, so take it into my waiting room there and let them have it and let them get it one day to my grandkids.



She goes down there, none of my kids showed up except for one, my oldest is there. The others are too busy. My oldest, Matt, is there and he goes, "Oh, man, a letter from dad. I need to make a copy of this for my brother and my sister." So he starts to make a copy of the letter that I made. He says I'm going to keep one and there's no copy machine around. So I'm just going to sit here. I got hours to kill anyway. Dad's in the other room dying, so I'm going to write down what Dad wrote. So he makes a copy by hand. He gets down in this thing almost to the end, I don't know, like 36 sentences in and he says, "You know what Dad is saying here in this part of it and what he says next, I mean, there's a logical step here in between, and I know what he means and so I'm just going to put a little note in the margin here as to what Dad is saying to his grandkids." And so he puts a little note in the margin. And then he finishes up the copy.

He takes the copy and says, "Hey, Mom, can you run this to my brother? He's out on the golf course" So my wife goes and finds my middle kid and John is out on the golf course and he gets this and he goes, "Oh, man, it's the copy that Matthew made." And he goes, "Man, this seems important. So when I'm done playing golf, I'm going to check it out." So he gets into the clubhouse, he sits down, gets his iced tea, and he looks at this and he goes, "Man, I need to make a copy of this for my sister."

So he starts to make a copy and he makes this copy and he gets to this statement that's in the margin by his brother and he goes, "Man, that's an important thing. It does help clarify what Dad is saying here." So he takes that as he's copying and he adds what's in the margin and he puts it in the middle of this page that he's writing out by hand. And so now I don't have any longer I don't have 39 sentences now I have 40 sentences because he added a sentence between the 36 sentence and the 37 sentence, and now he says, "Ah, there it is, I'm going to take this to my sister." So he goes and brings it to the house where his sister is and Stephanie's there and she gets it and she goes, "Oh, let's check this out."

So she starts reading it. She goes, "I'm going to make a copy for his grandkids. I don't have any kids yet, but I'm going to do that and get ready." And as she's going through it, she gets to that 37th sentence and she goes, "That didn't sound like dad." And so she says, "I'm going to text my brothers and say, 'Hey, can you send me a picture of the copies that you made of this? Can you do that?'" And so they do. So when she gets Matthew's picture to her phone, she sees that that sentence that she didn't think quite matched the vocabulary of Dad, she sees that it was in the margin of Matthew's first copy. And she goes, "Oh, see there, it's not even in his handwriting, it didn't even belong there."

Here's the problem. Her brother in the clubhouse is such a careful guy, he's thinking this letter is so important and I know my kids are going to want to recite it and they're going to want to memorize it and meditate on it. I'm going to give all of these sentences numbers, and he numbers them. And because he's incorporated that statement in the margin of his brother, he's now got 40 numbers, one through 40 sentences that are to the grandkids. Stephanie's got that. But the copy she's got is all numbered, she's verified now, "That is not Dad's writing. That's Matthew's clarification." So she goes and scratches a line through the 37th sentence and then takes it and hands it to her eventual children and they go "Conspiracy!" Right? "My





mom, Stephanie, is trying to truncate the message from grandpa." And Stephanie goes, "No, I wasn't. Matter of fact, I was trying to get you an accurate picture of what Grandpa said."

OK. There's my dumb illustration. Let's identify the players. OK? Let's identify Matthew. Who is Matthew in this illustration? Matthew is someone way out, picture Israel here, Africa down here. We've got modern-day Turkey and then way over here we got Italy. Matthew is someone over here in Italy, out in the west, who says it'd be really good to have a clarification, because if you read this text, it kind of needs a clarification or at least it begs for clarification or you can see why a clarification would be helpful. Let's look at the text again, verse 36. Verse 36 of Acts Chapter 8, "As they were going along the road they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?'" Verse 38, "And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he was baptized."

What's missing here friends? What happened? Did he get it? Did he repent? Right? Of course he repented. Philip, he knows this. He's done this. He's been an evangelist from the beginning of the chapter. He sat in Peter's preaching. He's listened to Peter preach. He knows what the gospel is. He knows what Jesus taught about you got to repent. You got to repent and put your trust in Christ. So that happened. Now someone is looking at this text, they're going to go, "Well, it would be helpful just to have that piece there."

As a matter of fact, every time I preach to you, I start by looking at the text, reading the text over and over, looking at the original languages and I take that text and one thing I try to do in my study early on is I just write a one-sentence summary of everything that's in it, just an encapsulated summary. And you know what I wanted really bad, because really, when I look at this historically, I'm saying, well, here's a passage about what? Here's a passage about the eunuch wanting to be baptized and Philip baptizes him and then he goes on and does more evangelism. And what I really want to say is, "Hey, the big deal is he got saved." I want that. I want to show that.

So someone out west in about three Greek manuscripts from the 6th century forward, they put that clarification in. It was reflected in all the translations and revisions of the Vulgate. The Vulgate is the Latin translation of the Bible, both in Old Testament and New Testament. In a late edition of Jerome, who was the man who translated it, was known for doing this back in the 4th century, there was an addition of this as best we can tell. There was an addition of this. Why? Because we don't have it anywhere else. We've got a few scant references.

Irenaeus was a second-century church leader, pastor, and he wrote a book called, a letter called "Against Heresies." And in that statement, he recalls the Ethiopian eunuch getting saved. And just like I said, there's no mention of him being saved. Well, he states the scene and talks about him being saved and calling on Jesus as the Son of God. Perhaps Irenaeus and Cyprian followed and the biographer of Cyprian, right after Cyprian in the next century, he also discusses that and this word of him calling out on Christ and believing with all of his heart is there. And perhaps from the second or third century, this ends up in the west with a clarification way out here in Italy, in the west. And so we have just a few manuscripts and the



Latin Vulgate revision edition of that, late edition, we have that statement. So who's Matthew? I don't know, some dudes out in the western world who put this clarification and perhaps influenced by Irenaeus' depiction and Cyprian's depiction of what happened. Which, of course, it's begging for that.

Who was John? Well, two people are John. John is, first of all, Erasmus. Erasmus and Stephanus, let's talk about Erasmus. Erasmus working in Cambridge in the 1500's, comes up with what we call a critical edition of the Greek New Testament, which is him taking some, I'd like to say all, but it wasn't all, it was a few basic New Testament Greek manuscripts that were found that, of course, there are plenty of them around, but he had a certain select group of them that he based a critical edition of the New Testament. Which means he was pulling these together and saying, let's reconstruct the original. Why? Because we don't have the negatives. I'm looking at all the scanned pictures and I'm putting together a picture of the Greek New Testament and I'll put some footnotes here.

So Erasmus does that work. It's decent work, but the decision that he made, even in a comment that he makes, I just think this is an oversight of the copyists. Right? He had no Greek texts that had this reading at that time. He didn't have those few western texts, but he had the Vulgate and he had the late edition of the Vulgate that had this reading in it. Later, by the way, he reflected on it after he published it and said, "I don't think I should have added that." Nevertheless, it was in the 1500's, the critical edition of the Greek New Testament that Erasmus did. So, John is Erasmus putting it in the main text and then Stephanus is John again because Stephanus is the guy in 1551 who put the verse numbers in. So the verse numbers were put in on the critical text of the Greek New Testament and other subsequent texts, it was the first numbering system that actually caught on, so they put 40 verses in Acts Chapter 8. So Stephanus and Erasmus are John saying, "I'm going to number these and put this from the margin into the middle of it." Right?

Well, who's Stephanie? Every basic scholar since... Are there people who will argue that? Sure. You find them on YouTube, the reliable source of truth in the world (audience laughs). But most people with degrees who sit around and do this work and I have plenty of source material, at least electronically, available to do the work myself and I come to the same conclusion everyone else has come to that Stephanie has come to, and that is if I compare all the available resources which are way more than Erasmus, way more than, I mean, we have a plethora of witnesses to the Greek New Testament and even the ancient translations, I'm going to say there were only 39 verses.

So I'm stuck now with a critical edition of the Greek New Testament that was based on the Vulgate and a marginal reading in Greek manuscripts that were way out west and that was then numbered by Stephanus and then we're stuck with Stephanie, which is every modern translation, putting a line through it and saying, "Well, wait a minute, that wasn't original." And why? Not only because the oldest manuscripts don't have it, but the majority of manuscripts don't have it. Which, by the way, if you want another level real quick, if you were exposed to the King James only people, which basically say, "We take a snapshot of what we got after a few revisions of the King James that started in 1611," but what they're carrying around is



several versions later, "I'm going to say everything has to be judged by that. And if it doesn't exist in the 1611 King James Bible, then I'm saying you're taking it out. And if you're taking it out, it must be demonic, You're filled with Satan. So you are taking verses out of the Bible."

And if you judge everything by that then you're right. But see, the King James and the Geneva Bible and Tyndall's version were all based on Erasmus's critical Greek New Testament. Therefore, everyone is looking at that King James Bible going, "Oh, they took it out." Now, if you have a new King James and you're here this morning or a King James Bible, "Well, it's in mine, ha, ha, ha." Well, it's in yours. I get that. The question is, did Luke write that? And I'm saying no. Irenaeus, Cyprian, I think, put this concept, these words into his mouth and then it became, it got picked up in a few manuscripts late over here in the Western Manuscript family.

There's a whole set of manuscripts in the Byzantine, this middle Greek-speaking area, and most people say, well, I believe in the King James because it has the majority of texts. Well, it does have the majority of texts because they were late, because it was the one region of the world that kept speaking Greek. But guess what verse does not exist in the Byzantine or majority text? Verse 37 doesn't exist. And that may be too much information. "It was too much information a long time ago, Pastor Mike." (audience laughs) OK, listen, if you are bored by this, then someone hasn't come into your office or into your world and said, you have a demonic Bible. I've had plenty of people tell me that. I've had them in my office, two on one, Bibles on the desk. One's the word of God. One's not. One's got verses, one doesn't. Yours is taking it out. 17 examples in modern translations that don't have verses.

All I'm telling you is that well most of them are confections from the Byzantine text family. I am saying here's an exception of one that is not even a confection. It's a marginal reading from late western texts. And I'm saying, if you don't have verse 37 in your Bible, you should thank God for honest translators because the translators are basing this translation work on the best available, most logical and supportable critical Greek New Testament. And every modern critical Greek New Testament is totally transparent about the problem. That's why I have all these footnotes at the bottom. It's called "apparatus." And trust me, it feels like apparatus, it's hard stuff to work through, but all of it is trying to help us figure out why verse 37 didn't exist. We don't even have verses in our Bibles until 1551. And that numbering system utilized Erasmus' decisions, Erasmus even regretted the decision about this particular text, so it goes, and there's why we should be thankful that there are honest scholars.

That's the hard explanation. Guess what a lot of people like? Simple explanations. Do you know what the simple explanation is? "King James Bible has it, yours doesn't. I'm right. You're wrong." OK. I can't argue with you then. Right? I'm sorry. Some things need complicated explanations because it's a complicated thing to get from the negative to the photo in your phone.

So, verse 38. Verse 38. (audience applause) I have no idea why you're applauding that, but, OK. Verse 38, "He commanded the chariot to stop," the Ethiopian, stop, "and they both went down into the water" "and they both went down in the..." "and they both went down into the



water," Presbyterians. "They both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized them." He didn't say, look, there's some water, and then it says Philip went over, got some water, came back to the chariot and sprinkled him. It doesn't say that. Now the text doesn't have to say that for me not to be a Presbyterian Paedobaptist. Here's the reason, because the word "Baptizo" means "to submerge, to dunk, to immerse." So we know that's what it means. And that was the practice. And so the practice is they go down into the water and it's a passive verb, "What prevents me from being baptized?" Verse 36. Well, someone has to do this to you. And of course, Philip does this to him. you can't baptize yourself unless you do a deep knee bend, but you're going backwards into the water. This is the picture of baptism. And they come back up and then off he goes, verse 39. More on that in a second.

But what we need to see is that this act of water baptism again, and you can see why verse 37 was a marginal reading that got incorporated, because I want to say it's after his response to the gospel, which is implied in this text, which, of course, it must be because Philip knows what he's doing. And so we know post-conversion, make disciples baptizing them in water. They go down in the water and they get submerged. All of us need to make sure we do that. That's a specific expression of identifying with Christ.

Number three, we need to "Obey God's Call for Water Baptism." Water baptism, by someone representing the church, in this case, Philip, publicly, stop the chariot's everyone is standing around watching, and it's by immersion. They go down into the water and then they baptizo, which is a transliterated word that means to submerge and it's after conversion. Why? Because Philip wouldn't do it any other way. He could if the verse for there. Well, somebody out in Italy decided to put the verse in there. But that is post-conversion by immersion publicly by a church leader. That needs to happen, those four things. Has it happened to you? You need to make sure if you are a Christian, you're professing Christ, you say, "I did repent. I responded to the good news." Great, then you need to, passive verb, you need to let someone baptize you. And that's not your buddy, your wife, your kids, your uncle. This needs to be in a church, doesn't have to be in a church setting, but it has to be by church leadership, by submersion, by going immersed within the water and post-conversion, "to make disciples baptizing them."

If you haven't done that, there's an easy fix. Go on your phone, [CompassChurch.org](http://CompassChurch.org), find the baptism link, sign up for the next one. The next one's coming up, it's already on the calendar. Say I want to be baptized. And the question that the Ethiopian asks, "so what prevents me from being baptized?" Right? That's what the church leaders do. We say, well, let's figure out if there is anything that prevents you from being baptized, and that's why, you may feel like you're being interrogated, but we need to find out if there is anything. Is your testimony a legitimate biblical Christian testimony? Do you understand what baptism is? So we have a meeting with a pastor and we have a book to read about what baptism is and what it isn't. Those two things. "Well, I want to do it right now on the patio." Well, we want to answer the questions, since Philip is doing the baptism, since church leaders are doing the baptism, then we want to make sure we answer that question in our own conscience as church leaders.



Hey, nothing prevents you from being baptized. Philip got through those hurdles in his mind. We want to get through those hurdles in our minds. "Oh, but it's scary." And I'm saying don't be ashamed of Christ. So it's scary. If you pass out, we'll catch you. Right? It's fine. It will be dramatic. No one will forget it. If you meltdown on the platform, you'd be famous, right? The point, though, is that you do it. So I need you to sign up to be baptized if you've never been baptized. Some say, "Well, I didn't like the last church. I want to get baptized here again." No, no, no, no, no. One time after conversion, public setting, post-conversion by immersion, by church leadership. That's taking place. "My church didn't like it. The guy who baptized me is an apostate." Doesn't matter. Doesn't matter. You did it. That's what matters. We want you to do it. If you haven't done it... "Well, I got baptized before I was a Christian." Well, that's not post-conversion is it? "I got sprinkled." Well, that's not emersion is it? So we need to make sure that's taken care of in your life. And when you lead someone to Christ, we need to say, "Hey, do this."

So much more that we have said on that. Go to the back of the worksheet, so many good resources there, sermons in the past that we've preached on about these things. It's not a salvific thing. "Well, if it's not salvific, if it doesn't save me then what? It's not important." A lot of things that don't save you that are very important because Christ commanded them. So we need to do it.

Verse 39. "When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more." What in the world happened here? "And he went on his way rejoicing." Who did? The eunuch kept going down south. And as Irenaeus, says, "Went preaching the gospel down in Africa." But Philip found himself at Azotus, and he passed through," 22 miles north, "and preach the gospel to all the towns," all the way up the Mediterranean coast, "until he got to Caesarea." And that's where we find him later in the book.

We'll get to this whole "carried away" in a second, but let's just get to the theme here and the theme is, and again, we have to rely on tradition of church history about the fact that makes perfect sense, that the church in Africa grew because of the Ethiopian eunuch as a standalone missionary there and starting the movement of Christ in the continent, at least down that far south in the continent. But Philip then clearly, and the text goes on, sharing the good news, proclaiming the good news. He wants to see more people standing out of the crowd and identifying with Christ.

Number four, we've got to "Work to See More Identified with Christ." That's the goal. That should be your passion. That should be your concern. It might have been easier in the first century in Antioch. It might have been easier in the 20th century in Georgia, but it's the 21st century in Southern California and we have got to have that same passion. Let me take you to one last passage. Let's close with this. Matthew Chapter 9, and for this I'll tie together that "carried away" phrase, What in the world? Carried away. That's the Greek word "Harpazo" and if you're a theologian or armchair theologian, you know that word. Harpazo in Greek is the word that translates into Latin, which is transliterated into English "rapture." It's translated in our English Standard Version into the words "caught up" in First Thessalonians.





So the Church is promised to be caught up. And when you think about that, you think about it in bodily form, which, of course, is what happened to Jesus at the Ascension, it's what happened with Elijah. We see examples probably of Enoch getting caught off the planet, bodily. Well, that's a miracle of teleport. I mean, that's Star Trek stuff, right? And you're like, wow, is that what happened here? I don't know. It seems to be that's what's being said. It could be used metaphorically. But the next phrase that "the eunuch saw him no more" seems to make it seem like it was like BAM! And if it was, I'm not saying that it's not metaphorically the Spirit, as some commentators say, just compelled him, like he compelled him to go there and he physically got there literally and physically within the laws of nature. Perhaps he's physically going and compelled to leave and he's just done. Either way, It's a forceful word, harpazo. He was caught up. The Spirit took him somewhere else.

It reminds me of this text at the bottom of Matthew 9. Are you with me on Matthew 9? Matthew Chapter 9, look down to verse 35 which is reminiscent of what Philip was described going up the Mediterranean coast. "Jesus went throughout," this is Matthew 9:35, "went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom." Wow. Everywhere. Moving, moving, going, going, going, going, going, going. And of course, as the Messiah, he is validating his messianic claim, "healing every disease and every affliction." He's got his authentication, miraculous authentication. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion." He felt something for them. He felt moved in his gut, literally is what the word means. He's moved in his gut, in his organs, "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Now, I don't know, and I'm sure they did, if Christians in the Bible Belt in the 20th century thought that about their culture. But man, if you don't see our world is absolutely insane right now. "They are harassed and helpless." They're harassing each other. They're helpless. They are certainly "like sheep without a shepherd" bumping into the walls with ridiculous theories about reality, ridiculous things that they're emphasizing. It is absurd. It is corrosive. It is self-defeating. It is an absolute mess. The people around you are dying, philosophically, mentally and spiritually, of course, and physically. And he says because of that, verse 37, "He then says to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful.'" Man, there are people who need to be saved. They need to be under the jurisdiction of Christ. They need to be identified with the Lord.

Here's the problem, though, "The laborers are few." I mean, that's the reality. The means by which God ordains for the gospel to go through the villages of the Mediterranean coast are human beings and it's like there are not a lot of them. And we need more workers. And so here's this word, harpazo, like he's taken... is he teleported 20 miles away? He might be, I don't know, maybe. Did he have to then hoof it for half a day to get there? Maybe he did. Maybe he was compelled, he didn't even stop for lunch. He just went. I mean, that could be. The point is, it's aggressive, which is exactly what we see in the next verse. Therefore, you ought to aggressively pray, this is the word "Deomai," the Greek word for an intense begging of God, you want to aggressively pray. Pray to the Lord, "Pray earnestly to the Lord." The Lord of the harvest, the one who is in charge of every city, every person, every life that has



been designed by God. God is the king of life. He wants these people saved. And the means that he's appointed is laborers to send out laborers into his harvest.

Send out. You could translate that much stronger. Here's an aggressive verb right here: "Ekbollo." "Ek" is the Greek preposition "out," "bollo" "to throw, to thrust them out" into the harvest. I'm begging God, aggressive word for prayer, two aggressive words, to thrust them out. Here's something that if he did get teleported there, that would be a thing to watch. Right? And you often think about well the Ethiopian eunuch, like, "whoosh." That's one thing, but what if he's showing up in your town that way. I'm thinking more of the other end, "whoosh." Here's this guy, right? Was it that? I'm not sure. I don't know. I mean, 50/50 on this in terms of whether this is the compulsion and this is a metaphorical use of the word or whether it's literal. Nevertheless, it's a strong, aggressive term for time to move this chess piece over here.

And all I'm telling you that ought to be the way we are mobily ready to identify with Christ and to see and want the last point of the last sermon of this series on Gospel Advance is that you and I ought to be committed to advancing the gospel. Always be ready to identify with Christ. And then I just want to see more and more people identified with Christ. You should want an expanding church. We should pray for the ekbollo, the thrusting forth of workers into the harvest field. And if you pray that prayer, you can't help but be that person. You'll be the answer to your own prayer in that regard because God is going to push you out into this mission field. Which, of course, is what he does to the Ethiopian. It reminds you of Mark Chapter 5, in Mark Chapter 5 when the guy, the demoniac, was healed by Christ. He says, "I want to go with you." And Jesus goes, "No, no, no. Go to your home. Tell your friends and your family what the Lord has done for you." And here goes the Ethiopian down into Africa. You go tell the people there but I got to go up north to tell people up the coast.

This takes from a human perspective a resolve. This is what a lot of what the series has been about, we've got to be resolved. It's an old song I sang in Sunday school as a kid about resolve. You might remember it. In your Calvinism, you may be afraid to assert it, but trust me, this is a decent description of the resolve of the Christian life, and that is this: "I have decided to follow Jesus." Look up the history of this song, and I know there are some apocryphal stories that might have grown up around it, but we know this. It came from India and it came from India in the wake of the missionaries who were sent, the Welsh missionaries who went out from Europe to go to northern India. And they were going into some really difficult places. This was an Indian song, a gospel song, that came out of the experience apparently of these European missionaries who came there and they brought people to Christ, and said, "You got to follow Christ. You got to trust in Christ."

Well, the story goes that one of the chiefs of one of the villages came in and saw what was happening to his people. And he cornered this family of Indians who were committing themselves to Christ and under duress and under threat of death he tried to get them to renounce Christ. His words apparently were, "Hey, you cannot follow Christ anymore." And out of that came this song. Apparently, so the story goes, these people, this family was actually martyred in the process. But the song was sung by the Indians who were saved



through that work of the missionary efforts of those Welshmen was, "I've decided to follow Jesus." I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided... remember the song? To follow Jesus. Do you know the last line there of the first verse? "No turning back, no turning back."

I thought of the song because I thought about that poor Ethiopian eunuch going all alone, the only Christian in his caravan and the only Christian in his nation. And I thought about the next verse, "Tho' none go with me, still I will follow. Tho' none go with me, still I will follow. Tho' none go with me, still I will follow. No turning back. No turning back." That's going to mean in your life and in your heart, you're going to have to get down to the brass tacks, to the core of what this Christian life is all about. You've got to be thinking as the last verse says, "The world behind me," it doesn't matter. The glory of man, I'm not real interested in that. "The world behind me, the cross before me." Care about what God thinks. Care about the glory of God. "The world behind me, the cross before me. The world behind me, the cross before me. No turning back, no turning back."

Let's pray. God, help us to be that resolved as the story goes of the Indians in that village who were willing to say, "I am not going to stop following Christ. It's my resolve, I've decided." We understand the work of the Spirit is securing that and empowering that. But God, we know that the means, the instrumentality, is the thing that you do in our volition in saying we're committed to this and it starts with us just being open as the world leads with all kinds of crazy things as they meet people. We want to lead with this, we are followers of Jesus Christ, the Christ of the Bible, and for us there'll be no turning back. And if none follow, I'm going to go. We're going to still do it. The world to us doesn't matter. It's in the rearview mirror. What matters is the coming kingdom when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne and separate the peoples as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. God prepare us for that day by not being ashamed to confess the Son of Man in this perverse generation. Settle that, steel our courage and let us eschew this timidity that is so rampant among evangelicals today. Give us a heart with no cowardice, with determination to follow you no matter what.

In Jesus name. Amen.