

Start Your Engines

The Green Flag (The Starter's Flag)

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Lesson 1

Scripture: *Acts 8:26-40*

Memory Verse: *Luke 24:47 – “And that repentance and remission of sins should be prayed in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

Introduction: Many times in the Bible the Christian life is likened to a **race**. That race begins when a sinner trusts Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and ends when he enters into Heaven. While in this life, God gives definite instructions in the Bible in order for the Christian to run his race properly: I Corinthians 9:24 – “*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*” II Timothy 2:5 – “*And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.*” God tells the Christian further that the race must be run patiently: Hebrews 12:1 – “. . . *let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*” This race of the Christian life is not a sprint but instead is a marathon. In order to run the race set before him, each Christian must first **Start Your Engines**.

In auto racing, the waving of the GREEN FLAG signals the beginning of the race. After the Lord Jesus had died, been buried, and risen again, He commanded His local church at Jerusalem to go tell the entire world about Him “*beginning at Jerusalem.*” (Luke 24:47) It was as if the Lord Jesus was waving the green flag signaling the start of the Gospel message going around the world to all men everywhere. One of the first men to go out of the church at Jerusalem to carry the Gospel to others was a man named Philip whose name means “*a lover of horses.*” Philip had been serving the Lord at the church in Jerusalem as one of their seven deacons. (Acts 6:5-7) However, now God called Philip to go as a missionary to the province just north of Judea called “*Samaria.*” (Acts 8:5-25) Throughout Samaria wherever Philip preached about Jesus, people were being saved and their lives were being changed. It was at this time that an angel came to Philip, and told him to leave Samaria and go down southwest of Judea to the area around Gaza. (Acts 8:26) There was one man, an “*Ethiopian,*” in that area who needed to hear the Gospel from Philip. Notice the story of **Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch**.

I**PHILIP WENT TO "A MAN" WITH THE TRUTH**

v 26-28

- A. Philip is sent on a special mission to the town of "Gaza" v 26
GAZA (v 26) - "*stronghold*" - the capital city of the Philistines located southwest of Judea a few miles from the Mediterranean Sea - The ancient name for the town of Gaza was "Azzah." (Deuteronomy 2:23; Jeremiah 25:20) Philip never questioned the Lord's leading in his life, but instead simply left Jerusalem and headed towards Gaza. (Psalm 37:23)
- B. A man of Ethiopia is sitting in his chariot near Gaza reading a scroll of the book of Isaiah v 27-28
ETHIOPIA (v 27) - "*scorched face*" - the land just south of Egypt in northern Africa currently known as Sudan, "*the country of the blacks*" (Isaiah 18:8; 45:14) EUNUCH (v 27) - "*bed keeper*" - a castrated man who could produce no children - Many times slaves were made into eunuchs in order for them to be trusted around the female royalty in the palace of a king. (Daniel 1:3)
CANDACE (v 27) - the title for the queen of Ethiopia
This Ethiopian eunuch had become the treasurer for the queen of Ethiopia. Contact with the Jews had convinced the Gentile man that the Jews actually worshiped the true God. He had finally been allowed to visit the holy city of Jerusalem, but had left there bitterly disappointed. As a eunuch, he had not been allowed to have full admittance to the "*congregation of the Lord.*" (Deuteronomy 23:1) He had seen the Jews' hypocrisy, prejudices and squabbles, and had left Jerusalem disillusioned and disgusted. The only thing of value he had obtained on his trip was a scroll of the book of Isaiah the prophet. The traditional way of reading the scriptures in eastern countries was to read them aloud in a loud voice. This is what the Ethiopian eunuch was doing as Philip drew near, but the Ethiopian was having a hard time understanding the scriptures. (1 Corinthians 2:14) The Ethiopian eunuch was "*a man.*" (v 27)

II**PHILIP WAS "SOME MAN" WITH THE TRUTH**

v 29-34

- A. Philip ran up to the Ethiopian and asked him "*understandest thou what thou readest?*" v 29-31
The Ethiopian had no trouble understanding the manuscript, but he could not seem to understand the message. He had to have been very educated in order to be the treasurer of his nation, and no doubt, was quite wealthy in order to be able to afford to purchase a copy of the book of Isaiah. What the Ethiopian did not yet have is the Holy Spirit of God in his heart to "*guide him into all truth.*" (John 16:13) He readily admits that he needs "*some man*" to guide him. Philip is that "*some man.*" (v 31)

- B. The Ethiopian eunuch shows Philip the passage in Isaiah that he does not understand v 32-34
The Ethiopian was reading from Isaiah 53:7-8. He does not understand if the prophet is speaking these things "*of himself, or of some other man?*" (v 34)

NOTE: In Old Testament days, an Ethiopian eunuch helped God's man (Jeremiah 38:7-13) while in New Testament days, God's man helped the Ethiopian eunuch. (Acts 8:26-40)

III PHILIP PREACHED ABOUT "THE MAN" WHO IS TRUTH v 35-40

- A. Philip began at the same scripture that the Ethiopian had been reading and "*preached unto him Jesus*" v 35
Jesus is the Fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. (John 5:39) The Ethiopian had found in Jesus what he had not found in Jerusalem. At long last, his search for peace in his heart was over. (John 1:45-49; Romans 5:1) Jesus is "*the Man*" (v 35) Christ Jesus.
- B. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized AFTER he was saved v 36-38
For a person to be baptized, he must first believe "*with all thine heart*" (v 37) on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. (Acts 2:41; 16:30-33) The Ethiopian did not have to complete a five-week course or be confirmed before he could be baptized. He simply had to trust Christ as Saviour. Notice that this was water baptism which was done by full emersion in water. (Romans 6:4-5; Matthew 28:18-20)
- C. The Holy Spirit "*caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more*" v 39-40 AZOTUS (v 40) - "*fortress; castle*" (also called Ashdod - Joshua 11:22) Azotus (Ashdod) was a city of the Philistines located about 20 miles north of Gaza and a few miles from the Mediterranean Sea.
CAESAREA (v 40) - "*pertaining to Caesar*" This city was also called "*Caesarea Maritima*" which means "*Caesarea by the sea.*" It was located north of Azotus along the Mediterranean Sea about 47 miles west of Jerusalem. Caesarea was the headquarters for the Roman government's rule over Palestine. Here was stationed Cornelius, the Roman centurion whom Peter would soon lead to Christ. (Acts 10:1) Philip seems to have settled down at Caesarea for the next time he is mentioned in the Bible, he will be called "*Philip the evangelist*" and will still be living at Caesarea. (Acts 21:8-9) Philip had received the "*Green Flag*" to go carry the Gospel for the Lord and was running his race for Jesus.

EVERY man needs SOME man to tell him about THE Man – Jesus Christ!