**THE EXAMPLE OF PHILIP**

In the New Testament, God gave us stories about people to illustrate what He expects of us. Little biographies of folks like Aquila and Priscilla, Mary and Martha, and Stephen to name a few serve as examples for us. Let’s consider Philip and the things that were said of him. (see **Acts 6:3-6; 8:1-40; 21:8-10)**

We first read about Philip when a problem arose over the care of certain widows. The apostles told the church to select seven men to take care of these women. These men had a good reputation. What they were at “church” was what they were everywhere else. And they were full of wisdom. Where did they get this wisdom? Perhaps they had studied the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and had the good sense to have learned from experience. Obviously, Philip, along with the others, also had the heart of a servant. Serving tables was not beneath him. He is remembered later in Acts as being “one of the seven” which alone would have made a marvelous epitaph on his tombstone.

Philip was a man of perseverance. He continued to serve the Lord in the face of persecution and discouragement. After the funeral of Stephen (Was Philip a pallbearer, one of the devout men who carried him to his burial?), he left Jerusalem because of the work of Saul. But he, along with others, “went everywhere preaching the word.” The gospel was still good news to him and he wanted others to believe and obey Jesus who is our only hope of getting out of this world alive.

Evidently, Philip was not a man given to prejudice like many of his countryman. He was willing to preach Jesus to all men, including Samaritans and a government official from Ethiopia. We do well to have the same spirit.

When several in Samaria believed and were baptized, Peter and John came down to lay hands on them so that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Apparently, Philip was not able to do this. It suggests to me some humility on his part. He knew his limitations and did what he could. We do well to do what we can and not envy others who can do things we cannot.

Philip knew the Scriptures. When he taught the treasurer, he was able to help him understand a particular text in Isaiah which he knew was talking about Jesus. How did he know this? I don’t think we have to assume this was miraculous knowledge (a gift of the Spirit). He could have known this the same way we do, by studying the Old Testament and hearing them explained by Jesus and His inspired apostles and prophets.

The last we read about Philip, he owned a home in Caesarea while doing the work of an evangelist. Perhaps he raised his family there. May I say something about Mrs. Philip even though she is not mentioned? There is an old saying that beside every good man is a good woman. Perhaps it was her being a helpful mate that enabled her husband to be the man he was. Nevertheless, we can know that his four daughters were Christians (I don’t think God was in the habit of giving the gift of prophecy to unbelievers). What an example they had in their father. And what joy these girls must have been to Philip as they were morally pure and useful workers in the kingdom.

Philip was a man given to hospitality, willing to keep Paul and his companions for several days. Oh, what conversations they must have had! And think about the irony of Paul being in Philip’s home. Wasn’t this the man who consented to the death of Stephen, one of Philip’s co-workers back in the day? Wasn’t this the one whose persecution of Christians in Jerusalem had caused Philip and others to flee the city? Here they were, sitting down and eating together in the same house! During that time, Agabus came to warn Paul of what was going to happen to him in Jerusalem. Philip, along with the others, pleaded with him in tears not to go. Can we not see a remarkable forgiving spirit in the heart of Philip? (Instead of thinking that Paul was finally going to get what was coming to him.)

Are we servants of the church? Do we endure hardships? Are we good bible students filled with the message of the Spirit? Are we raising our children to be useful workers? Do we use our homes to encourage others along the way? Philip was no different than the rest of us in that he had to make choices about what he was going to do with his life. By the grace of God, he became a disciple whose example we would do well to follow.

Lee Wildman

leewild@juno.com

1029 Timber Ridge Court

Kingston Springs, TN 37082