

Mark 3:13 And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. **14** Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, **15** and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: **16** Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; **17** James the *son* of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"; **18** Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the *son* of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; **19** and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house. (NKJV)

In our study of the disciples we have gotten as far as Philip and Bartholomew, also called Nathaniel. We will look at their lives this morning. I am not going to try to be systematic about this study. I think that would even be more confusing. We will learn about Philip and Bartholomew together as we go.

Now we start after John, Andrew and Peter came to Christ from following John the Baptist.

John 1:43 The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." **44** Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Now this is interesting. Consider that you were Christ. You had all the power of God behind you. You could call anyone you wanted. And you would know everything about everyone. Who would you pick for the task of taking up your mantle and representing your mission?

Well Jesus went out of his way here and found Philip. The first thing to notice is that Philip was from Bethsaida. There is some good evidence that 7 of the apostles were fishermen and they all knew each other, many originating in Bethsaida. After Christ Resurrected Peter went fishing and, more than likely, Philip was one who went with him, although all of them weren't named. The point I am trying to make here, is that Jesus picked 7 out of his 12 guys from a podunk town who all were, more than likely, friends. These were not exceptional men. They were not singled out for any reason obvious to us. In fact, they look like men that could be found in any town. Our old Youth For Christ training taught us to look for people like this. They were evidently faithful, available and teachable. That is probably all they had going for them. And that was only true because Christ was working in their lives. With many of the other disciples we might think that Christ picked the ones that gravitated towards him. We see some made an effort to hunt Christ down. But with Philip, Christ hunted **him** down. Philip must have been a follower of John the Baptist as well, because he was located where John was located. So we see that Philip was spiritually interested, spiritually devoted.

Now look what happens next.

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Look what Philip says. We have **found Him**. But look what **Christ did**. Verse 43 says **Christ found Philip**. Well which is it? Did Philip find Christ or did Christ find Philip?

Let me ask you this. If you are a believer, did you find Christ, or did Christ find you? Your testimony might be that you were searching for something. You felt there was something missing. And then you heard the message of Christ and you found what you were looking for. Is that a lie? Of course not. That is how you experienced your conversion from inside your skin. But that is not the whole story.

Scripture tells us the rest of the story.

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (NKJV)

John 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (NKJV)

John 6:65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." (NKJV)

So, did you find Christ? Yes, there is a sense that you did. But only because He did a miracle in your soul that caused you to look for Him. He created in you a feeling of need for Him. That did not come from you. That could only come from Him.

If you have never trusted Christ as your savior, let me ask you this. Do you see yourself as a sinner? Do you see the evil that you have done in your life as being against God? Does it bother you and you desperately long to be clean, to be free of the guilt you feel? Do you long to have your sin forgiven and removed as far as the East is from the West? If you feel that need, you didn't put that feeling there. God did. And He may have done it to prepare you for this very moment. You see, what Christ did on the cross was for people like you and me. Ordinary people with sin in their hearts. He took **upon Himself** our sin and paid **the penalty** for our sin. That is what this is all about. It is not about trying to be a better person. It is not about turning over a new leaf and performing public service. No. Christianity is about sins being forgiven and the believer being given a new life in Christ. That is what is being offered to you by God this morning. If sin does not bother you, this call is likely not for you, at least not yet. But if you know that you are a sinner, Jesus Christ offers you forgiveness and an eternal relationship with Him and His family. If you don't understand how, talk to one of us who do know how. We will be glad to tell you.

Now, back to Philip. After Philip spoke with Christ, he had enough evidence to know that Christ was the Messiah.

**"We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote-
-Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."**

We can see from what Philip says that both Philip and Nathaniel or Bartholomew had studied scriptures. They knew what Moses wrote about the Messiah and they knew what the prophets said about the Messiah. Now Philip is revealing the identity of the Messiah. And he says it is Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. If we got the full narrative it may have started with Philip saying, "you're never going to believe who the Messiah is." This would have been a shock. The Messiah is coming from utter obscurity, a nowhere place from a no name family. In fact, we will see just how much of a no name place in the next sentence.

46 And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Now, think about the things Nathanael could have said here. He could have said, scripture doesn't mention Nazareth at all, so how could this be true? He could have said there must be more to the story than this. He must have come from somewhere else first. But that is not what he **does** say. So the first statement by Nathanael tells us something about him.

Nathanael was prejudiced. He ascribed **many characteristics** to a person who only had **one known** characteristic. That is what prejudice is. In Nathanael's mind,

1 Jesus was from Nazareth.

2 All people from Nazareth are worthless.

3 Therefore Jesus is worthless.

We all carry prejudices. And those prejudices are dangerous. Because they rob us of proper evaluations. They allow us to skip over proper discernment and thought and jump right to a conclusion that is not based on all the facts.

There is a lot of talk about prejudice in the media right now. I don't know all the facts about the current events, but I would say a good piece of advice whether we are black or white, green or purple is that if you try to take a police officer's weapon, your chance of living a long life has just been cut down dramatically.

God has given them the power of the sword as civil servants and we need a very good reason to trifle with that. Anyway,

You might say, I am not prejudiced. Well consider these statements and see if you agree with them.

Anyone who is liberal politically cannot be a serious intelligent faithful follower of Christ.

People who are depressed simply won't exhibit the willpower to get themselves out of it.

People who have homosexual tendencies feel that way because they have chosen to feel that way.

These are ones I have had to deal with. I used to believe all those blanket statements but I don't any more. This is the kind of thing I am talking about. We can go on and on. We may have met someone for whom those statements are true, and then we lump everyone that shares that one characteristic into the same category. And when we do that we run the danger of missing the truth about how to best love and minister to that person. Prejudices are a great danger to truth. Because prejudices already assume they know the truth so there is nothing to learn. Nathanael was in great danger here.

Oddly enough, Bethsaida, where Nathanael was from, was even more of a one horse town than Nazareth. At least Nazareth was a crossroads for major travel. Trade roads crisscrossed at Nazareth. But Bethsaida is more like Cranesville. You mostly only go through it if you **live close** to it. So Nazareth might be like Friendsville. It kind of has a rough reputation. And Bethsaida would be more like Cranesville in that it is very "out of the way" and rural.

I think we have a very good application here. Never trust your prejudices. Trusting your prejudices will rob you from greater truth. Nathanael's prejudice could have cost him a relationship with Christ, if he had clung to it tightly. So Nathanael lays out his view of Nazareth and all of its citizens. "Nothing good there."

But look what Philip says. It is the perfect comeback to prejudice.

Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Come and see, Nathanael. Come and look at the evidence. You don't have to believe me that the world is different than how you perceive it. Come and check it out for yourself. Apply your reasoning to the facts. So Nathanael, probably trusting Philip enough to know he wouldn't make this claim lightly, decides to do what his friend suggests.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

Wow. What an endorsement. These are extremely rare coming from Christ. There was something rare about Nathanael that Christ is fully aware of. We know that Christ did not say this kind of thing at all about the Jewish leadership. He accused them of hypocrisy over and over again. They were not true Israelites at all. They were blind leaders of the blind. They were whitewashed tombs. So what is a true Israelite? What was Jesus saying about Nathanael?

Romans 9:6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are

the seed of Abraham; but, *"In Isaac your seed shall be called."* 8 That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are not* the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. (NKJV)

The children of promise are the true Israelites. The people who are called by Christ and respond to His call are the seed.

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; 29 but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is not* from men but from God. (NKJV)

We see here that a true Jew is a person that has a changed heart. He is truly driven by a changed heart, a true heart.

Jesus equated a true Israelite with one in whom there is no deceit. The word for deceit means to catch with bait. To lure or snare. So it means to trick someone with deceit.

But Nathanael was not such a man. He was true. He was what he was. And he would not gain an advantage by portraying himself to be one thing when he was really something else.

Oh how much trouble we get ourselves into when we refuse to follow Nathanael's example. We use so much energy when we posture and pretend in order to impress people or gain something from someone. And we can never relax. We can never have peace in those situations. We have territory we must defend. We get our defenses up to defend our lies. And all we end up doing is destroying relationships.

Nathanael did not have that problem. He had some prejudices. But he made no pretense of not having them. He was all there.

Now we move on

48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?"

Now think about people like Nathanael. While they work hard to be real and they spot falsehood in themselves rapidly, they are not likely to be tricked by flattery. They will test it. They will make sure the statements are legitimate statements and not ones crafted to gain an advantage. So Nathanael is asking, why do you think that is true? It may even be getting to the idea that says, "Prove that you know what you are talking about."

Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Now in this region, houses tended to be very small. Fires to cook on were burning all day outside the house. So houses tended to be small and smoky. People would plant trees around their houses to provide shade. Those shady places tended to be pleasant places to read and study and pray. And fig trees were a great tree to plant because they provided good food. They also only grew about 15 feet tall. And

they provided good shade. So it is likely that Jesus is referring to time that Nathanael was studying God's word and communing with God. Jesus is essentially referring to an instance where Nathanael was communing with God, a time that only he and God would know about.

49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Look how quickly Nathanael believes in Christ. Nathanael must have assumed that if only he and God knew about this incident, Jesus must be supernaturally tied in with God in a way that no one else was. So He believes, given very little evidence.

50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." 51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (NKJV)

Jesus honors Nathanael's quick belief. And he lets him know that, just like this one supernatural act strengthened Nathanael's faith, he will have plenty more that will strengthen it even more.

So we have learned a few things about Philip and Nathanael.

They were friends. They were followers of God. They were students of the Bible. And they were looking for the Messiah.

We see that Nathanael was one of those rare people who cared greatly about truth in the inmost parts. And he was without duplicity. He was truly a changed person with a changed heart who loved God.

Now let's learn more about Philip.

John 6:5 Then Jesus lifted up *His* eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" 6 But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. 7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." (NKJV)

Look at the situation. Thousands of people are approaching. This definitely means more work for the disciples and they are probably not happy about it.

Now, they all know what Christ is like. So as soon as they start appearing, Philip probably starts figuring. Maybe he was in charge of logistics? We don't know.

But we can tell he was calculating. Odds are he started counting heads immediately. Being informed about the facts is really important to people like Philip. They don't want to be surprised by facts. They care about details. And sometimes they don't have much tolerance for those that don't.

So Philip has an idea of how many people there are. He knows how much items cost. And he indicates by his response that he probably knows how much money they have.

Philip is locked into a system of thought. There is one way to get this done. And there is only one way. It is the conventional way. It is the way we control. The way we have always done things. He looks like the kind of guy that panics easily because he knows perfectly well what is possible and what is not. He has done the math. This cannot be done. Period. There is no way to feed these people.

Before we get too hard on Philip, we better look under our own hoods. How many times has this happened to us? How many times have we looked at a problem in our lives, or a request made of us, and we have started our reply with- "I can't". I can't do that. Or this thing can't be done. And sometimes we even know it is God's will, but because we can't see a way to get it done, we lead the conversation with No- it can't be done. We can't do that. Or I won't try to do that.

And don't we have reasons every bit as good as Philip? After all, we can count can't we?

When Carla and I were first married we would do an annual budget together. I am not going to lie. At first it was not a pleasant conversation. And the biggest problem wasn't that I was being stubborn or Carla was being stubborn. The problem was the math. Our predictable expenses, and that isn't even accounting for unforeseen emergencies, our predictable expenses outstripped our income. And there was no way to make the budget work. Looking back, Carla's points were valid and so were mine. But what we lacked was perspective. We knew the math. But we didn't know our Provider as well as we should have. Over the years we would marvel at how God met our expenses year after year. Even when it was impossible. But that is not where we started. We started like Philip.

Now Philip was there when Jesus turned water into wine. He had seen Christ do countless miracles. But he still relied upon his own resources and evaluated everything based on that.

What does God have in front of you today that you cannot do? What does he have that you can find no way to accomplish i? Have you considered that you are only factoring in the resources you are accustomed to? The resources you can see and count? Let me ask you. What resources do you need that God does not have? That is how we need to learn to think. That is the thought that Philip should have had. It would have turned his "it can't be done" into, "you know Christ might just do this."

Did you notice that Jesus asked this specific question to Philip and him alone, to test Philip? Jesus knew this was Philip's problem. Jesus wanted Philip to see that he was thinking wrongly. Because it is not until we agree with God **that we are**

wrong that we will get it right. I doubt Philip ever forgot what Jesus did with Philip's evaluation that **it could not be done**.

Let's look more at Philip.

John 12:20 Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. **21** Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." **22** Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. (NKJV)

Why did Philip not take the Greeks to see Christ?

Well, what had Christ told the disciples about who they were to minister to first? Was it not to the Jewish people? Suppose you were a person like Philip? You care about structure. You care about protocol. A position like this can throw you into a tizzy. What should I do? I don't know if Christ would like this thing or dislike it. I don't know what the policy or procedure is for this. I don't know the rigidly clear right thing to do.

So what does Philip do? In my way of thinking, he passes the buck onto Andrew. Maybe he thought, Andrew is good with people. Andrew knows Christ better. And Andrew seems to be always introducing people to Christ. I will pass it off to Andrew.

Now this isn't to say that what he did was right or wrong. But we can learn some things about him. It seems that Philip may have been more timid than some of the other disciples. And he was more easily paralyzed when there were not clear boundaries and protocols. He likely wanted order, very strict order. And he was probably more focused on avoiding blame than fulfilling objectives. He could think of a million reasons not to do something instead of just giving it a shot. Now maybe you see some of yourself in Philip. Or maybe you see something of others in Philip. Well, you know what? Christ chose Philip. He went out of His way to include him. So if you find those traits of Philips sometimes irritating, whether they are yours or someone else's, realize that Christ included Philip intentionally for the good of the Kingdom, for the good of the others, and for the good of Philip. Everyone has their style of faults. And love is there to help us all grow out of them.

Now let's look again at Philip.

Jesus is teaching the disciples for the last time before His death.

John 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. **2** In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. **4** And where I go you know, and the way you know." **5** Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

We will be looking at Thomas later on. But Thomas starts with a question. It is something he clearly does not understand. Christ goes on.

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. 7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

OK, so Christ is saying that Christ's life and work are representing the Father. In fact, they are so similar that if you see one you have seen the other. By seeing Christ and what He does you see the Father.

Now Philip asks his question:

8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

As a human, this would have been so discouraging to Christ. This had to be one of the lowest points of Christ's life. Now I don't know how his knowledge of future events would temper this, but this had to be a blow.

Philip wants the black and white world. He wants the lines clearly drawn. He wants the clear procedure manual. And he wants to have a clear stamp, to stamp his beliefs with. So as he sits there thinking about all that Christ says, he thinks, you know, I would have no more doubts whatsoever if Christ would just do this one thing. Just let us take a glimpse of God. That would do it. That would be the one clear thing that would no longer require faith in Christ and all He has said and done. After all, Christ is just a human like us. But if I could just see God....

Philip's following of Christ and believing in Christ came quick. But it may not have been as deep as some of the others. It always seemed up for grabs. He could never be convinced enough. And by voicing his disbelief he must have delivered an emotional blow to Christ.

9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. 11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. (NKJV)

Here is Christ's final appeal to Philip before Christ's death. He is telling Philip-Believe. Quit hanging on to all your doubts, all the reasons why you can't believe, all the evidences you are still waiting on, all your self-made safety nets. You have got to, at some point, take the step and trust me. That seems to be the hardest thing for people like Philip. It is simply hard to trust and submit. It is hard to throw one's self wholly in a direction and sink or swim as a result of it.

Christ's appeal is basically, "Do you not believe?" "Believe". That is what Philip has to do. And that is what all stragglers on the fence must do. It is not smart to cling to reasons for **what can't be done** when those reasons have been proven false by Christ over and over again. Philip probably always thought his reasons were smart, his hedging his bets was smart, his saying "It can't be done" was smart. But it was just unbelief. And there is a time for that to stop. For a person like Philip it is hard. But it is necessary. And it is the answer to most of their dilemmas. Believe.

Now, what happened to Philip?

The Philip that preached in Samaria was not the apostle Philip. He was the deacon Philip. In Acts 6:5 we see a man named Philip being appointed as a deacon. Then in Acts 8: we see that persecution caused a great number of people to scatter. But it specifically says in verse 1 that the apostles did not scatter. Then in verse 5, one of those who did scatter was named Philip and he preached in Samaria. So it could not be the apostle.

Tradition tells us that Philip ended up being very effective in spreading the Gospel. He was probably put to death by stoning at Heliopolis in Asia Minor. He was killed 8 years after James, so he was one of the first of the rest of the disciples to be martyred.

It would seem that Philip did as Christ commanded. He went all in and believed and trusted Christ. And he died in that faith, the greatest sign of commitment that can be demonstrated.