

Christ of whom the prophet Isaiah wrote.

Look at him for a moment closely. He has been up to Jerusalem, and has returned, without any hopeful illumination in grace. We learn from his demeanor that his heart is not at rest. He has gone his round, and is now on his way home disappointed. But the one grand thing in his action is that he clings to his purpose. He will not give up without a blessing. Oh, there is nothing, nothing, in human history like that impressive moment in which an aroused soul begins to ask the question, "What must I do to be saved?" If those gracious feelings pass away, they may never arise again in one's heart. The Spirit, grieved, may never return.

It is interesting to note how this weary traveler was seeking to beguile the time when Philip found him. In early days, it was the custom for those who could afford it to make their extensive journeys in chariots—mere open wagons, sometimes covered with a light awning. These were low and easy to alight from or enter. Generally those of rank were accompanied by a suite of attendants.

It must always have been tedious to cross the desert alone. And the climate was hot, and the way was waterless, and the sights were dull, and the advance was lamentably slow. So this nobleman was trying to while away the hours in reading. He had in his possession, as we suppose, a copy of the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It was what is called the Septuagint Version of the Hebrew Scriptures; his quotations are taken from that; and *Esaias* is the Greek name for Isaiah. This he was studying with some perplexity.

One could almost wish he had a picturesque pen to enable him to describe the meeting of those two men out in the desert. Such a spectacle arrests the imagination powerfully. Two atoms of sentient life in this vast universe float up to each other on the unperceived winds of divine grace. Yet eternal ages cannot so much as begin to exhaust the

chapters of that soul's history, which was written during the tranquil hour beside the Gaza fountain. Apparently they catch sight of each other near the same moment. In an open country, level and treeless, one sees very far away.

At once they came together: "Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Now, we all understand, of course, that this was the Holy Spirit. And the same gracious Agent probably powerfully influenced the Egyptian's mind likewise, so that he did not resent Philip's somewhat abrupt challenge. Strangers in the East are quite supercilious toward those they happen to meet in desolate places. They force the conversation to be very short when any one accosts or interrupts them. Here Philip found the access remarkably easy, although the traveler he approached was a grandee of the highest aristocracy. The good deacon does not appear in the slightest measure embarrassed, and we remember he had excellent success.

We know that the Lord will never set a timid or a diffident man to speak to a rich nabob or a politician like this, about his soul, or to any other awkward difficult person, without going beforehand, and, as it were, clearing the way by making him courteously inclined, and disposing his heart toward the truth.

So we learn that, without hesitancy, Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" It is not everybody who would put up with such an interference as this. And there must be times when even deacons would go too far, if they should intimate that people who read the Bible have often the poorest sort of success in getting the meaning of it. Still, the eunuch preserves his tranquility. And he ends with inviting Philip to a seat in the chariot beside him. And I think we shall all agree that this busy deacon never rode in such state before.

Now, before we attempt to go on any further with this story, I want you to