

Sunday 2nd May 2021 - Thoughts and a Prayer

Acts 8:26-40 - NIV

Philip and the Ethiopian

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road – the desert road – that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' ²⁷ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means 'queen of the Ethiopians'). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, ²⁸ and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. ²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.'

³⁰ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked.

³¹ 'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³² This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

'He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth.'

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, 'Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

³⁶ As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptised?' ³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

Are you bored?

Are you bored with your life as a Christian, as a follower of Jesus? Do you feel as if nothing exciting ever happens? If so, I would like to add a third question to that. Have you been open enough to God recently to say 'yes' to his prompts?

The greatest thrill in being a Christian is seeing God at work, both in ourselves but also in the people we see and meet. The ultimate thrill is seeing individual people come to faith and grow in faith in Jesus.

Philip must have been so excited by the response of the Ethiopian eunuch. Philip had said 'yes' to a prompt from an angel, we are told, who instructed him to take the road from Jerusalem

to Gaza. He then said 'yes' to a prompt from the Spirit who told him to 'Go to that chariot and stay near it'. All of that led to the opportunity to speak to the man in the chariot about the good news of Jesus.

We might not get anything anywhere near so dramatic as this example from Acts but whenever we respond 'yes' to God's prompt, whether that's to make a phone call to someone, to write a letter or card, to go over and speak to someone, or whatever it is that we feel we're being led to do, we are participating in God's kingdom moving forward.

Sometimes we might see immediate results, sometimes we only find out later what the effect was, and sometimes we won't know until we meet our maker face-to-face but it is exciting when we say 'yes' to God and start to see results.

Some of the biggest regrets in my life have been when I've failed to say 'yes' or have been insufficiently alert to what God is prompting me to do. I don't know what I might have missed out on or what others might have missed out on, and they are reminders to me of the need to remain alert and to say 'yes' to God.

I mentioned an example in the last YouTube service I took on 18th April of saying 'yes' to what I felt was a prompt from the Holy Spirit. It involved staying with someone who had fallen over her back door step and was waiting for an ambulance but I told more of the story than so I won't go into more details here.

A more recent example, though, of a prompt from God was to offer to take my much loved neighbour's funeral towards the end of 2020. I was unsure whether or not to make the offer as I didn't know whether I was intruding, but after praying about it I felt that it was the right thing to do. Our neighbour's children were in fact relieved to have someone who knew their Mum to take the service and it was a real privilege to do so.

I can't claim in either event that the people concerned came to a faith in Jesus as a result, although I would love them to do so, but I hope and pray that it will have helped them come closer to God and will be one of the steps along the way.

If you have a copy of Singing the Faith why don't you turn to StF 666 (Master Speak! Thy Servant Heareth), to Frances Havergal's hymn about listening to God. There's a version of it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/raPJHiezEhw> performed by St Michaels' choir.

Prayer

Loving God help us to listen out for your voice and help us to say 'yes' when you prompt us to act. Amen

Nigel

StF 666

Master, speak, thy servant heareth
Waiting for thy gracious word
Longing for Thy voice that cheereth
Master, let it now be heard
I am listening, Lord, for Thee
What hast Thou to say to me

Speak to me by name, O Master
Let me know it is to me
Speak that I may follow faster
With a step more firm and free
Where the shepherd leads the flock
In the shadow of the Rock

Speak to me by name, O Master
Let me not unheard depart
Master, speak, for O Thou knowest
All the yearning of my heart
Knowest all its truest need
Speak and make me blest indeed

Master, speak; and make me ready
When Thy voice is truly heard
With obedience, glad and steady
Still to follow every word
I am listening. Lord, for Thee
Master speak, O speak to me

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