

# CHASING CHARIOTS

## ACTS 8:26-39

Text:

### Introduction

A few days ago I received this true account over the Internet. A young man had just left his Wednesday evening Bible study.

Sitting in his car he prayed, "Lord, we studied tonight about your speaking to Samuel. Do you still speak to people today? If you'll speak to me, I'll try to obey." On the way home, he passed a corner grocery store when he heard a loud voice in his head saying, "Buy a gallon of milk!" He slammed on his brakes, pulled over, and asked, "Is that you, Lord?" "Buy a gallon of milk," the voice in his head repeated. "This is crazy," he thought. "But, if it's the Lord, I told him I would obey. Besides, I can always use the milk."

He bought the milk and started home when he heard the voice again: "Turn down this street and stop." He did so reluctantly, all the while asking himself, "Am I going crazy?" Again, the voice prompted him, "Take the milk to that house." The small row house was dark; it was late and the occupants appeared to be asleep. Sheepishly, the young man knocked on the door. Then,

he saw a door opening from a lighted room down the hall. A man opened the front door and stared at him. Trembling, the young man said, "I don't know why, but I felt like I should bring you some milk." The man grabbed the milk and ran back down the hall shouting in Spanish. A young woman carrying a baby came to the door with tears streaming down her face. She explained in broken English, "We had no money to buy milk for our baby, so I prayed and asked God to send an angel with some milk. Are you an angel?"

The young man explained his strange urge to bring milk to their house. Then, before he left, he gave them all the money in his wallet. He left praising God and thanking him that God does still speak today if we will only listen for his voice!

Acts 8 tells of another man almost 2,000 years ago who obeyed an angel, and later the Spirit of God, giving what seemed to be very strange instructions. Let's look at Philip's unusual adventure in Acts 8:26-35.

A couple of weeks ago at an evangelism conference in Norfolk, I heard Dr. Jerry Vines from Jacksonville use this outline. I've adapted it for my sermon I call "Chasing Chariots." Dr. Vines suggested that we can see here 4 ingredients for soul winning and salvation.

# 1. A PREPARED SINNER

First, we can see in verse 27 a prepared sinner. Let's call this character a VIP, a very important person. We're introduced to a eunuch from Ethiopia who had all the authority of the Queen Mother Candice. She trusted him with all her finances. He had risen from being her slave to becoming her personal business manager, treasurer, and confidant.

We could also say this eunuch was a VRP, a very religious person. He had traveled all the way from his country in Africa, up through Egypt and along the Mediterranean coast to Jerusalem. He was searching for the true God. He must have tried the many religions of Africa. Surely, he checked out the multiple gods of Egypt. He had gone right on past the Canaanite gods of Philistia and Gaza. But, when he got to Jerusalem, he found in Judaism only an empty shell of religion. God had removed his presence before the Babylonian captivity; even his Ark was missing from the Temple then. Alas, he was returning like he came: empty, still hungry for the Bread of Life and thirsty for the Water of Life. Again, we could say this eunuch was a VPP, a very prepared person. The Spirit of God had been working on him to create a God-shaped vacuum in his heart that only God could fill. Now, God was obligated to respond to his cry, because God promised Jeremiah that those who truly seek him shall ever surely find him. So, we see a man who's very influential and

important; he commands and it's done; he can buy anything he wants; but, he's still not happy because he's lost and undone before God. He's searching for God, but he can't find him unless someone leads him. Perhaps that describes you: You have many blessings in life and you've searched for fulfillment in the things money can buy, in personal companionship, in technology, or even in the ordered life of the military.

But, you'll never find fulfillment until you meet God in Jesus Christ.

Or, perhaps you're a Christian who's been so occupied with your own personal life that you haven't looked around to see all the people who're searching for God. They're everywhere, and the same Spirit who brought you to Jesus is trying to draw them to him; but, they don't know how to find him. You'll find them experimenting with cults and false religions, listening to radio and TV evangelists, or reading their Bibles but not understanding what they're reading.

They need somebody to care enough to chase down their chariots and tell them the only way to lasting peace is a personal, daily relationship with Jesus. Now, let me meddle a little: When the chariots pull up in the parking lots of our chapels and churches, what do they find? Do they find more empty rituals that don't really satisfy their longing for a personal relationship with the Creator, or do they find the Spirit of God alive and real

among genuine people of faith? Jesus said, "Give ye them to eat!" You know, Christians have the franchise on the Bread of Life. If we don't distribute it, the world will never know the fullness of salvation.

## **2. A PROMPT SOUL WINNER**

Now, let's look at a second ingredient in salvation and witnessing: a prompt soul winner. I call our second character in the story an AARP. I doubt that Philip was old enough to be retired, but let's apply those initials to his character. I believe he was ACCESSIBLE to God. Remember, we're not talking about the apostle named Philip; we're talking about one of the first 7 deacons listed in Acts 6. This Philip was a layman, but he was accessible to hear what God wanted him to do. A lot of us are often too busy for God to get our attention. We have our minds on our family or our jobs, or sometimes we're even so busy in church that we aren't accessible to obey God. What about you? Are you accessible if God wants you to deliver a gallon of milk to some of his needy children?

Now, this is an amazing part of the story: Philip was already having great success preaching Jesus to the Samaritans. You can read in the first verses of this chapter that many Samaritans were getting saved. The Mother Church in Jerusalem even sent a credentials committee to check out what was happening in Samaria. But, the Lord sent an angel to tell Philip to

leave his successful crusade and go one-on-one in the desert.

If it had been me, I'm afraid I would have said, "But, Lord, this Samaritan revival can't continue without me! Surely you don't want me to leave a successful nation-wide crusade!

Look at the potential B, B, and B's I can get for you here: baptisms, buildings, and budgets!" However, God's reasons are different from ours. He needed then - and still needs today - men, women, and young people who will obey without questioning.

Again, I believe Philip was also AVAILABLE to the eunuch - (there's the second A).

Philip obviously wasn't a racist because he had been living among the Samaritans whom the Jews considered to be a lower race of half-breeds. Maybe he was the only one God could find who was willing to go and preach to a black man from Ethiopia.

Philip was also READY - (the R).

He was ready to go where God needed him. He could have offered many excuses not to go: "Lord, surely you don't want me to break protocol; I'm less than a private; I can't just walk up to this officer and expect him to acknowledge me. Besides, Lord, did you see the

size of those bodyguards? And, look at me: I'm not dressed to meet dignitaries. Besides, those footmen are running with his chariot, and I couldn't keep up. I think somebody else could do it better, because what if he wants to argue? You know I'm afraid to witness because they might ask me a question I can't answer, and then I'd be embarrassed!"...Does that sound familiar?

However, Philip didn't do that. He was a PROMPT soul winner - (there's our P).

Philip obeyed the Lord immediately.

Remember that he didn't see the eunuch coming toward him; the royal processional passed him; because they were both going south. When the chariot with its entourage passed, Philip heard the eunuch reading from Isaiah; and the Spirit said, "That's your cue, boy; chase that chariot!"

## **2. A PERTINENT SCRIPTURE**

For our third ingredient, we see a pertinent Scripture. The eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53. I call this Scripture: SOS.

It could very well refer to "Save, O Save" because it explains salvation. However,

I call it SOS for 3 reasons:

It SPEAKS OF SACRIFICE.

Verse 32 talks about a lamb being silent as he is brought to be killed for a sacrifice. This eunuch may have offered a lamb in Jerusalem, but it didn't satisfy the sacrifice he needed for his sins.

The Isaiah passage also SPEAKS OF SOLITUDE.

Verse 33 says this human lamb experienced humiliation and solitude because he was cut off before he could have any children: "Who shall declare his generation?" The eunuch could identify with that because, as a slave, he had been emasculated to make him safe in the Queen's court. That's what a eunuch is. He lived with humiliation knowing he would never father any children.

The last SOS is that the prophecy SPEAKS OF A SAVIOR.

Although the verse is not quoted in Acts 8, Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way, but the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."

This human sacrifice had died to take away sins. That's what the eunuch was looking for!



So, he asked Philip who the passage was about.

## **4. A PERSONAL SALVATION**

Fourth, we can see a personal salvation. When Philip began at that scripture and preached Jesus, the eunuch believed and was saved. This personal salvation the eunuch found involved at least 2 things.

First, there was B&T: BELIEF & TESTIMONY.

The eunuch found the simple end to his life-long search. He simply believed the gospel and was saved.

Then, he testified of his faith in Jesus. He was so indebted for his salvation that he would do anything to obey God. Jesus said, "If you love me, obey me."

When they came upon an oasis, the eunuch asked Philip what would prevent him from being baptized. You see, nobody told him before he made his long journey to Jerusalem that even if he accepted Judaism, he could never become a Jewish proselyte.

Only gentiles without deformity could be initiated into Judaism. He didn't qualify because of his physical emasculation!

Therefore, his was a very relevant question, "Is there anything to keep me from being baptized as a Christian?"

How wonderful to hear Philip say, "No, my friend; you may come just as you are. When you acknowledge my Jesus as your sacrifice for sin, you'll never be turned away."

Then, the eunuch went on R&R: REJOICING & REAPING. Verse 39 says after he obeyed the Scriptures and was baptized, he went on his way rejoicing. He wanted to thank Philip. But, after Philip immersed him and they came up out of the water, he looked around and Philip was gone - whisked away by the Spirit to another place where they needed an unbiased soul winner.

And the reason I said R&R, rejoicing and reaping, is because Christian tradition tells us the eunuch's first convert was the Queen Mother Candice, herself. Years later, when the first missionaries arrived in Ethiopia, they found a thriving church started by this eunuch.

Close:

The eunuch found the true religion when he found the one that calls: "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely...Whoever comes unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Further, we are promised when we come to Jesus in faith, repenting of our sins

and believing he will forgive us, that all things become new and we start over with a clean sheet before God.

That same Jesus, who saves all who call upon him, wants us to share that good news with everyone. Chase all the chariots you can find! Go up and down life's highways looking for people who need Jesus.

Many will turn you down, but a lot of people are cruising out there with their hearts hungering for God.

They're hoping somebody will chase their chariot or bring them the milk of the Gospel. Will you obey God today?