

WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO'

And Other Radio Addresses

by
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CHAPTER FIVE HOW A JEW LED A BLACK MAN TO CHRIST

IT WAS a hot, dusty, sand-blown trail which the young evangelist traveled - taking a short cut from Samaria, southward. Soon now he would reach the great highway that ran from Jerusalem, the Holy City, and headquarters of the church, down to the city of Gaza, ancient headquarters of the Philistines. Why he must take this strange route, he did not know - he only knew that the day before he had been in the midst of a great spiritual awakening, in which hundreds of Samaritans were believing on the Lord JESUS CHRIST and being saved. And now, after an angel visitant had commanded him to go, he is on his way.

Why, Philip, are you leaving behind your great work, among the hungry multitudes?

Why? I don't know. I only know that I am commanded by an angel of GOD. Perhaps down there somewhere, I shall find another task - another needy soul, someone who knows not my CHRIST. Someone to whom I can tell the story of Calvary and the empty tomb.

Hot, tired, sand-blown, wondering why - why the change from popularity to loneliness? And then suddenly, he sees the reason.

Yonder, coming swiftly, a great cloud of dust blowing, rising about them, moves a caravan - a train of worshipers returning from Jerusalem to their own country. At the head of the procession, rides in grandeur, a high official in the Ethiopian government, in his hands a scroll, partly unrolled, from which he is reading.

"Philip!" The command throbs within the heart of the evangelist. **"Go near and join thyself to this chariot!"**

Go! It is the voice of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the medium through which the Lord of heaven is communicating His will to His servants of the church. GO . . . Great Commission . . . Lo! . . . Goes along. GO? He, Philip? to speak to that - that black man! (For the man in the chariot is dark of skin, an Ethiopian.) All during his stay in Jerusalem, had no man condescended to speak to a black man about CHRIST?

Ah, but the Spirit of GOD knew His faithful witness. He knew the evangelist He could command. He knew the man whose love for GOD could leap racial barriers with the agility of a young red deer leaping from rock to rock - of a mountain goat sailing from boulder to boulder. The Son of GOD had not come to die for a white or a red or a brown or a yellow race. He had come to die for black hearts . . . **"Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man . . ."**

Already Philip had dared to go down to the despised Samaritans who had been foreigners all these years. Only this past week, he had preached there.

The Spirit of GOD knew His man. He knew that here was a man who would GO, at His command . . .

And now, the caravan is about to pass by.

Beside the lonely trail, stands the God-directed personal worker. Soon, the train of visitors to the holy land will have gone, and only a cloud of dust will be seen, and that soon to disappear over the rim of the horizon . . . Go! thou! Philip! Go . . .

And now we see him go - this young man, running toward the caravan. Panting, his heart thumping with strange emotion, he attaches himself to the chariot. He is walking now beside it, his eyes glued to the underside of the scroll from which the man is reading. He calls up to him above the creak and groan of the cart wheels, above the swish of the sand and the rattle of the harness of the animals, he calls, **"Understandest thou what thou readest?"**

Strange! Why am I here? . . .

The man in the chariot looks up from his scroll, which, perhaps, he had bought in the great city. Who is this stranger who suddenly from out of the waste of the desert appears at my side? Can he perhaps tell me what this bewildering passage of Scripture means - this mysterious pronouncement? Ah, the black man may be thinking, wild stories came to me back in Jerusalem, stories of a Man who claimed to have come down from heaven, claimed to be the Son of GOD, was crucified upon a Roman cross outside their religious camp, strange stories of One who, by Divine Power has risen again, and has been seen again and again and again! I . . . wonder . . .

"And the place of the Scripture which he read was, 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so He openeth not his mouth. In His humiliation His judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation for his life is taken from the earth' . . ."

And now we hear the voice of the man in the chariot, **"How can I understand except some man should guide me?"**

"Will you - ah, come up and sit with me . . . ?" Strange ride, that - a Christian and an African, side by side, their eyes glued to the words of the book of Isaiah, the prophecy of the suffering Messiah . . . **"led as a sheep to the slaughter."**

The command is given to the caravan to move on. Yonder they go - Here we go rather, for we are riding along with them today, listening.

Listen . . . Philip is speaking . . .

"And so, though He had done no evil, though He was without sin, He was sent to Calvary - the Son of GOD Himself. He marched that day out through the dreary way to the Calvaria, and let them nail Him to the Cross, where between thieves, He hung until He had made full atonement for your sins and mine - the sins of Jew and Gentile - for men of every race . . . Ah, no, it doesn't matter how black the face, how black the sin, He can and will forgive . . . He is alive now.

Low in a grave He lay,
JESUS, my Saviour;
Waiting the coming day,
JESUS, my Lord.
Death could not keep its prey,
JESUS, my Saviour;
He tore the bars away,
JESUS, my Lord."

The chariot wheels move on, toward the south, toward Egypt . . . The gospel chariot rolls on, and a man who in Jerusalem, has bought a copy of the gospel, who on the dreary desert way, has read the gospel, who now listening to the gospel, is about to believe. He IS believing NOW.

And the message of the evangelist goes on . . . "And," he says, "I am just returned from Samaria, where the Samaritans, half Jew and half Gentile, have believed by the hundreds and have been baptized, many of them . . ."

Suddenly the black man, whose heart has already been made white through faith in the shed blood of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, looks to the side of the road, where appears an oasis, and he exclaims, **"Look! here is water! What doth hinder me from being baptised?"**

Suddenly, also, the chariot wheels are still. And down from the high seat, two men move, slowly toward the scene of water . . . to seal the black man's faith with the outward symbol of an inward transformation . . . And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away the evangelist, sending him to another needy place, Azotus, farther north . . . And the eunuch went on his way rejoicing . . .

Invitation . . . LOOK TO THE LAMB . . .

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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