

Weekly Bible Study for Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

OBEDIENCE AND DISCIPLESHIP – ACTS 8:26-40

Jean Davies w/c 17th May

Philip's obedience to the Lord's commands leads to the Ethiopian eunuch's discipleship.

Following the martyrdom of Stephen, the young church is scattered by persecution into Judea and Samaria, although a core of apostles remains in Jerusalem. It has been said that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church". The precious seed of the Gospel found good soil in Samaria as Philip went to "a city in Samaria" preaching and teaching; and probably reaping a harvest of souls who had first heard the Gospel of Christ from the Lord Himself (John 4). Philip's life in Jerusalem will have been disrupted but he was still living a fruitful life for Christ. What about us in these days of Coronavirus disruption of our lives?

Read and re-read ACTS 8:26-40

It seems that, as we obey the Lord's commands in our discipleship of Him, we are kept spiritually in tune and in step with Him, and, in this process, He is often over time preparing us for the next step. And this is how it was with Philip. The Lord's instruction to Philip was simply to "go south to the road – the desert road – that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza". The Lord gave a direct instruction; Philip made a direct response of obedience; and what a new direction of discipleship the life of another man, an Ethiopian eunuch, would take!

The Ethiopian eunuch was hungry for God, his heart's desire revealed by the reading of the Scriptures (Old Testament) when he was alone (v30). God has said that if with all our heart we truly seek Him we shall surely find Him (Jeremiah 29:13). Philip's next step of obedience to God is to approach the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot. As the account unfolds, we see Philip accepting the eunuch's invitation to climb aboard where he proceeds to enlighten the man on his reading of Isaiah 53: 7, 8. Baptism quickly follows conversion. Did Philip stay around for accolades or rewards? No, he was quickly and suddenly taken away by the Holy Spirit to continue preaching the Gospel to others; and the Ethiopian eunuch continued his homeward journey "rejoicing".

Reflections

- 1 Do you sense the Lord giving you a new instruction or direction for your life at home, church or in your community? How will you confirm it, and will you obey it? (v29)
- 2 In what ways do you now, or will in future, help to further understanding of the Bible for yourself and/or others? (v30-35)
- 3 How do you keep in step with the Holy Spirit in your discipleship of Christ? (v40)
- 4 Maybe you are still seeking God, or maybe wanting a deeper relationship with Him. Where or to whom will you turn to help you in your journey to rejoicing in Him? V39

How precious is each man's soul in God's sight! As He sent Philip to just one man, the Ethiopian eunuch, so He has used other individuals in our own conversions to Christ. In turn, we should be willing to obey His call on us to sow the seeds of His Gospel in the lives of others. How the eunuch's own life unfolded afterwards we are not told, but in that new life in Christ he, in his turn, would be a witness to a whole nation of unreached people.