

Acts 8: Ordinary Servant, Extraordinary Impact
October 11, 2015

An ordinary person, Philip gives total surrender to God's call and direction, placing him at the forefront of the global missions movement.

Two stories will parallel ours today: Agnes and Nick:

Agnes was born to Albanian refugees and raised in poverty; Nick born into wealth and nobility. They lived in two different parts of the world and at two different eras in history. Yet, both lived lives of GREAT spiritual significance with a world-wide impact. And I believe it was because of the ONE thing I can think of that they DID have in common – and it's the same characteristic that makes our main character today a really extraordinary man. So, let's look at HIS story, then we'll come back to Agnes and Nick.

SETTING THE STAGE

- Part II of Acts: Judea and Samaria
 - Chapter 9 begins phase 2 of Acts 1:8
- Stephen's Service and Martyrdom.
 - Verses 1:3 – Net RESULT of Stephen's Martyrdom in Jerusalem:
 - Persecution
 - Scattering
 - Sorrow
 - Ravaging
 - The RESPONSE
 - Bold Sharing as they (and Phillip) scattered
 - Phillip goes to Samaria and proclaims Christ

SURRENDERED START

- His Character
 - Phillip's Back Story - Acts 6:1-6 : "Good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of (serving the Hellenistic Jewish widows daily food)
- His Culture
 - Hellenistic: already 'multi-cultural', and somewhat 'looked down upon' by Jews
 - Apostolic 'ordination' of these 'deacons' was already an expanding of Jewish leaders' mindset re 'worthiness to lead'
 - AND HE LIVED UP TO IT: We assume from context that Phillip did what he was tasked. Like Stephen, he was:
 - Spirit-filled: Dependent
 - Servant-hearted: Active
 - Self-surrendered: Willing and ready

- ORDINARY! He was not a priest, and did not attend seminary. His credentials were Christ!
- **Proof that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things!**

SURRENDERED STRATEGY

- Surrendered to the God over the Circumstances
 - Verse 4 - The troubles of persecution. Phillip is dislodged from Jerusalem and ends up in 'the armpit of the Jewish world' at that time: Samaria.
 - Samaria/Samaritans – 2 Kings 17 – Gentiles put there by Assyria. The Jews in the area mixed in marriage with the Gentiles and the resulting race was despised by both. Had their own form of Judaism/traditions.
 - Adversity embraced as opportunity; Persecuted become Preachers
 - Verses 5-8: Much Gospel, much ministry, much rejoicing
 - Verses 9-13: Even the local Witch Doctor hears, sees, and professes faith
- Surrendered to Godly Authority
 - Verses 14-17: The separate 'falling of the Holy Spirit' was an authentication by "apostolic OK" – affirmed that this was legit! This subsided in subsequent gospel advances...the 'norm' was/is the seal of the Holy Spirit at one's salvation.
- Surrendered to the work of the (true) Spirit
 - Simonic Side-bar: Verses 18-24
 - Holy Spirit is powerfully at work and Simon (a guy who profited from 'spiritual activity' and was seen as spiritual authority) is impressed! MAGIC at this time included illusion and trickery, but was also spiritistic/demonic.
 - He is even MORE impressed when comes the Apostolic Power/Authority... and he thinks he can BUY it.
 - Differing Interpretations – here's mine: He genuinely believed, and (like us all) still has a big flaw in his flesh... His fleshly coveting and manipulation is dangerous and is rebuked. He seems to 'get' the seriousness of it – but we don't KNOW if he changed.
 - Bottom line – sin is BAD and can 'take you out' – so don't take it lightly and hang on to it – receive correction...get help!
 - Sent South – Heading back to Jerusalem, they do more work in Samaria along the way – but GOD's not done yet! (Verse 25)
 - Clear vocal direction from Holy Spirit and Phillip obeys right away! (Verses 26-27a)
 - Encounters an "international" – a foreign seeker (Verses 27-38)
 - Phillip is available – eyes open
 - Phillip is responsive/obedient – dependent
 - Phillip is ready to speak
 - Knows the Gospel
 - Knows/uses the Word - skilled

Phillip's given a PEACH of an opportunity; he's alert and ready; BE alert and ready!

- Phillip is flexible – Baptism on the spot

Impact of His Availability/Surrender – The low (Samaritans) and the high (royal Ethiopian) were reached – changed – gospel advanced!

And in EVERY situation, his response is:

STILL SURRENDERED (Verse 40)

- 'Found himself' (Azotus) – where he was ALWAYS 'just where God wants me'
- 'Passed through' – kept moving on by the Spirit
- Kept preaching the Gospel to ALL cities from there to Caesarea.

That's PHILLIP - but before we wrap up, let's come back for a moment to the story of Agnes and Nick:

Agnes you remember was poverty-born to a refugee family. Seeing the need around her, she surrendered to ministry at 18 and joined a walled-in convent community. At 36, she surrendered to leave the walls and go into and live in the slums of Calcutta. Born Agnes, she'd changed her name to Teresa – Mother Teresa. And even when she gained 'celebrity,' she surrendered that to be used for the benefit of her mission.

"[...] Mother Teresa committed her life to working with the poor throughout the world. She lived among impoverished people so that she could better serve them. She created a new order of Catholic nuns, the Missionaries of Charity. She established orphanages, schools, and homes for the elderly and terminally ill. Her work attracted the attention of the world and earned her the Nobel Peace Prize She eventually established organizations to help people on every continent." - 100Leaders.org

Nick, you recall, was from a very different background. Born Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, you may not all be as familiar with him. Raised by his Lutheran Pietistic grandmother, he trusted Christ at an early age and as his passion for ministry grew, he despised his wealthy status. But he couldn't 'get rid of it'. So what did he do? Surrendered to the causes of prayer and global evangelism, he harnessed his wealth (and even his estate grounds) to provide for religious refugees, and thus make possible one of the most vast and long-lasting prayer and missions movements in history – the "Moravian Brethren". Even when he tried to be a 'missionary' in the frontier of the Americas, his distaste for discomfort proved a distraction. So, returning to Moravians' 'offices', he put 20 more missionaries on the field before he returned to his home in Denmark. It is said of him...

"The Moravian Brethren [...] took the Great Commission to heart, paving the way for the great era of modern missions. During the 18th Century alone, they planted mission stations across a vast portion of the globe. A prayer vigil was begun that continued around the clock, seven days a week, without interruption for more than one hundred years. Zinzendorf's contribution to missions is best seen in the lives of the men and women who accepted his challenge to forsake all for the sake of the gospel. Their sole

motivation was Christ's sacrificial love for the world, and it was with that message that they went to the ends of the earth." Ruth Tucker – From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya

Surrendered!

So what about you? What about me? How do we apply this today? Phillip was constantly surrendered.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

- Wrestling with God's Will? – For Phillip, wherever he found himself was God's desire!
- Are you getting/staying equipped? Small group, training, serving?
- Do you know you know what your church is up to in regard to YOUR Great Commission?