

#25 — Compelled!!!

God seems to have a variety of ways that he “talks” to us. Of course, our part is to be always available to hear, or receive — trusting he is in the moment and speaking.

No, I have never heard a voice from above, but I have often sensed the Lord was speaking to me through my spouse or a close friend. But I want to suggest there are times when God seems to want something done and he has chosen us to do it.

Certainly, the book of Acts notes numerous times when the Apostle Paul was clearly “compelled” to do something that would not have been “normally” generated by his own decision process, or his personal desires and reasoning.

The pure definition for the word compelled helps us to better see how it is used.

WEBSTERS... **To urge forcefully or irresistibly. To cause to do or occur by overwhelming pressure.**

STRONGS... **To necessitate, constrain... whether by force, persuasion, or by other means.**

As you can see, the word, as it is often used in our New Testament, has a very distinct and powerful meaning that seems to be a method God sometimes uses to require us to “do” something that, at the time, is contrary to our natural response.

Acts 18:5 — ***When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.***

Acts 19:21 — ***Afterward Paul felt compelled by the Spirit to go over to Macedonia and Achaia before going to Jerusalem. “And after that,” he said, “I must go on to Rome!”***

Acts 20:22 — ***And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.***

Acts 28:19 — ***But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation.***

Paul seemed open to identifying graciously that it was the Lord who was directing his life, and he, like us, was learning to trust in the compelling power that he had given his life to, for a purpose that had eternal meaning. In the verses above, it is clear that the compelling was initiated by the indwelling Spirit of God — who is joined to the human spirit of all believers.

In Paul’s letter to the church in Corinth, he noted how “terrible” it would be if he didn’t obey God’s calling on his life.

1 Corinthians 9:16 — ***Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn’t preach the Good News!***

Even Jesus was compelled by the indwelling Spirit of the Father to go into a place that had possibly not been a part of his immediate plans.

Mark 1:12 — ***The Spirit then compelled Jesus to go into the wilderness...***

There were also times when the Spirit of God, through Jesus, compelled entire groups to go somewhere immediately so he could properly deal with the crowds in their midst.

Matthew 14:22 — ***Immediately afterward He compelled the disciples to get into the boat and to go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away.***

There is a clear reference in the Old Testament, that God seemed to allow his anointed king to fall under the power of his self-imposed and dominating flesh to the point of total disobedience and loss of his position, so God could replace him with the man who had been chosen to lead his people. King Saul, in response to his own feelings, and reasoning, and out of fear, disobeyed God's instructions and he was quickly removed from the position he had been given so the kingdom could be given to David, a man after God's own heart. As King Saul said to Samuel when he was confronted for his disobedience...

1 Samuel 13:12 — ***So I said, 'The Philistines are ready to march against us at Gilgal, and I haven't even asked for the Lord's help!' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering myself before you came.***

It's interesting to note that God was clear from the beginning regarding the nation having a king; that it should be God's choice and not the people's chosen one. The Bible tells us that when Saul was anointed to be king, it was with a flask of oil (a man-made object) — but when David was anointed to be king, the Lord told Samuel to use a horn of oil (representing authority) to anoint him (1 Samuel 10:1 and 16:1. Everything God does has purpose and meaning.

So, how do we bring that all down to how God often speaks to us, through ways that are beyond immediate reason, and are... well, compelling! Let me share just one very simple episode of being compelled in my own life several years ago to illustrate my point.

Ann (Elizabeth) and I were on our way home from the central part of the city we lived in. We were on a major highway that connected our suburb to the city. I suddenly noticed a young black man walking in the weeds, and sometimes trash, along the highway. My first thought was, "he's barefoot. That has to be miserable." For some reason it weighed so heavy on me and I couldn't get him off my mind.

Now, this is where the compelling part comes in. I knew in my heart that I had to go back and see that young man. *Forcefully, irresistibly, to cause to do or occur by overwhelming pressure* — I don't know anything more than I had to do it — I was compelled to do something for that young man. It wasn't a choice... it just had to be!

At the next exit, I told my wife, "I have to go back and do something." I took the exit, got back on the lane toward the city, telling Ann that I just needed to do this, as I told her about the young man we passed. She fully understood, being far more compassionate than me. We took the next exit — crossed over, and drove back a

reasonable distance, exited again and got back to the original direction and lane where I had passed him.

Once I found him again, I had to find a place that would let me get off the road and stop safely. I got out of the car, and he was on the other side of a shallow ditch area. I said, “where are you headed?” He said, “I’m going to see my mother who is sick.” I motioned for him to come closer and I said, “You don’t have shoes on. You’re going to hurt your feet in all of this.” I seem to remember that he acknowledged that he didn’t want to mess up his only shoes.

I always carry an extra pair of tennis shoes in my car in case of emergency (and still do). I told him that I had an extra pair of shoes and asked him to come closer so we could see if they might fit him. He smiled, trusted, and graciously came to the car. To be brief — I found the extra shoes in the trunk and (of course) they fit his feet perfectly.

I asked where his mother lived and told him we could easily drop him off at her house. He was humble, very kind, trusting, mid-to late teens, easily responsive, and grateful. We encouraged him for his kindness in visiting his mother, especially not having a car. We took him to her home, shook his hand, saw him to the door, and assured him that God loved him and I told him again, what a kind young man he was for coming to check on his mother. The family welcomed him with smiles and joy. And, we went on home.

God wanted to meet that young man’s need, at that moment in time, and I fully believe that God compelled me to see him, sense that check in my heart that God wanted me to notice he didn’t have shoes, and the only Y in the road in that moment was — did God direct that entire episode and I just became his hands, or do I chalk it off as an opportunity to just do a kind thing for someone and just continue on? Only one of those choices fits the description of compelled. I was learning first hand that compelled is knowing, without any doubt, that God, through his Spirit, is sometimes calling us to do something important and asking us to trust his call. Thank you Lord for often letting us be a small part of something you are doing to advance your Kingdom.

For me, it has happened on other occasions. I’ve come to believe that those times really don’t come as a choice. When we are compelled, we really can’t take any credit for any of it. I do think however, there is the choice later to recognize it was God’s hand in it all — and thank him for letting us be the one person, who in the moment, was an extension of his work to help someone in need.

Hmmmm. Worth thinking about!