

The Conversion Of The Eunuch

Introduction. An effective element in preaching consists of the recital of cases of conversion. Examples serve the purpose of stirring the heart and showing sinners the way into the kingdom. The Lord knew the power of examples to plainly teach and to stimulate to obedience. Consequently, He devoted one whole book in the New Testament to these recitals of cases of conversion.

The book of Acts is made up chiefly of accounts of the conversion of a great variety of persons in many different places. If you were to take out everything that is connected with these cases, you would have very little left in the book.

Today we generally have two different classes of examples of conversion. One class is the examples which took place in the first century as recorded by Acts. The second class is the examples which take place today. These examples are open to a wide variety of interpretations and they obviously allow for much falsehood to enter the picture.

For my own part I prefer to be guided by the examples in the book of Acts. All the conversions that took place in those days occurred under the direction of inspired preachers, and those early converts were never misled. If I, in obedience to the gospel, imitate the conversions recorded in Acts, my conversion is genuine. Because of the grave importance of our own conversion to Christ and any assistance we may render to others, we will examine five very important details between Philip and the eunuch in his conversion.

I. ***There Was Great Concern For Righteousness***

- A. This was not just petty curiosity that brought this Ethiopian nobleman to Jerusalem to worship. He was probably a Jew who had been raised to high honor in Queen Candace's court, much like Nehemiah and Daniel. It was customary for Jews in foreign lands, as much as possible, to attend the great feasts at Jerusalem.
- B. This was a man who had more than just a passing interest in religion. He came to Jerusalem that he might hear and searched the scriptures that he might see (Jeremiah 29:13; Acts 17:11; 2:42).
 1. It is not difficult to convince men of the truth and persuade them to obey the gospel when they are engaged in an earnest study of the Bible.
 2. When people are truly seeking, help for their souls will not be withheld for long. Likewise, when we are diligent to teach people, God will send us more.
- C. Our greatest prospects will come from people who are seeking something in this life. It is of the utmost importance that we find the good and honest hearts and speak the truth in love to them (Ephesians

4:15). We need to show them the plainness of the scriptures and get them to compare their present beliefs to the New Testament.

II. ***There Was Great Enthusiasm For A Soul***

- A. Philip was someone who wonderfully demonstrated the first century zeal for converting people (Proverbs 11:30). Those of us who wish to be wise in winning souls will "go up and join the chariot" and lead others to a knowledge of Jesus Christ (John 1:40-46; 4:28-29; Acts 11:19-21).
- B. You can imagine that it would take some faith on the part of Philip to leave the promising field in Samaria and go to a road which did not even pass through any villages in its whole length from Jerusalem to Gaza. However, God spoke and off he went (Isaiah 6:8)!
- C. Real enthusiasm in the work of God is a rare accomplishment these days. Have you let the devil whisper in your ear and tell you that no one will listen? You must decide if you will make time for someone's soul. Evangelism takes great time and patience, but fruit in the form of a conversion is one of the greatest joys you will ever know.

III. ***There Was Great Faithfulness To The Bible***

- A. Although the angel of God and the Holy Spirit guided Philip to the eunuch, it was the word of God that was preached to him (cf. Acts 2:14, 37; 10:22, 32, 44; 11:14-15).
 - 1. The angel did not bring any unseen, unheard, mystical influence upon him. Therefore, sinners should not look for spiritual illumination through the ministry of angels.
 - 2. The Holy Spirit could have inspired the eunuch with a full knowledge of the truth just as easily as He inspired Philip, but that was not God's plan.
- B. The eunuch was reading the scriptures and after Philip asked if he understood what he was reading, the eunuch said, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"
 - 1. From that point, Philip showed him how Jesus of Nazareth fit the description of the prophet in Isaiah 53.
 - 2. The obvious conclusion was that the prophet referred to the Messiah, and that Messiah was Jesus Christ.
 - 3. What did it mean to "preach Jesus" to the eunuch?
 - a) To preach Jesus is to preach that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.
 - b) To preach Jesus is to preach that He died for our sins and rose again.
 - c) To preach Jesus is to preach that He has all authority in heaven and on earth.

- d) To preach Jesus is the preach that He will judge the living and the dead.
- 4. In preaching Jesus to him, Philip instructed the eunuch that Jesus is the subject of Old Testament prophecy and the hero of New Testament history.
- 5. Furthermore, Philip made known, not only what Jesus had done for him, but also what Jesus required him to do, and this must have included instruction about baptism.
- C. It is sad to see Christians whose language is sprinkled with "I think this" or "I believe this" rather than with specific references to the word of God. The Bible can equip us for every good work, including evangelism, only if we have a knowledge of it (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 3:15).

IV. *There Was Great Readiness To Confess*

- A. After the eunuch heard the truth, he was ready to confess Jesus as the Son of God. He was truly fit to become a child of God. Faith came by hearing for the eunuch, not by some miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Romans 10:17).
- B. His confession was a prelude to his baptism. After finding water, he was eager to be baptized (Galatians 3:26-27). The eunuch shows that one can rise above the status quo and accept truth. If you want to please God, the hour in which you learn your duty is the hour in which you should act (Hebrews 3:15; Acts 22:16).
- C. We frequently are lost in an overwhelming feeling that no one will listen anymore. Although many are callous when dealing with spiritual matters, there are people who are having their consciences pricked to seek the truth. Every visitor from the community is someone who is saying, "I need something in my life. Can you help me find it?"
- D. There has been great debate over whether Acts 8:37 should be included in our Bibles.
 - 1. All versions, with the exception of the KJV, indicate that this passage is not in the original text.
 - 2. Irenaeus (A.D. 170-210) and Cyprian (A.D. 200-258) both quote it, which shows the interpolation is very early.
 - 3. It also appears earlier than our earliest manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus).
 - 4. Even if Acts 8:37 is not considered a part of our Bible, there are plenty of instances of confession elsewhere.
 - a) Confession is commanded.
 - (1) It was commanded by Christ (Matthew 10:32-33).
 - (2) It was commanded by Paul (Romans 10:9-10).
 - b) There are a number of examples of confession.

- (1) The demons (Luke 4:34, 41).
- (2) Peter (Matthew 16:16; John 6:66-69).
- (3) The centurion (Matthew 27:54).
- (4) Nathanael (John 1:49).
- (5) Martha (John 11:27).
- (6) Thomas (John 20:24-29).
- (7) Paul (Acts 13:33; Romans 1:4).
- (8) Christ (Mark 14:61-62; 1 Timothy 6:13).

E. As has been said before, after the eunuch's confession, he wanted to be baptized. What exactly is baptism?

1. The word "baptized" means "to immerse or submerge" (cf. John 3:23). Notice how Philip and the eunuch "went down" and "came up" out of the water.
2. Allusions and direct testimony to baptism are both indicative of a complete immersion (Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).
3. No other form of baptism except immersion was practiced for over 200 years in the early church.
4. It is helpful to remember that the "faith only" doctrine is no older than Martin Luther.
 - a) Before Luther wrote the word *sola* (Latin for "only") in the margin of his Bible at Romans 3:28, no one ever taught "faith only."
 - b) Modern-day "faith only" teachers have perverted Luther's teaching! He was combatting the meritorious works idea he found in the Roman Catholic penance and indulgence system.
5. There is no evidence that the eunuch heard anything about the Holy Spirit or knew that He had acted on his behalf. Philip could not transfer the gifts of the Holy Spirit to others (cf. Acts 8:18), so it follows that there was no transference here. No one else was present so we can conclude that there was no giving of the Holy Spirit at all.
6. There is no mention of the baptism of the Spirit. Therefore we must conclude that the only form of baptism that the eunuch came under was immersion in water and that it is the baptism that mattered in becoming a Christian (cf. Ephesians 4:5). We must also then conclude that the eunuch did not require an indwelling of the Spirit in order to save his soul (Ephesians 5:18; Colossians 3:16).

V. ***There Was Great Rejoicing In Christ***

- A. Being justified by faith, he had peace with God and now he goes on his way rejoicing (Romans 5:1-2). The darkness had passed and now true light shined within his heart (2 Corinthians 3:18). When the message of Christ is believed and obeyed, it brings about a glorious and wel-

come change in life (Romans 6:3-5).

1. When he came out of the water, "he went on his way rejoicing." Do you suppose that he knew that he was "in Christ?" Or was there some unsettled doubt in his mind?
 2. There is no indication of a need for a continuing education in the first principles of being a Christian before salvation was granted, there was no vote taken by the church and no prayer was made to get him into the fold.
- B. This man could now return to Ethiopia rejoicing in the promises of God.
1. He had the remission of his sins and redemption through His blood (Acts 2:38; Colossians 1:14).
 2. He knew that he was saved and was now in Christ (1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 3:28).
 3. He now had the privilege of access to God through prayer and the prospect of usefulness (1 John 2:1; 5:14; 2 Timothy 2:1-2).
 4. He also knew that he had been born again to a living hope, the hope of heaven (1 Peter 1:3; Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25).
- C. The instrumentality of truth is strikingly exemplified with the eunuch. By means of the truth concerning Jesus, the eunuch's mind is enlightened; his views, desires, expectations and hopes are all changed. Moreover, he is anxious to confess Jesus as the Messiah and enter into God's kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Acts 2:47).
- D. What a joy it is to stand justified in the sight of God; to have peace with God and fellowship with other Christians (1 John 1:5-7). What a joy it is to have hope for yourself and for others as you preach the gospel message (Psalm 32:1; John 13:17)!

Conclusion. When Philip was told to arise and go to the eunuch, he did not delay. He went out, with faith like Abraham, not knowing where he went but was content to do the will of God. A thousand difficulties might have arisen in his mind if he had taken the time to reflect. If we are not persistent to teach the lost, fear is apt to well up in our heart and ruin the chance.

All these elements came together to produce fruit for the Master (Luke 15:10). If you would have met the eunuch farther down the road and asked him why he was so joyful, he would have responded that he had obeyed the gospel. He would not have told you about the angel or the Holy Spirit, for he knew nothing of them. He would have told you about reading a passage he could not understand and how a kind man came and explained how a glorious Redeemer died for his sins. The same simple obedience can be produced today (Acts 4:12; 2 Corinthians 6:2).