**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**The Conversion of The Ethiopian Eunuch**

In some churches today time is allotted in their church services for people to give their testimony of how they were converted to Christ. Also many preachers in their sermons will give examples of people who got saved. These examples of conversion are given, I suppose, for two reasons: first to show sinners by example, how they can be saved, and second, by their stirring story they may be able to stimulate sinners to imitate them.

But, you know, God has already given us several examples of conversion. These are given in the Book of Acts in the Bible. These cases of conversion are stories of how various ones were converted to Jesus Christ. In these cases of conversion we learn what was preached to convert them, and we learn what people were told to do to be saved from their sins. We learn how people became Christians in the first century. And yes, these examples are given to show sinners today how they can be saved, and to stimulate them to do exactly as they did.

And so we have today two classes of examples of conversion, between which we may choose those that shall guide us. We have this class written down in the book of Acts, and we have this other class that happens in many present day churches. In the present day the great majority of the people are guided chiefly by the latter, as they are so abundantly described by the preachers. But for myself, I prefer to be guided by those examples given in the book of Acts. Why? In the first place, all the conversions that took place in those early days recorded in the book of Acts occurred under the direction of inspired preachers; and consequently those early converts were not misled in anything that they did. Secondly, after many conversions had taken place the Holy Spirit guided Luke (who wrote the book of Acts) to select a few of them for a permanent place in the Bible; so we may say that these cases of conversion have passed twice under the inspection of the Holy Spirit.

It follows then if one’s conversion experience is to be correct and he is truly converted to Christ, he must follow the examples given to us by God in the book of Acts.

Today I want us to consider the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch recorded in Acts 8:26-39. Beginning with verse 26, *“Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, ‘Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’”*

This Ethiopian was either a Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish religion. If he was a Jew, he was, no doubt, one like Daniel, or like Nehemiah who had attained to a very high position in a foreign land. He had just been up to Jerusalem to worship God. He had made a journey of more than a thousand miles on land in a chariot, to worship God there; and now he is returning home. He is reading from the scriptures, in particular, the book of Isaiah. And so, this man, no doubt, is a worshipper of God and desires to please God, but he is a sinner in need of salvation. This is the reason Philip is sent to him.

The first thing God does is He sends an angel. But He does not send the angel to the sinner. The angel does not do anything directly toward the sinner. Rather the angel was sent to the preacher, Philip, and directed him to go to a place where he would find the sinner. The angel’s work was to get the preacher of truth together with the seeker of truth.

Also the Holy Spirit interposes and begins his part of the work of the eunuch’s conversion. He does not begin to work directly in the heart of the eunuch; he does not say anything to the eunuch; but, following up the action of the angel, the Holy Spirit speaks to Philip. He says to Philip, *“God near and overtake this chariot,”* and, receiving this command, Philip ran to him. Now, we have an angel working, at the command of God, for the salvation of this man; we have the Holy Spirit; but the effect of all that the angel and the Spirit did was only to bring the preacher side by side with the man that is to be converted; so, if the angel's action, or the Spirit's, is to have any effect on him, it will be through the words which the preacher will speak when he gets there. Remember, Paul says, *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Rom. 10:17) No one will be saved without hearing the gospel of Christ. Conversion takes place through one hearing, believing and obeying the gospel.

When Philip gets to the eunuch he hears him reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip asked him, *“Do you understand what you are reading?”*  The eunuch said, *“How can I, unless someone guides me?”* *“And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.”*  The passage which the eunuch was reading is in Isaiah 53 which says, *"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,*

*So He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.”* The eunuch enquires, *"Of whom does the prophet say this, of himself, or of some other man?”* The text tells us that Philip began at that same scripture, and preached to him Jesus, and this was the answer to his question. This scripture was not written about Isaiah himself or any other man, but about Jesus, the Son of God. Evidently, the eunuch did not know about Jesus’ sacrificial death in fulfillment of this prophecy. And so Philip preaches to him about who Jesus is and what He did to procure our salvation. We don’t have recorded what Philip preached, but we can be assured that He preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and that through His death, burial, and resurrection we have forgiveness of sins.

Now the text goes on to say that *“as they went down the road, they came to some water.”* And the eunuch said, *“See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”*  Now, why would the eunuch ask that question? We are told that Philip preached Jesus to the man; but while he was preaching Jesus, the man expresses his desire to be baptized. How did that come about? How did the eunuch know that he needed to be baptized? There have been those who have criticized our preaching by saying that we ought to preach Christ crucified, and not speak of baptism so often. But when Philip was preaching Christ to the eunuch, it seems that baptism was a part of the sermon. Indeed, it is impossible to preach Christ fully to a sinner and leave baptism out of the sermon. When Jesus commanded the apostles to go and make disciples of all nations, He said, *“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”* (Matt. 28:19) Jesus told the apostles in Mark 16:15-16, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”* There is no way they could go and preach the gospel and make disciples without preaching baptism. It is a mutilated gospel that leaves baptism out of the sermons addressed to sinners. When Peter was preaching to the Jewish sinners on the day of Pentecost, he didn’t leave it out. He said to them, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 2:38) It was not left out when the gospel was preached to the Gentile sinners. It says that Peter *“commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.”* (Acts 10:48) When the gospel was preached to Saul of Tarsus it was not left out. Ananias said to him, *“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'”* (Acts 22:16)

So then Philip did not leave it out when preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. While he was listening to Philip, he intensely desired to be baptized. He said, *“See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"* Philip, no doubt had taught the importance and necessity of baptism, as Peter had to the Jews and to the Gentiles.

Verses 38 and 39 says, *“So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.”*

Notice, both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. This is water baptism. And this also indicates immersion in water. It would have been unnecessary for Philip to have gone down into the water if all he was going to do is pour some water on the eunuch’s head. The fact that they both went down into the water favors immersion. And when it says “and he baptized him,” it is saying that he immersed him. The word “baptize” means to dip, to immerse. Baptism then is an immersion in water.

Now let me ask those of you who have heard others preach about conversion and salvation, does this conversion experience agree with what you have heard your preacher to preach? Many preachers preach that accepting Christ into your heart means you just believe in Him and pray a sinner’s prayer to be saved. Is this what the Ethiopian eunuch was told to do? Is this what he did? In any of the cases of conversion recorded in the book of Acts, were the sinners ever told to just believe in Jesus and pray the sinner’s prayer? No! Salvation by faith alone is never taught in scripture. Yes, we are saved by faith, but not faith alone. The faith that saves is a faith with obedience. James says in James 2:14, *“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?”* The answer is no. Faith without works cannot save a person. In verse 24 James say, *“You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”* Can a person be justified by faith only? James says “no!” Saving faith is a faith that will obey. We see that exemplified in the cases of conversion in the book of Acts. Those who were truly converted to Christ and were saved were those who believed in Jesus, but they demonstrated their faith by repenting of their sins and being baptized for the remission of sins.

When the Ethiopian eunuch did that, he went on his way rejoicing.

We stated at the beginning of the program today that there are two classes of examples of conversion. We have this class written down in the book of Acts, and we have this other class that happens in many present day churches. Why not choose to follow those examples in the book of Acts that occurred under the direction of inspired preachers, and recorded by an inspired writer?

You may have a question for our program. If you do we would like to hear from you. There are three ways you may send in your questions.

You may email it in: Our email address is sjchurch@sjchurchofchrist.com.

You may call it in: Our phone number is 573-265-8628. If no one is there to answer, just leave you question on the answering machine.

Or you may mail it in: The address is Bible Talk, PO Box 308, St. James, MO 65559