

God Has Spoken Tract Series



*Faith,
Confession,
Baptism,
Rejoicing!*

The brief record, in Acts chapter 8, of the conversion of the Ethiopian includes elements that teach important lessons. We're never told his name, we never hear more of him or his country after this single event. This passage is not even about him; we meet him in the record of Philip's work. Still, these few verses (26-40) are profound in their description of a soul's conversion to Christ. They are also striking in their simplicity. Here is an inspired illustration of the God-given work of preaching. Here too is an example of the spirit God wants in hearing that preaching. We find in Acts 8:26-40 the Holy Spirit's focus on faith, repentance, confession and baptism, and on the place those have in assuring salvation to the soul created in the image of God.

FAITH IS FUNDAMENTAL

Before returning to Heaven Jesus told His apostles, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* Hearing the word, and believing what is heard, are both prerequisite to salvation. When Philip approached the Ethiopian, and learned that he was reading from Isaiah 53, the evangelist asked, *“Understandest thou what thou readest?”* And he said, *“How can I, except some man should guide me?”* ... Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus (Acts 8:30-31, 35).

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

(Hebrews 1:1-2).

A preacher friend told of a man, a stranger, who came to him and wanted to study the Bible. The stranger said that he had “got saved,” and wanted to learn who God is and what He has said to the world. No one is saved from *the wages of sin* (Romans 6:23), who hasn’t learned the gospel. This is certain because *without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him* (Hebrews 11:6). That *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Romans 10:17).

Becoming a Christian requires faith. There is not one example or promise of salvation before faith or without it. Babies are not Christians, because babies cannot believe that Jesus is Christ. No one ignorant of Jesus is a Christian, because faith in Jesus is prerequisite to salvation, which is in Jesus (II Timothy 2:10). Every record of one becoming a Christian indicates a single pattern applied everywhere. Paul and Silas told the jailer in Philippi (Acts 16:30-31) first that he needed to *believe on the Lord*. They proceeded then to teach him what he needed to believe (Mark 16:15-16). After learning, he obeyed the teaching.

REPENTANCE IS REQUIRED

When Jews in Jerusalem asked Peter what to do they were told to *repent* (Acts 2:38). Jesus had earlier told some in the city, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish* (Luke 13:3). When the apostles and other Christians heard Peter’s account of the conversion of Cornelius they observed, *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life* (Acts 11:18). Repentance is the natural first step of one who has learned that Jesus is in truth the Son of God, the Christ. God requires that we turn (repent) from sin to serve Him (I Thessalonians 1:19). When John the baptizer preached he called upon people to *bring forth ... fruits meet for repentance* (Matthew 3:8); that is, to show evidence of their having turned.

The evidence in Luke’s record shows that the Ethiopian repented. He had come to worship according to Moses, and now wanted to follow the way of Jesus. A soul ready to turn and obey is not yet saved, but he is on the right course to salvation.

CONFESSION IS COMMANDED

The Ethiopian heard the gospel and wanted to be baptized, but Philip could not baptize him without knowledge of his faith – The man had

to tell (confess/profess) his faith in Jesus before he could be baptized. The Ethiopian confessed, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God.*

John concluded his gospel record, *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.* (John 20:30-31). Jesus said that His kingdom is built upon the confession that one believes that truth (Matthew 16:13-18). Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that *with the mouth confession is made unto salvation* (Romans 10:10). Confession of Christ is always precedent to receiving remission of sins (John 20:38; Matthew 16:16; I Timothy 6:12).

BAPTISM IS THE BEGINNING

The Ethiopian was studying the respected Book, seeking understanding of its prophecies and application of its promises. When those were understood he requested to be baptized. He had learned from Philip what Jesus had taught: that baptism is the point of salvation from sin (Mark 16:15-16) and the beginning of fellowship with Him (John 14:1-6). He spoke of it as a new birth (John 3:3-5) – a beginning again.

(If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Corinthians 5:17). There is no past record against him; all sin is forgiven: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:1). Philip had taught the Ethiopian the means of coming into Christ: baptism (Galatians 3:27). Paul described that beginning in Romans chapter six: *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life* (verses 3-4). From baptism we rise to begin a new life in Christ.

REJOICING IS THE RESULT

He went on his way rejoicing. The Ethiopian had reason to rejoice. He now understood the passage the comprehension of which had eluded him. When we believe enough to do as much as we know, that obedience will open our understanding to even more truth.

God had taken notice of Him and had sent a messenger especially to him. God is aware of ordinary people going about ordinary daily activities. Moses was tending sheep (Exodus 3). Gideon was threshing wheat in his father's field (Judges 6). Isaiah was a man of unclean lips dwelling among people of unclean lips (Isaiah 6). Jeremiah was a youth abiding until he was old enough to serve as a priest (Jeremiah 1). The Ethiopian was simply riding down the road, headed back home to serve his queen.

He could rejoice because he had been granted the blessing (baptism) he had requested. We all like to know that those with power to give it agree that we should have what we request. Jesus commanded that we hear the gospel, believe it, and obey it. He promised our salvation from Hell and our eternal fellowship with Him in Heaven. Rejoicing follows obeying and receiving.

Further, by the harmony of scripture we understand – as did the unnamed Ethiopian – that he was now saved from the wages of sin. His baptism put him into Jesus. Jesus is the Savior of the world (Matthew 1:21), *the captain of our salvation* (Hebrews 2:9-11).



Skyway Publishing
P. O. Box 662
Lincoln, IL 62656
the literature work of Confirming the Churches
www.skywaypub.org