

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Our Scripture selection is a beautiful account concerning an individual who came to faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. It's truly vital for folks to come to faith in Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, is the only Way to God and heaven, for John 3:16-18 declares, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Now, faith in Jesus Christ is NOT something sinful human beings can produce in themselves by their own power, in whole or in part, for Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly states, "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Yes, it is God who bestows faith; it is God who converts unbelievers into believers, for 1 Corinthians 12:3 informs us, "that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

Therefore, let us be reinforced in the truth as we ponder our sermon text, which tells us about:

#### "THE CONVERSION OF AN ETHIOPIAN MAN"

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) Who the Ethiopian man was
- 2) How the Ethiopian man was converted
- 3) What happened after the Ethiopian man was converted

Verse 26, ----- (Acts 8:26)

Philip was an evangelist, a preacher of the Gospel of Christ, for prior to our Scripture selection, we read in Acts 8:5-8, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city." Furthermore, Acts 8:12 informs us, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Accordingly, the preaching of the Gospel of Christ brought many folks to faith in Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord.

Subsequently, in the opening verse of our sermon text, we learn, *the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.* Just think of it: a holy angel, a messenger of the Lord, spoke directly to Philip, instructing him to go on a certain road into the desert, south of Jerusalem, toward the city of Gaza, the southernmost city of Palestine, which was located in the territory of the ancient Philistines.

Verses 27 & 28, ----- (Acts 8:27-28)

Did Philip argue with the angel or question why he was to go into a desert away from the city where he had much success in preaching Jesus Christ to crowds of people? No. Philip *arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.*

Hence, our text introduces us to an Ethiopian man, a man with dark skin, a Negro; a man of high social rank in his African country of Ethiopia; a man of great authority who worked directly under a woman named Candace, who was the queen of Ethiopia at that time. The Ethiopian man was a eunuch, a castrated male, as such was the practice long ago in some countries, in order to prevent improper sexual activities between a queen and those employed by her for civic duties. The Ethiopian man in our text had great authority, being in charge of all the queen's treasure, all her great wealth. So, the Ethiopian man was an individual of high position in his country, subject only to queen Candace.

Additionally, the Ethiopian man had respect for the God of Israel, the God of the Old Testament Holy Scriptures, for the Ethiopian man had been to *Jerusalem* for the purpose of *worship*, but was subsequently on his way home, *and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet*. Thus, the Ethiopian man was a student of the Holy Bible.

My friends, we all do well to be students of the Holy Bible, for we read in 2 Timothy 3:15-17, "the holy scriptures... are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Let us follow the example of the Ethiopian man in valuing the Holy Scriptures.

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As we proceed with our sermon text, let us see how the Ethiopian man was converted.

Verse 29, ----- (Acts 8:29)

Philip was traveling on foot along the desert road which led from Jerusalem to Gaza, as he had been commanded to do by an angel of the Lord; an Ethiopian man of great civil authority was traveling the same road, seated in his chariot, reading the

book of Isaiah the prophet in the Old Testament Holy Scriptures. Now, when Philip and the Ethiopian man were within visual range of each other, the Holy Spirit said unto Philip, *Go near, and join thyself to this chariot*.

Think of it. Philip the evangelist who had recently preached Christ to multitudes in Samaria, was instructed by the Holy Ghost to go and join himself to a chariot in which one man was reading from the Old Testament book of Isaiah the prophet. Oh beloved, EVERY SOUL is important to God.

Verses 30 & 31, ----- (Acts 8:30-31)

Consider Philip's response to the command given him by the Holy Spirit, for *Philip ran thither to the Ethiopian man, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him*.

It is commendable that the Ethiopian man desired guidance in his study of God's Word, the book of the prophet Isaiah. The Ethiopian man cared about what the words he was reading meant; the Ethiopian man was not satisfied with a mere mechanical reading of the Scriptures.

We too need to care about what we are reading when we spend time in the Holy Bible, for our Lord Jesus Christ instructs, in John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

Getting back to our sermon text, observe that Philip did NOT argue with God the Holy Ghost and say, "I'm not going to get in the chariot because that dude is black." Nor did Philip say, "I'm not going to waste my time talking to just one man, I need to speak to big crowds." Rather, Philip immediately and energetically obeyed the command of God the Holy Ghost, for he ran over to the chariot in which the Ethiopian man was seated.

Philip rightly took a genuine interest in the Ethiopian man, for every soul is precious in God's sight! Indeed, in 1 Timothy 2:4-6 we are told in no uncertain terms that God our Savior is He, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Yes, whether a person is black or white, or any shade in between, he or she needs the salvation earned by Jesus Christ for the whole world, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; [and] the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 3:23; 6:23) God grant that we too have a genuine interest in every human being. Let us regularly pray to the Lord to awaken people by His Word, that they may come to realize their sin and their desperate need for Jesus Christ, the only Savior from sin.

Verses 32 & 33, ----- (Acts 8:32-33)

It's interesting to note that the Ethiopian man was reading a portion of Isaiah which are words of prophecy concerning the Messiah, the Christ, for *The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.*

Yes, it is Isaiah 53:7-8, which reads, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

Of course, we New Testament Christians know that those words of prophecy were completely fulfilled by Jesus Christ, true God and true man, who willingly suffered and died for us on the tree of the

cross. Indeed, Jesus Christ, the eternal only begotten Son of God, is He, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:6-8)

Jesus Christ willingly gave Himself into death to pay for our sins in full, yea, to pay for the sins of the whole world. It's as 1 Peter 1:18-19 relates, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Yes, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures... he was buried, and... he rose again the third day according to the scriptures," as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

Nevertheless, the Ethiopian man in our sermon text did not yet know that the words he read in the book of the prophet Isaiah referred to Jesus Christ; but, that was about to change.

Verses 34 & 35, ----- (Acts 8:34-35)

The Ethiopian man desired to learn from the Holy Scriptures, for he asked Philip, saying, *of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

Notice that Philip BEGAN at the same Scripture verse in Isaiah, but he obviously continued by sharing OTHER Bible passages with the Ethiopian man. Most importantly, Philip PREACHED UNTO HIM JESUS. Yes, Philip proclaimed the Gospel of Christ to that Ethiopian man.

Philip was right to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also

to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17) God grant that we all continue to value His Holy Word, especially the Gospel of Christ.

Verses 36 & 37, -----. (Acts 8:36-37)

The fact that the Ethiopian man desired baptism indicates that Philip had undoubtedly told him about that sacrament which is commanded by Christ. Yes, it happened that as the Ethiopian man and Philip *went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* Thus, the Ethiopian man, upon being instructed in the Word of God, was converted, for he came to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ— the REAL Jesus Christ who is the Son of God.

The Ethiopian man’s faith in Christ was faith of the heart and not mere head-knowledge. The Ethiopian man’s faith in Jesus Christ was wrought in Him by the Holy Ghost who worked through the Word of God which the man read and Philip preached unto him. Indeed, it’s as Romans 10:17 declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Accordingly, the Ethiopian man confessed Christ with his lips from his heart; a heart which now beat with love and faith in Christ Jesus.

It’s evident from the Ethiopian man’s desire to be baptized that he recognized the value of holy baptism; he did NOT consider baptism a useless ceremony, as is sadly the case with all-too-many professed Christians in our present day and age. Let us never forget that Jesus once said to a man named Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto

thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:3-6) So, being born again IS BEING BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT— that is, by holy baptism, the Holy Ghost working therein, His Word accompanying the water.

Jesus Christ in His great commission commands, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:19-20) So, all nations, people young and old, are to be baptized in the name of the Triune God and taught to observe all things commanded by Christ in His Word.

Oh, holy baptism is important, for, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:5-7) Therefore, Holy Scripture is clear: baptism is NOT to be despised, for it is a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost!

Take it to heart that the Ethiopian man was converted by God the Holy Ghost working through His Holy Word.

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As we ponder our sermon text to its conclusion, let us see what happened after the Ethiopian man was converted.

Verses 38 & 39, -----. (Acts 8:38-39)

Despite being in a desert area, some water was available, as there are a few shallow streams in the area even yet today. So, the chariot was stopped,

*and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*

Now, there are certain professed Christians who make much out of the method in which water is applied in baptism, insisting on immersion, while the same people unfortunately have little to say about the benefits of baptism, since they look at it as a work man does to please God, rather than a work of God by which man is benefitted. Anyway, our sermon text says *they went down both INTO the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.* Our text does NOT say *they went UNDER the water.* To BAPTIZE, according to the original Greek Word and its uses throughout the New Testament, is to apply water, to wash— by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.

The important thing to remember is that water is applied to the individual in the NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY GHOST! Without the Word of God there is NO baptism. Adults who have been instructed in God's Word receive baptism after such instruction and after confessing their faith in Christ, as did the Ethiopian man in our sermon text. Infants are baptized because they are NOT EXCLUDED from Christ's command to baptize ALL NATIONS; but, they are certainly to be instructed in the faith as they continue to grow, lest they lose the faith God has given them, for Ephesians 6:4 commands, "ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Holy Scripture reports that entire households were baptized. Furthermore, let no one deny that babies can have faith, for Jesus says in Mark 9:42, "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." And, Luke 18:15-16 relates, "they brought unto him also infants, that

he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Therefore, let no one keep their children from holy baptism! Bring those little ones to Jesus!

No sooner had Philip and the Ethiopian man come up out of the water onto dry land, that *the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.*

The Holy Spirit took Philip away to another location. Nevertheless, the Ethiopian man was not saddened by Philip's departure; rather, he went on his way rejoicing, since he now knew Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord.

Fellow Christians, we have reason to rejoice in knowing Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, for Romans 5:1-2 says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Yes, the joy of eternal life in heaven awaits all of us who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior!

Let us therefore remember what we've pondered in our sermon text concerning the conversion of an Ethiopian man.

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, never forgetting that Mark 16:16 clearly states, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Amen.

m.e.l.