

Conversion

Sunday, June 6th, 1993

Acts 8: 26-39

And 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. And he 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. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, 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. 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. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, 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. And as they 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. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: 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.

We are going to be looking at the Acts of the Apostles again today. I'll be speaking from the Eighth Chapter of the Book of Acts. It is the story of a man to whom God Almighty brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't have any information about this man, prior to this time, and I don't believe that there is any information about him after this time. One thing is quite certain, this man was one of God's elect; I am certain of it. This man is one of God's sheep; I am certain of it.

His experience is recorded for us in the Word of God, like the experience of the Apostle Paul and like the other apostles our Lord called. He called Matthew, John, Peter, James and the others. Now, here is a man whom God saved.

Philip was up in Samaria and God was blessing people. They were hearing the gospel and being saved. The Spirit of God said to Philip, "*You go down into the desert in a place called Gaza between Jerusalem and Ethiopia.*" So, Philip went down there and while

standing in the desert, chariots approached him. There was a man in one of these chariots. He was an outstanding man, a wealthy man. He was a servant of the queen of Ethiopia. He was her treasurer; he had charge of all of her riches.

What was this man doing in the desert? He had been to Jerusalem to worship. He had been to Jerusalem to attend a feast that I talked about last week, the Feast of the Pentecost or the Feast of the First Fruits. He was on his way home, sitting in his chariot, reading the Word of God. We even know what part of the Word of God he was reading. He was reading the prophet Isaiah.

The angel of the Lord said to Philip, *"You go join yourself to this chariot,"* so Philip did as he was told. He was walking along the chariot and the man was sitting there reading. He may have even been reading aloud. Philip looked at him in the chariot, and Philip said, "Do you know understand what you are reading?" He leaned out the window of the chariot and said, *"How can I understand unless someone shows me, unless someone teaches me?"* He had been to Jerusalem to hear the Pharisees and the Sadducees, Scribes and Priests; they hadn't taught him anything. He said to Philip, *"I can't understand it if someone doesn't teach me."* He asked Philip to come up and sit beside him. So, Philip got up in the chair and sat down, and looked at the place where he was reading, in Isaiah 53.

Philip began at that scripture and preached Christ Jesus to him. The story goes on that as they went their way, the man, seeing a body of water, outside of the chariot beside the road, said, *"Here's water, what doth hinder me from being baptized?"* Philip said, *"If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest."* He said, *"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* Phillip had the chariot to stop, they got out and Philip immersed him, (baptized him) and he came up straightway out of the water. When they had come out of the water, the Lord took Philip away. The scripture says; *"The man went on his way rejoicing in the Lord."*

Now, I have preached from this text many times. I'll probably preach from it many more because it is so encouraging and so enlightening and it is edifying to all believers. There is something here for us every time we read it and every time we preach from it. I saw something recently, and I preached it to our folks at home. There's something that might be a special help to you today; I believe it might be in regard to the matter of conversion. That is the title of this sermon: "CONVERSION."

When is a person converted? When is a person truly saved? What takes place in conversion? This man was converted; there was not a doubt about it. God sent one of His chief preachers to talk to this man and this man was converted; I am sure of that.

What took place? When was he converted, How was he converted? What took place when he was converted?

Now, there is a lot of hand raising today, maybe both hands. There is a lot of isle walking, a lot of people going down the isle. I see them in these huge campaign palaces, just going down front in these football stadiums, or the front of a church, or the front of a tent. There are people walking down isles, and making decisions. They call it "conversion." I do know this; it does not last long. I see these same people getting converted over and over again in these meetings. It doesn't last long and it doesn't bring peace, it doesn't bring grace and it doesn't change their lives or their hearts.

Here is an example of true conversion recorded in God's Word by the Holy Spirit. It is set forth clearly, right here, and I will show you five things that God, I believe, has revealed to me in this. I really feel that I have been taught concerning this thing called conversion. I believe there are five things that are seen and experienced in every conversion. It's shown right here and there is a reason why this story is in the Word of God. I mean minutely, in detail and it is spelled out, everything that went on. There is a reason for that. The Bible does not have that many volumes, for God to give so much space to this man's conversion.

Here are some reasons; it is something that happens in all-true conversions.

First of all, see if this is not true. There is an interest in the things of God. It says in Acts 8:27, "*Behold a man of Ethiopia had come to Jerusalem.*" This man had taken a long, perilous, and tiresome journey, all the way to Jerusalem. He had heard about the God of Israel. He had heard about the people of Israel. He had heard about the temple of Solomon. He had heard about the sacrifices and the ceremony. He had heard about the miracles of God. He took a chariot and went all the way to Jerusalem and he was on his way back home, after the feast and after the ceremony, sitting in his chariot, reading the scriptures. So, there was an interest. God had given to him and kindled in him some time, an interest in God, in the things of God and in the Word of God. Somewhere he secured a copy of God's Word and he was reading it.

I know he had received nothing in Jerusalem. Those fellows didn't know God and they didn't know Christ. "*The Lord Jesus came to His own and His own received Him not. He was in the world and the world didn't know Him.*" The religious leaders didn't know Him, so they couldn't give this man anything; they didn't have anything. The man had an interest and a desire was there.

I'll tell you, when the Lord begins a work of grace in a person's heart, man or woman, girl or boy, there is first, an interest, kindled in the heart. I don't know when He begins it and I can't point you to the time or the day or the hour. It is like these people who came to the disciples and said, "*Sirs, we would see Jesus; we want to see Jesus; we want to hear him.*"

What about Zacchaeus climbing up in a tree? This Publican, Zacchaeus, when did that interest become so compelling that he was willing? He was a little fellow, a collector of taxes, and a prominent man in town. Why would a Publican climb a tree and almost make a fool out of himself? He was sitting up in the tree with boys and girls wanting to hear and see Jesus Christ. There was an interest! I'll tell you, when the Lord came there, He looked up and called Zacchaeus to come down.

There was a man named Cornelius who was another example. He was a man that had an interest. He was a devout man; and he prayed to God, but he didn't know the gospel. God sent Peter down to preach the gospel to him. He didn't even know what Peter was going to say, but he sent for him.

What about Rahab the Harlot? Did you ever read that story in the Book of Joshua, Chapter Two? The spies came to Rahab's house. This is when the Jews had been in the wilderness for 40 years. They were about to enter Canaan and conquer Jericho, and she said, "*We have heard about you people for 40 years; we know about you crossing the Red Sea. We know about your God; your God is God.*" She expressed an interest in knowing that God.

What about Lydia? Paul came to Philippi to preach and he went down by the riverside and found a dozen women. One of them was named Lydia. She didn't know the gospel; she didn't know Christ, but they had gathered down by the river to pray and God sent them a preacher.

What about the man from Macedonia who appeared to Paul in a vision and said, "*Would you come over and help us?*"

I have a missionary who is a friend from Mexico. It is a place called the Yucatan. It's a very poor, poor part of Mexico. I've been down there a lot of times. The roads are so rough and rocky. In some places, you can't even drive a car. You can ride a bicycle or walk but the roads are so terrible, that you can't get to those villages. One day, this missionary friend was out preaching and handing out Bibles and was teaching the people. He saw a road that he had never driven on in his truck. It was a terrible, terrible, road. He took that truck and went over that road and pulled up in front of one of those little

stone houses with a grass roof and three women came running out. They said, “Come in, our grandmother dreamed, (listen to me now; this is a true story); our grandmother dreamed that a North American would come in a machine and tell us about God. Are you going to tell us about God?” There was an interest!

I will tell you this, when the Sower went forth to sow, he sowed the seed. Some of it fell on fallow ground and stony ground and ground where the weeds ate it up. Some of it fell on what? Some of it fell on plowed ground. Who plowed the ground? God did it! Are you interested? A man will never hear the gospel without an interest, (not effectually). God has got to give him an interest.

The Ethiopian Eunuch had an interest. He got into his chariot and went clear to Jerusalem. Miles won't make any difference if you ever get an interest. I hear people say, “I watch you on television. I live about 50 miles from where you preach; that is too far to go.” If you ever get interested, miles mean nothing. There has to be an interest!

Secondly, there was an encounter with someone who knew the gospel and preached the gospel. The Spirit of the Lord in verse 29 said to Phillip, “*You go near and join yourself to that chariot.*” Phillip went to that chariot and heard him read and said, “*Do you understand what you are reading?*” I will tell you this; this man had an interest and God gave him that interest and God sent him a true prophet to teach him the gospel and to preach to him the gospel. That's right! God sent him a prophet.

The Lord sent Peter to Cornelius. If you've got an interest in the gospel, if God's given you an interest in really knowing Him, (I'm not talking about an interest in religion; everybody is interested in religion; religion is as plenteous as sunshine), a real interest in the gospel is a rarity today. The gospel, the gospel preaching is a rarity. God sent Peter to Cornelius, and He sent Ananias to Paul. He sent Paul to Lydia and He sent Phillip to the Eunuch. If you are one of His own, He will cross your path with the truth. That may be why you turned this program on.

I was in Australia preaching, two years ago. I ran into a young man from one of the Scandinavian countries. He was down in a little village in Australia, called Tumut. They didn't even have a church building. We were meeting in the City Hall in the City Building. I had a crowd of people there to preach to.

This young man, an engineer, had come down to Tumut for some reason to Australia, half a way around the world. We met and I preached to him that night and he came up to me after the service and said, “What in the world is a fellow from Kentucky doing clear down here in this little village in the middle of the night in Australia?” I said, “God sent

me here to tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ. You came all the way to hear about Him and I came here to tell you about Him, just like Phillip met the Eunuch in the middle of the desert.” *“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved, but how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?” “God has chosen by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”*

When Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, he said, *“I know you are one of God’s own, I know you are one of God’s elect;”* I know you are because, *“Our gospel didn’t come to you in Word only, it came to you in power in the Holy Ghost with much assurance.”* That’s how I know that you are one of God’s sheep because God sent you the gospel. It is Paul said to the Ephesian Church *“In whom you trusted, after you heard the Word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation.”*

We’ve got to preach the Word in context, verse by verse. I can’t just stand up here and bawl you out for not coming to church and not sending in a dollar and all that other foolishness. I am here to preach Christ and to tell you about the Lord and to tell you what His Word says. What you do with it is between you and God. God sends men a preacher. That preacher cannot save him, but he can tell him the truth. God can save him and reveal Christ to him. This man had an interest and then he ran into, (not by accident), but on purpose, he ran into a true preacher, one of God’s true preachers.

Thirdly, there was an understanding. You need to have an understanding. Look at verses 30 and 31: Phillip asked him, *“Do you understand what you are reading?”* You are sitting here reading the prophet Isaiah, Chapter 53, Philip said, *“Do you understand it?”* Do you know how that chapter goes? *“Who hath believed our report, to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground. He hath neither form nor comeliness. There is no beauty about Him that we should desire Him. He’s a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. Despised and rejected of men. We hid as it were our faces from Him. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. By His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we’ve turned everyone to his own way. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”* Phillip said, *“Do you understand what you are reading?”* He said, *“How can I understand this?”* “These are words I do not understand, things I know nothing about.”

I know I’m a treasurer; I know about money, paying bills, borrowing, finance, percentages, interest, and annuities, but I don’t know anything about these things. I will tell you the very fact that the scriptures are the Word of God and they make them impossible for a natural mind to understand. *“Can we by nature find God? Can we by*

searching find God? God is higher than the heavens, who can know Him? He's deeper than hell, who can understand Him? He's broader than the sea, who can encompass Him?"

In First Corinthians Chapter 2:14 says, *"The natural man receiveth not the things of God, they are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them; they are spiritually discerned."* The word mystery is used over and over and over again regarding the Word of God, and *"Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh."* The mystery of Christ, the mystery of the gospel; these are the scriptures. There's the mystery of the church; it's Christ and the church. There's the mystery of the Gentiles, and the mystery of the resurrection. Paul said, *"I show you a mystery."*

Not to speak of the questions raised by Job, but *"How can man be just with God?"* Do you have an answer? *"How can he be clean that is born of a woman? How can God be just and justify ungodly people?"*

If a man dies, where is he? We have his body right here, but where is he? If a man dies, shall he live again? They are mysteries, all mysteries. How can the law be satisfied and yet curse? How can the judgment of God and justice of God punish, and yet forgive. How can mercy and truth meet together? They are as far apart as the poles. *"How can righteousness, (strict righteousness) and peace kiss each other?"* They are mysteries. How beautiful are the feet of them that open those mysteries, who preach the gospel. God has ordained prophets, apostles, missionaries, pastors and teachers that we might understand these mysteries.

I am not a cheerleader, I'm not up here to lead chants and cheers and cantatas; I'm here preaching, proclaiming and teaching the Word of God. I'm preaching *"How God can be just and justifer."* I'm teaching *"How can he be clean that is born of a woman?"* I am up here talking seriously and scripturally, and straightforwardly to you about the things of God.

What do you want me to do? Do you want me to run around this pulpit; go around here in front of a bunch of flowers and wave my hands and make jokes? This is not the time to joke. This man wasn't joking. He said, *"How can I understand if somebody doesn't show me?"* I've got to know. He said, *"Of whom does this man speak, himself or some other man? Of whom does he speak?"*

Now, this thing of conversion, there was an interest in God. There was an encounter with a man of God. There was an understanding.

Fourthly, then came a revelation of Jesus Christ. He was reading Isaiah 53, *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, He bore the chastisement of our peace, He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.”* The Ethiopian asked, *“I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?”* He’s talking about the God-Man Mediator. Pilate said, *“Behold the man, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

I’ll tell you; all the way through the Old Testament from Genesis 3:15 a man is promised. That seed of woman is a man. That’s right, born of a woman. That seed of Abraham is a man. That Son of David is a man. Redemption is in a man, and salvation is in a man.

So, Phillip began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus Christ the God-man. He’s my message. He must be your message. It’s not the Baptist Church or the Catholic Church or whatever church. The church can’t save; Christ does. The church is not our mediator. *“There’s only one Mediator between God and men, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Our Lord has come to fulfill for us, all things. *“In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”* The Old Testament says, *“Someone’s coming.”* The four gospel records says, *“He has come.”* In Matthew, He’s King of the Jews, in Mark, He’s the servant, in Luke, He’s the Son of man, and in John, He’s the Son of God. That is who He is.

The epistles say, *“That someone is coming back.”* His reward is with Him and He’s coming for His own. The Father gave them to Him. He came down and purchased them and one day He will come to receive them. This man is none other than the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Fifthly, what’s the next thing in conversion? It is confession. This man sat there; God gave him an interest; God gave him a preacher; God gave him an understanding; God gave him a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and he said to Phillip, *“I want to confess Christ in baptism.”* Phillip said, *“Do you believe?”*

That is the only hedge put about baptism. You don’t hedge it about with rules and regulations and church membership and all of these things. You hedge it about with one question, *“Do you believe with all your heart, you may.”* He said, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”* What is it to confess Christ? It is to believe it in my heart. It is to publicly confess him in baptism. Christ died and was buried and rose again.

We’re dead to the world; buried, raised to walk in newness of life. It is to identify with His people. You’re not to be ashamed of His people. It is to confess Christ in my walk

and in my talk and in my daily behavior and daily conduct. That's how I confess Christ. I confess Christ daily when I talk to people and walk before people, where I work and where I live. I confess Christ in my home.

One time, a fellow asked John Newton, "Do you believe Mr. Shades is a converted man?" Mr. Newton replied, "I don't know, I have never lived with him." There's one way to know if a man is a converted man is to live with him and you will find it out.

To confess Christ is to continually confess Him, day by day until the end of the journey of life. Believers do persevere and die in faith.