

The Ethiopian Eunuch's Story

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[0 : 00] Let's turn in our Bibles to the passage of Scripture which we read in the Book of Acts, chapter 8. And while I want to refer to much of what we read, well maybe just read again verse 35.

Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

Well in the passage we read from verse 4 we read about two people who professed Christianity, Simon the Sorcerer and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

One was right and one was wrong. There's a false profession of a shrewd trickster, Simon the Sorcerer first of all and then there's the genuine conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch, a humble believer in Christ.

So let's look at both these incidents to see what we can learn. First of all, briefly the false profession of Simon the Sorcerer.

[1 : 28] Well look at his faith, his nature, his response. Briefly his faith.

What did he believe? He actually believed and followed Philip. If you read verse 12, it's Philip he believed.

What he believed was the things about the kingdom of God. Believed about them. He believed in God, believed in heaven, believed in hell, believed in sin, about these things.

What he actually believed was the miracles. That's what he believed. What he could see with his eyes but these things he heard about, he only heard about and believed about them.

He didn't believe in them. You see, it's not people believe about Christ but it's believing in Christ that saves.

[2 : 39] Do you believe, well, do you believe in Boris Johnson? Well, believe about him. Who believes in him?

See the difference? There's very few intelligent people who don't believe about Jesus Christ. Very few intelligent people. The evidence is so strong but it's not enough to believe about him.

You have to believe in him and on him. That was his faith. It wasn't a faith in Christ or on Christ just about the things he did and said.

What about his nature? Well, 21 to 23 tells us his heart was not right with God.

You see, religions about the heart, it's about our nature. And we do wrong things because our heart is not right.

[3 : 40] His heart was not right. He was never changed, never born again. Verse 22 tells us he had wicked intentions.

Simon the social was devising, plotting, contriving plans. He was planning to, well, some few things with the power he had.

He was interested in the power. He wasn't interested in being changed. He wasn't interested in being forgiven, interested in power. And verse 23 says it all.

The Bible never lies. You're in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Now these terms are terms which actually means Simon was controlled by a bitter spirit.

He was intentionally promoting and scheming evil. He had a deep, deep craving for power, fame and fortune.

[4 : 46] Simon the social is not a case of someone being deceived and you feel sorry for him. The very opposite. He wasn't being deceived. He was deceiving the church.

He was deceiving the Christians. He was plotting, he was scheming. And it's all proved, thoroughly, by his response to what Philip said.

And that is the saddest thing of all. He was told his condition. He was told his sin.

He was told what to do. You pray and all can be forgiven. That's the gospel. That's the gospel.

Confess your sins. Ask for forgiveness and you're forgiven. Simple. Hard to do, am I right? Very simple.

[5 : 45] Hard to do. You've done wrong. You couldn't do it. Simon never mentions his sin.

He never mentions repentance. He never mentions the need to be changed in need for a new heart. He never even mentions forgiveness.

Simon's only concern is to escape judgment. Now that's perfectly natural. That's perfectly... No one wants to go to hell even though wicked don't want to go to hell.

It's just that they don't believe in the place. It's perfectly natural not to want to go to hell. So he says you pray. I'm not going to pray but you pray I won't go.

I find so sad. He never asks for forgiveness. We're back to the children's story. Ask for Jesus to forgive you.

[6 : 42] He died so that you'd have the power to forgive people their sins. Just ask him to forgive you. That's the gospel. There's nothing else. That's what starts off this change of life.

There's nothing to say to God in fact. There's no prayer of sin. There's no fear of God.

There's no desire for forgiveness. No faith in the gospel. There's no Jesus Christ anywhere.

Well let's change the subject. Let's now look at the genuine conversion of the Ethiopian unique.

I heard somewhere there was probably no one else on earth more unlikely to become a Christian.

[7 : 46] I've read that. He was one of the most unlikely people on earth to become a Christian. And here he is leaving the most likely place on earth where he would be converted, become a Christian.

Jerusalem, Israel. You see you've heard of Jews and Gentiles and you can divide the world into two by saying Jews or Gentiles because what is a Gentile?

Any person on earth is a Gentile if he's not a Jew. A Gentile is someone who's not a Jew.

So here is this Gentile and what a lot there is against this man ever becoming a Christian because first of all as I've said he was a Gentile.

Now the Jews were the people of God. God chose the Jewish race that he would send his word that they would be able to have the oracles of God which is just the Bible, the word of God from heaven.

[9 : 01] It was left, it was deposited with the Jews. Who were incidentally when the time came whose job was to spread this gospel to the Gentiles but they wouldn't do it?

They're proud, proud. God spoke to us. We got the tablets, the two table tablets of stone direct from God written with his finger.

We are the people. Have you heard that before? We are the people. That was the Jews proud, proud and their job was to keep the oracles of God and eventually when the time came to tell all the other nations but they haven't done it yet.

But can you hear what Satan will be whispering to the Ethiopian unique? If God wanted you to be a Jew, a Christian, he'd have made you a Jew.

That's where God's word is. That's where God's people is. That's where God's house is in Jerusalem, the capital. God can't want you to be a Christian or he'd have made you a Jew.

[10 : 12] Never ever listen to that whisper. Whoever says it, it'll come from below. It'll come from the pit of hell. Never listen to anyone who says the gospel is not for you, Christ is for you.

But there's something else against the Ethiopian unit, not just that he was a Gentile but he was an Ethiopian. Now I don't know why.

I've never been able to discover why. And I've spent a little bit of time but for some reason to the Jew, the most despicable person on earth was the Ethiopian.

And there's a verse in the Bible which says, Ethiopia to God will soon stretch out her hands.

Meaning, here's this unbelievable news, Ethiopia, Ethiopia becoming Christians.

No, can't believe it. Well the unique was an Ethiopian. There'd be no people of God, no Israelites ever praying for Ethiopia.

[11 : 26] And here he is, can you hear him saying, if God wanted me to become a Christian, he wouldn't have made me a Gentile and he wouldn't have made me an Ethiopian because there's no one praying for me.

But there's something else even more than that, this Ethiopian unit had great riches and power.

He was tremendously well off. He was today's equivalent of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. All the treasure, all the money in Ethiopia was at his disposal.

We heard it there, verse 27. He arose and went and there was an Ethiopian, a unique, a court official of candidacy, Queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure.

He was the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He had millions, equivalent today of billions at his disposal, wealthy, wealthy, wealthy person.

[12:41] Did you remember what Jesus said about the wealthy? Do you remember how hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of heaven?

Can you hear what Satan whispered to him? If God wanted you to be a Christian, he wouldn't have made it so hard for you.

And a lot against this man becoming a Christian. But there's even something more against him ever becoming a Christian.

And that's the fact that he was a unique. You see, I've mentioned before how privileged the Jews race was, and how only the Jews had the Word of God, the House of God, and the people of God. But there was a system, there was an arrangement within Judaism whereby somebody could become a proselyte, what they call a full proselyte, or a God-fearer.

[13:54] And that is, if any Gentile, not born a Jew, if he heard about the God of Israel and said, hey, I think that's the real God, I think that's the only God, that's the God I want, I want to worship this God.

There was an arrangement whereby Gentiles could become what they call proselytes, or God-fearers. But there were seven stages in becoming a proselyte, a full proselyte. Seven steps in becoming a proselyte. And everyone that wanted to be a God-fearer or a proselyte could come along among them and be a proselyte, except, except the unique.

The unique was only allowed to take the six steps. He was never allowed to take the seventh step and become a full proselyte.

You can hear the devil, can't you? He can hear himself, can't you? If God wanted me, He wouldn't have made me a unique.

[15:14] And you know, there was something else about the unique. Not only could he not become a full proselyte, like taking the seven steps, he was actually forbidden, unics were forbidden to enter the congregation of the Jews.

Deuteronomy 23 verse 1 spells it out. Forbidden to enter the congregation. He does our texts say, what was he doing?

He went to Jerusalem to worship. He never got in, it seems. He never got in. He tells us he was returning.

He was coming back from Jerusalem. Possibly didn't get past the door. You see, we read there, he was a court official.

For some reason, unics did have this on their side. They got into, they got very high positions in government. And he was a government official and apparently they had some kind of uniform so you could tell right away.

[16:29] Imagine, it seems, he arrived at the court of the temple. And this man at the door said, you're unique?

Sorry, sorry, you can't get in. Can you hear the devil?

Can you hear? Can you imagine what he felt like? God doesn't want me in his kingdom. Eh?

Well, there was all these things against him. But you know this. According to secular history, it's not recorded in the Bible, but according to secular history, he eventually became the first bishop of Ethiopia, the Episcopal Church.

Anyway, how did it all happen? How come this man got into the kingdom of heaven? Well, there was all these things he had against him, but there was a couple of things that were for him.

[17:46] Number one, he has a few pages of the Bible. Only a few pages. There were no Bibles in these days. There's no Bibles. There's no books.

But there were scrolls. And you didn't get a whole...the Bible, well, you know that. 66 books compiled together.

How did he get hold of it? A unique from Ethiopia. How did they get hold of...well, we don't know. And it actually doesn't matter. But I found it very interesting.

I read once, are we allowed to use sanctified imagination? Are you allowed here? Here's just something to hear.

It's very interesting. Maybe...it's only imagination. Maybe when he was rejected from the church, from the temple, he must have been in an awful state, turned away from the house of God.

[18 : 51] Maybe he wandered into the streets of Jerusalem and saw the Old Testament equivalent of a Bible bookshop and he says, maybe I'll go in there.

He goes in there and he says to the bookshop manager, tell me, have you anything for a unique? I've just been turned away from the house of God.

Have you anything in your bookshop for a unique? He's a good manager. He's a good bookshop manager. He knows his Bible.

Ah, he says, there is, there is a verse in the Bible in the Old Testament, you know, in the book of Isaiah chapter 56, it says something there about unix.

Let me read it to you. Isaiah 56 verse 4, thus says the Lord to the unix, to the unix who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant.

[20 : 04] I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters.

There's an Old Testament promise to your unix, despised, rejected.

There's a promise when the New Testament comes and the New Testament has come. It has started in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is a transitional period from the Old Testament, ways of worshiping God to the New Testament ways.

But he hasn't reached chapter 56 because he's not divided at the chapters then. But he's reading the scroll, the few pages in the middle or toward the end of the book of the writings of the prophecies of Isaiah.

[21 : 07] And he's only at chapter 53 reading about Christ, reading about the sufferings of Jesus.

And he asks him a question. Who's this worried about? Who's this man that was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquity?

Who is he? Who is he? How can I get hold of him? And that's the second thing that's in his favour. Number one, he's got a couple of pages of the Bible. Number two, he's a preacher of good news. He's got the words of God, but he doesn't understand it.

So he asks the servant of God, what does this mean? What does this mean for me? How can I get no more about this man?

[22 : 11] And Philip, as our text says, told him the good news about Jesus.

There were good signs. There were good signs. All were bad signs, but there were good signs. You see, he genuinely sought God. He genuinely sought salvation. He genuinely sought forgiveness.

Simon the sorcerer sought power. Simon the sorcerer sought publicity. He wanted power.

What are you seeking? Forgiveness, pardon, salvation. God, well, you'll get it in Jesus.

[23 : 11] You'll get it in Christ. Another good sign, it's not only what he sought, but he wanted to understand about Jesus.

He wanted to understand the word. You know, there are people, and they can quote the Bible by the square meter, but they don't understand it.

They don't understand it. It's vital to understand this book. Some of it's very, very hard.

Peter said that about Paul, or was it Paul who said it about Peter? Self, which some things hard to be understood, but it's important to understand what God is saying.

You know the best way to understand what God is saying? Look at Jesus. Look at Christ. He's a way to the Father.

[24 : 15] And Jesus himself said, He who has seen me has seen the Father. Do you want to know God?

No Jesus, no Christ. That's what's vital. That's what's important. You've got to a desire to understand what all this is about.

Simon only wanted to understand how he get the power of miracles. I want to be able to do this miracle. Well, the Ethiopian Eureka, I want to understand why Christ died.

Why did Christ die? Why did he die for someone like me? That's where salvation is. That's where forgiveness is.

That's where pardon is. Interested in the death of Christ. Well, just in conclusion, two things.

[25 : 22] Number one, we better ask, what then is a Christian? Here we have two examples of professions, one right, one wrong.

What is a Christian? Who is a Christian? It is someone who is depending on the death of Christ to take them to heaven. You see, there were three people crucified that Friday afternoon. Three. Why is it the one in the middle that's different? Why? Try and understand it. He'd never committed a sin, and yet he was punished physically and indeed spiritually for all the sins of everyone that will be in heaven.

Do you believe Christ on the center cross that Friday afternoon was paying God for the sins of everyone who will be in heaven?

That's the gospel. That's what a Christian is. And it's life changing. If you believe that, you'll love Christ.

[26 : 38] And you'll want to follow Christ. That's where salvation is in him. He really did pay God for the sins of other people.

And the other people is any person who depends on Christ for forgiveness. That's where a Christian is.

But the other thing to note, and it's quite in conclusion, the other thing to note was a hugely interesting and encouraging.

Here's Philip. Where is he when we read about him first? You know where he is? He's an evangelist. There's a campaign going on.

And the campaign's in Samaria. Half Jew. We're in full Jews, half Jews. Philip's preaching that the campaign in Samaria, the campaign's going great.

[27 : 43] The campaign's going great. Samaria's turned to the Lord. There's people there being converted. So much so that as you read, if you read the whole chapter, you'll find out, they had to send to Jerusalem for more workers, more preachers, more evangelists.

The campaign's going terrific. And they're sending to Jerusalem for more evangelists. And God says, to any evangelist that's in the campaign, Philip, come here, come here, Philip.

Come here. I want you to go to a desert place. There's one man there seeking me.

And I'm moving my evangelists from the thriving campaign that's going on in Samaria for one man, one lonely man in the desert.

He's got a couple of pages of my work, but he's not following it. Go and explain to that one man in the desert.

[28 : 50] God is interested in one isolated sinner seeking him.

You're not our own friend if you're seeking God, seeking forgiveness, seeking pardon. God is senior.

God is senior. And any man, any woman, any boy, any girl who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved, even although they're an Ethiopian eunuch.

May God the Holy Spirit make his word a fixture to every one of us. Let's power it.