

## False Faith Contrasted With True Faith – Part II

### *The Example of the Ethiopian Eunuch*

(Acts 8:25-40)

#### Introduction:

1. The church by this time is a well established entity and the means by which God uses to reach the world with His message of grace and love.
  - The story of “redemption” is written throughout all of human history and recorded for us both in the historical narratives of man as well as the Biblical narrative of God’s people the Israelites.
    - 1) In many “other cultures” (Gentile people) the understanding of Jehovah and His rule over the world is not hidden from their written records. As such you can find such ancient documents that support the claims found in Scripture especially surrounding God as Creator and the Sovereign power of the universe.....albeit the skeptics declare the Biblical narrative to often be in contradiction to this historical data.
    - 2) The Biblical narrative (obviously) is our best resource for the full “redemptive” story - for contained in its pages are found the means by which God will reconcile man to Himself through His Son Jesus Christ.
  - Where the Israelites (God’s covenant people) failed to be that channel by which the nations would know and learn of God’s grace – the church would now become the avenue by which all people, nations, and tongues would know of God’s saving grace!

- Israel's failures of being the light to a dark world usually came through two extremes that the church must avoid:
    - 1) They \_\_\_\_\_ themselves from others to the point where they wanted no contact with people outside their community. They became embittered and resentful of those outside the covenant and seemed to care little about their eternal souls – see the story of Jonah.
    - 2) The other extreme was in the area of \_\_\_\_\_ in which they often adopted the ways of the world and it in turn destroyed their ability to proclaim the truth because of their own hypocrisy.
2. The results of those two extremes are what produce the false faith (faith that does not save) that we learned about in our previous lesson.
- Such extremes are the breeding ground for hypocrisy for both produce an attitude of pride and apathy that pretty much negates the desire to help others find their way to God for those whose faith is false have no “real faith” themselves.
  - The lessons we learned about Simon the Magician are typical of what the nation of Israel had become by the time of Christ – selfish and hypocritical; something Jesus often rebuked the Pharisees of.
3. In this lesson we will learn of a true faith (“a faith that saves”) as we witness a Gentile man (the Ethiopian Eunuch) come to accept the words of Phillip and follow Christ. Once again I will borrow from the words of John MacArthur in his Commentary on Acts page 251 as he claims that genuine faith requires three elements:
- “Proper **preparation**”
  - “Proper **presentation**”
  - “Proper **Response**”

### “The Proper Preparation” (Acts 8:25-28)

1. First and foremost is the sovereign work of God in salvation through the Spirit (Acts 8:25-26)
  - As Peter and John witnessed the people of Samaria embracing Christ and being baptized it was convincing proof to them of the preparatory work of God in their hearts.....thus the “Great Commission” was becoming a reality.
    - 1) This of course caused them to return to Jerusalem with the news of what was taking place in the region of Samaria – people were being saved.
    - 2) Besides returning to Jerusalem with this news; what other results do we see from Peter and John and why would this be a noteworthy item? (Vs 25)
  - The second person that God moves into a very strategic position is \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 8:26)
    - 1) He was already an effective minister to the people in the region of Samaria. (Acts 8:1-8)
    - 2) God will now use him to proclaim the Gospel to an influential Gentile whom we don’t know by name but we know by title which was the “**Ethiopian Eunuch**”.
  - Not only does God work in peoples lives but His sovereignty is also seen in the circumstances surrounding their lives:
    - 1) The road that the Spirit directed Philip to use was one of two roads that could have been used to get where he was to go.

- 2) The road (“a desert road”) that he was directed to use (“south from Jerusalem to Gaza”) was a road that was least traveled for it passed through “old Gaza” which was destroyed in 93 B.C. and therefore a rather unusual and least traveled back road to use.
- 3) This is how God often works....through unusual circumstances. Why do you suppose that God directed Philip to go this way?

2. Another noteworthy item is ***Philip’s submissive will*** (Acts 8:27)

- There was no \_\_\_\_\_ in Philips’ actions
- He didn’t reason with God, nor try to show all the reasons why he shouldn’t leave a thriving work in Samaria.....he just up and went!
- What a great lesson to learn about properly responding to the call of God!
- Because of this obedience; Philip would become the instrument that God uses to reach the Ethiopian Eunuch.

3. Another noteworthy item is the ***soul searching*** or ***seeking God*** by the Eunuch himself. (Acts 8:27)

- This of course was the result of the drawing of the Spirit (John 6:44)
- This Eunuch however was serious in his search:
  - 1) We are told he was headed for \_\_\_\_\_ and came from \_\_\_\_\_; (not modern day Ethiopia but probably the kingdom of ancient Nubia which was the region of Aswan in Southern Egypt to Khartoum Sudan), which would have been a long journey.

- 2) Why would he go to Jerusalem?
  - 3) How did he come into contact with the Scriptures?
- This man (the Ethiopian Eunuch) found himself empty and wanting.
    - 1) He was in need of filling a void in his heart that (in my opinion) all people (men and women) at one point or another face.
    - 2) If we are made in the image of God wouldn't it make sense that He has put His imprint in our hearts that would cause us to desire to be restored to Him?
    - 3) This eunuch was in search for the true God and little did he know but God was the One drawing him to Himself! (Jeremiah 29:13, John 6:44, John 7:17)
4. A fourth and very important item in a proper preparation for salvation is **the Scriptures themselves**. (Acts 8:28)
    - What was the eunuch doing while sitting in his chariot?
    - What is the significance of this? (John 5:39, 46, Luke 24:25-27, Romans 10:12-15)

### **“The Proper Presentation” (Acts 8:29-35)**

1. The presentation was “centered on \_\_\_\_\_” (Acts 8:30-34)
  - The text that the eunuch was reading was Isaiah 53:7-8 and it confused him. His confusion was shared by other Jewish teachers and scholars of that day:
    - 1) Some Jewish scholars felt that text considered the slaughtered sheep as representative of the nation Israel.
    - 2) Others held the position that Isaiah was speaking of himself
    - 3) Finally there were others who believed that Isaiah was referring to the Messiah.
  - Philip knew exactly who Isaiah was speaking about (John 5:39) and will use the opportunity to declare that Jesus is the one whom Isaiah was referring to. (Note all of Isaiah 53)
2. The presentation was also centered on “\_\_\_\_\_” (Acts 8:35)
  - Judging by the eunuch’s response in Acts 8:37 we conclude that Philip successfully presented the evidence that the Lamb was Jesus and He was the Messiah that Isaiah spoke of.
  - To attempt to preach anything other than Jesus as the Messiah and Savior is deemed to be “another gospel” and such is absolute heresy. (Galatians 1:6-9)
  - The Apostle Paul will also write in Romans 10:17; “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”.

### **“The Proper Response” (Acts 8:36-40)**

1. Note his \_\_\_\_\_ that was expressed in two ways
  - The desire to be obedient to God through the outward act of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - The inward \_\_\_\_\_ by the eunuch that Jesus is the Son of God through either his words or his actions. (See Matthew 16:13-17)
2. Some people get confused as these two “actions” seem to be in reverse order.
  - They actually are in proper order as we already witnessed the Spirit who was drawing the eunuch to salvation and the natural response of obedience via the prescribed method of Baptism would have followed.
  - In other words the conversion of the eunuch had probably already occurred as belief/faith is necessary for salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16, Romans 10:9-10).
    - 1) It is ironic that we feel the need to show the eunuch made some outward profession of faith and thus explains why verse 37 was inserted into many of our modern translations. The reality is this verse (Acts 8:37) is not found in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts and really should be omitted from the text for there is no need to prove that a profession of faith was made....for it must have taken place in order for Philip to baptize the eunuch.
    - 2) It is also safe to conclude that the eunuch’s baptism was his declaration of faith to all those (of his entourage) who would have witnessed what took place.

3. We witness this proper response to salvation through two lives:
- The eunuch went away \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 8:39) which reveals a genuine conversion. (John 15:11, 17:13, Acts 13:52, Romans 12:12, 14:17, **15:13, Galatians 5:22**, Philippians 1:25, I Thessalonians 1:6, **I Peter 1:8**, Jude 24)
    - 1) Luke does not record what happened to the Ethiopian eunuch after this but an early church leader named Irenaeus claims he became a missionary to the Ethiopians.
    - 2) Whatever the case it is evident by the response of the eunuch that his was a true faith.
  - \_\_\_\_\_; who was taken away to continue his ministry in the region of Gaza and eventually settled in Caesarea (Acts 21:9).
    - 1) He had a fruitful and effective ministry in that entire region (cities such as Joppa and Lydda) and would be followed later by the Apostle Peter.
    - 2) Philip (though not one of the 12 Apostles) is proof that much can be accomplished (irrespective of title or accomplishment) when we obediently serve God with our whole hearts and follow His leading.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

1. Two lives were contrasted for us in this two part series:
  - Simon the Magician who revealed for us a “Faith that does not save”.
  - The Ethiopian Eunuch revealed for us a “Faith that does save”
2. Questions/Comments: