

Morning Service

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Preacher: Rev. George Macaskill

- [0 : 0 0] Well, I would like to speak about most of what we read. Maybe just read again verse 35. Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with this scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus.
- I'd like to look at this passage of scripture under two headings. First of all, the false, and briefly I trust, the false profession of Simon the sorcerer.
- A shrewd trickster. And then secondly, the genuine conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.
- A humble believer in what the Bible says. You can imagine the dilemma Philip must have been in.
- As the Ethiopian eunuch asks Philip, Here is water. What prevents me from being baptized? Just think about it.
- [1 : 1 5] I don't know how long before, but it could actually have been the same day. We're not told the difference or the space of time between verse 25 and verse 26.
- But one of the last things that happened was what? The excommunication of Simon the sorcerer. What a solemn occasion that was.
- And here Philip meets this man that he's never met in his life. And he asks essentially for church membership. He's never seen him before.
- He knows nothing about him. And he asks for church membership. What would you do? I ask myself, what would I do? There's lessons to learn here.
- So let's look at it. Let's look, first of all, at the false profession of Simon the sorcerer. First of all, his faith.
- [2 : 1 7] What did he believe? You see, everyone has faith. We all have faith. We can't live without faith. You had faith there was going to be a church service here today. So you came along.
- It's not faith that saves. It's faith in Christ that saves. It's Christ that does the saving.
- You can't live without faith. But you need to have faith in Christ's death and resurrection to have your sins forgiven and appear in heaven.
- And we are told in verse 12 that Simon the sorcerer believed Philip. He followed Philip.
- He believed the things about the kingdom of God. Well, a lot of people believe about the kingdom of God, about Christianity, about the Bible.
- [3 : 1 9] There's very few intelligent people do not believe that there was a person, Jesus Christ, walking about earth who claimed to be the Son of God and has power to forgive sins.
- It's believing in Christ. It's believing on Christ, not just about Christ. That's important. What Simon the sorcerer apparently believed was the miracles he saw with his eyes.
- He saw the miracles. And when he saw the miracles, he wanted that power. That's his faith. What about his sin? Well, we're told categorically his position before God in verses 21, 22, and 23.

See, his heart was not right with God. We need a new heart to believe in Christ. His heart was not right in God. He did not have a new heart.

In verse 22, we're told, he had wicked intents. He had a purpose. He was devising. He was plotting schemes, contriving plans.

[4 : 33] He had an agenda. He knew what he was doing. All this was leading up to something. And in verse 23, Philip says, I perceive you're in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

That's his state. That's his condition. The case of Simon the sorcerer is not a case of him deceiving himself.

He wasn't deceiving himself. He wasn't a poor soul without enough knowledge deceiving himself. He was deceiving the church. And he was intentionally, that's what the word means, intent, plotting, scheming, how to make money.

Deliberately, intentionally promoting evil. And he had a deep craving for power, for fame, for fortune. Controlled by bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

That was his state. That was revealed to Philip. So that's Simon's faith. Sorry, Simon's faith, Simon's sin.

[5 : 48] Saddest thing of all is Simon the sorcerer's response. You see, he was told his condition. He was told his sin. He was told what to do. Repent and pray for forgiveness. But he never mentions his sin.

He never mentions repentance. He never mentions his need for a new heart. He asks Philip to pray for him.

He basically refuses to pray. He's told, pray to the Lord. But he says, no, no, you pray for me. Simon's only concern is to escape judgment.

To escape the punishment that he was due, which Philip pointed out to him. But listen, that's perfectly natural. It's perfectly natural to want to escape punishment.

[6 : 56] Am I right? Nobody wants to, nobody wants punishment. That was perfectly natural. What we're looking for is something spiritual.

He never asks for forgiveness. He never asks for forgiveness. He never acknowledges he has sinned. He's got nothing to say to God at all.

There's no repentance of sin. There's no fear of God. There's no faith in the gospel. There's no Christ anywhere.

So let's look at the genuine conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch.

You know, he was probably one of the most unlikely people on the face of the earth to ever become a Christian.

[8 : 03] Here he is, and we're told, he went to Jerusalem from Ethiopia. He went to Jerusalem to worship. And here he was, returning, sitting in his chariot, having left, having left the most likely place on earth to be saved.

saved. And he leaves it without being saved. If you get a map and you look at the land of Israel, how small it is compared to the rest of the world, the rest of the globe.

But that's where God's people was. That's where God's people met. You see, what a lot there was against this man ever becoming a Christian.

First of all, he was a Gentile. And as you will know, if you know your Bible, the world at this time, ecclesiastically, was divided into Jews and Gentiles.

Divided in two. Jews, the people of God. The people God chose. The people God blessed. What's the definition of a Gentile?

- [9 : 26] Anyone that was not a Jew. There was Jews, and if you were not a Jew, you were a Gentile. It doesn't matter what nation you belong to, what race you were of.
- If you weren't a Jew, you were a Gentile. Can you hear this Ethiopian eunuch saying to himself, if God wanted me to be a Christian, if he wanted me to be saved, he wouldn't have made me a Gentile, he would have made me a Jew.
- You cannot reason like that with God. But there was something else against them becoming a Christian.
- He was an Ethiopian. Now, I've never discovered why. I've never discovered why, but for some reason, to the Jew, the Ethiopian was one of the most despised people on earth.
- As I said, I've never found out why. And it was so much in fact, you find the Bible saying, Ethiopia, to God, will soon stretch forth their hands.
- [10 : 44] That was an amazing thing to do. Ethiopia becoming Christian is never not possible that God's promises, yes, Ethiopia, to God, will soon stretch forth their hands.
- But you can imagine the eunuch, the Ethiopian eunuch saying, if God wanted me a Christian, he wouldn't have made me, he wouldn't have made me an Ethiopian.
- You see, he would probably discover, no Jew would be praying for Ethiopia. No Jew would be praying for him. They were despised by the Jews.
- So you can see how his mind would be going. But there was a third thing against him becoming, ever becoming a Christian. He had great riches.
- He had tremendous power. We read there an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candice, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure.
- [11 : 56] Do you know who he was? He was the chancellor of the exchequer of Ethiopia. He had a tremendous amount of power. All the wealth, all the money in Ethiopia was at his disposal.
- What did Jesus say about those who had riches? how hard it would be for them to enter the kingdom of heaven?
- How hard for them. Can you hear the Ethiopian unit? If God wanted me in his kingdom, he wouldn't have made me so wealthy.
- You cannot reason like that. because most of all, you know, there was something else against this Ethiopian eunuch ever becoming a Christian.
- The very fact, he was a eunuch. You see, as I said already, there was Jews and there was Gentiles. the Jews were the people of God.
- [13 : 19] What happened a Gentile, whatever nation, if he heard about the Jewish Jehovah God? And he said, I think that's the real God.
- I would like to worship their God because I think he's the real God. What could they do? You had to be born a Jew, you see. And if you weren't born a Jew, what would you do if you made that discovery?
- Well, you see, there was a system in Judaism whereby if you were a Gentile and you really wanted to worship the God of the Jews, you could become a proselyte.
- You could become a proselyte. But there were seven stages in becoming a proselyte. Sometimes proselytes were called God fearers.
- They weren't born Jews, they were Gentiles, but they could be a God fearer. But there were several stages. I don't, I've forgotten the stages. There were seven stages that you had to go through to become what they called a full proselyte, except the eunuch.
- [14 : 36] eunuch. The eunuch could never get past stage six and become a full proselyte.
- We're told in Deuteronomy chapter 23, the first verse, that they were not allowed to enter the congregation.

Can you imagine the Ethiopian eunuch? He makes his way to Jerusalem to worship. Verse 27, he had come to Jerusalem to worship.

He reaches the temple. Israel, he doesn't get in. He's not allowed.

He's a eunuch. They're forbidden to enter the congregation of Israel. Can you hear him? Can you hear what Satan would say to him?

[15 : 50] God doesn't want you forgiven. God doesn't want you in his kingdom. He wouldn't have made you a eunuch if so. Now you might ask rightly, hey, how did the Rosa eunuch?

Well, apparently, for some reason, they got positions in government. And you see, we're told that he was a court official of Candacy, the queen.

A court official. And apparently, very often, they would have uniforms. And they could be quite easily recognized. If you were the chancellor of this checker, you would have quite a uniform.

And it would be, they would know, sorry, you can't get in. You're a eunuch. What do you make of that?

You cannot reason like that with God. If you are in God's house, God wants you in his kingdom.

[17 : 00] If you are prayed for, God wants you in his kingdom. You're prayed for. Every one of you are prayed for.

We've prayed for you in the room through there. You're all being prayed for. God wants you in his kingdom. Whoever you are, whatever you've done, however guilty you are, if you're hearing the gospel, always remember this, however evil you are, however wicked you are, if you're hearing the gospel, it is a genuine, a genuine offer of mercy from God.

He wants you in his kingdom. God's gospel, so there's all these things against him.

But let God be true, and every man a liar. There's these things, all these things against him. But he has one or two things for him.

What does he have? he has a few pages of the Bible. He's a few pages of the Isaiah in a scroll.

[18 : 25] There was no books in these days. It was all in scrolls. How did he get a part of the Bible?

How did he get a scroll? I mean, he's not allowed into the church, as it were. How does he get a copy of the Bible? We don't know, because the Bible doesn't tell us, and it doesn't matter.

What matters is he has a copy of this Word of God. I heard read, actually, one minister saying he's going to use sanctified imagination, how he got the role.

We don't know, it's only speculation. It's just maybe he went into the equivalent of a Christian bookshop in Jerusalem and said, have you anything for a eunuch?

eunuch? I've just been forbidden to enter the congregation there, and I want to know, have you anything in your bookshop for how a eunuch can be saved or forgiven?

[19 : 41] and the bookshop manager knows his Bible. Oh, there's something Isaiah said.

There's something Isaiah said about eunuchs. chapter 56 about the eunuch.

Listen to it. Isaiah 56 verse 4 and 5 For thus saith the Lord to the eunuchs Thus saith the Lord to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me, and hold fast my covenant.

I will give in my house. God speaking, in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters.

I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. That's Isaiah 56 verses 4 and 5.

[21 : 18] But the eunuch's only at chapter 53. He hasn't reached that. Maybe he was looking for it. Now, all that is speculation. We don't know what we do know.

He has the word of God and he has that promise. Isn't it wonderful? An Old Testament promise to a eunuch.

The eunuch who holds fast my covenant will get a place and a name better than sons and daughters.

There's a promise. Do you believe it? You see, Isaiah is prophesying about New Testament times.

He's prophesying about the day that you and I live in today. When you don't need to be a Jew to belong to God. When all you have to do is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved and you'll have a name and a place better than sons and daughters.

[22 : 37] Adoption is a tremendous, a tremendous blessing. And we don't, we ministers are guilty of not preaching enough about it. The gospel of Jesus Christ, so wonderful, so powerful.

Just probably half a dozen pages of the Bible. You know, I always remember when the iron curtain was up, the young people won't know what the iron curtain was.

Russia, no Bibles, no Christians, no missionaries allowed to go to Russia. And I remember hearing about God's smuggler, Brother Andrew, he would smuggle Bibles through the iron curtain and he would make arrangements to meet people in Red Square.

And I always remember one missionary going out there with a copy of the Bible to give it to someone he'd arranged by secret to meet under a lamppost in Red Square, Moscow.

And he went there with his Bible and of course it was all secret stuff mustn't be seen. And he met him under the lamppost in Red Square and he took something out of his pocket and said, friend, can you tell me this?

[23 : 58] Is this God's word? Tell me. I've only one page to tell me. Is this God's word? And the missionary looked at it. Oh, yes, he says, I can verify.

That's God's word. Well, the man said, please, please, can you give me the next page? I just want the next page.

That's how much he valued the word. How many have we got? You know, my iPhone, I've got nine versions of the Bible in my pocket.

God's precious, it's powerful, it's life-changing. And he had a preacher of good news.

God has appointed prophets, teachers, evangelists. That's why Satan sends out false teachers, false prophets, because it's God's way to send out true prophets, true teachers.

[25 : 04] Well, as we close, he preached the good news. You don't need to do anything. Christ has done it all.

Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures. You don't need to do anything. Just believe what's written in the word, and you're a new creation in Christ.

He had good signs. Oh, what a lot there was against him, ever becoming a Christian. But he had good things for him, good signs as well.

Number one, he genuinely sought God. He genuinely sought salvation. salvation. The sorcerer sought power, sought publicity, sought money.

God. A second thing, not only did he want to be saved, want to be forgiven, he wanted to understand the word.

[26 : 20] You know, people have a Bible, and they use it as a lucky charm. Oh, I always carry a Bible and you test it in my pocket. The epiophilus, you know, he said, I want to understand what this word is saying.

What does it mean? What is it saying? What a good sign that is when someone wants to understand what God is saying in his word.

But probably, most of all, the best sign was he was interested in who Christ was and in what Christ done.

Tell me, he says, of whom does this man speak? Is it of himself or of some other man? Who is this man? I read off in the Bible.

Tell me, can you find Jesus in the Bible? Can you find him in the Old Testament? Can you find him in Providence, what God does? Are you looking for Jesus?

[27 : 26] Are you looking for Christ? That's where safety is. Christianity is about a relationship with God's Son.

Just find him and you find life, eternal life. If you find Christ, he is life itself.

Well, that's it. Just one final, I think, lesson we can learn from all this. You see, the beginning of the chapter, we read it, verse 4 onwards, because there was what you might call the equivalent of an evangelistic campaign going on in Samaria.

And in fact, they were needing more preachers. And they were sending to Jesus for more help, more preachers here. But see what God the Holy Spirit does.

he calls to one of the preachers in Samaria, Philip, and he says, Philip, come here, come here.

[28 : 43] I have one man in a desert seeking me. Go to the wilderness. Speak to that man and show him Christ.

Christ. God is interested in one isolated sinner, wherever they are, and he is prepared to send his servants, to move, transfer his servants to deserted places.

He's prepared to do it for one isolated sinner. sinner. You be that one isolated sinner seeking God, seeking salvation, seeking salvation, seeking the kingdom of heaven.

May God, the Holy Spirit, make his word effectual to every one of us. Let's bow our heads.

Our Father in heaven, be pleased to take the things of Christ and make them ours here in this place this day.

[30 : 10] Take all the praise, take all the glory. We ask this unworthy riches that we are, we ask it in the name of your dear Son, exalted, a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.

Hear us in mercy, answer us in peace, as we pray in his name alone. Amen. Amen. Let's conclude our service of worship by singing from Psalm 107, the same psalm, but in the Scottish Psalter version, page 384.

Page 384, Psalm 107, verse 29. The storm is changed into a calm at his command and will, so that the waves which raged before, now quiet are and still.

Down to verse 32. Among the people gathered, let them exalt his name. Among a selved heirloom, spread his most renowned fame.

Psalm 107, at verse 29, on page 384, to God's praise. The storm is changed into a calm what is called and will, so that the waves which reached before event, what I give you The heaven he embrings, which he desires to see.

[32 : 37] O that nature the Lord would give, grace for his goodness and and for his words of wonder time and dear the sons of men.

Among the people gathered, let them exult his fear.

Among the temple dead are spread, his words we now redeem.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[34 : 31] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.