

The Acts of the Apostles

Sermon Number: 14

Acts 8:26-40

June 5, 2011

“The Right Place at the Right Time”

Acts 8:26-40

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³⁰ So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

³¹ And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

*"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.*

³³ *In His humiliation His justice was taken away,
And who will declare His generation?
For His life is taken from the earth."*

³⁴ So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. ³⁶ Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, *here is* water. What hinders me from being baptized?"

³⁷ Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."

And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

³⁸ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. ³⁹ Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

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This episode that is recorded about Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch is one of God's illustrations of the way of salvation.

And by salvation I mean the justification by God of a sinner.

When I used the word "saved" in this context I mean to be justified; to be declared "not guilty!"

God justifies the ungodly!

To be justified is to be moved from a state and condition of **condemnation** to a state and condition of being justified or not guilty.

By an act of the Holy Spirit a guilty sinner is at one instant bound for hell if he dies unjustified and in less than a blink of an eye he is not guilty!

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...."

Romans 8:1

How does that happen? How is it that a guilty sinner can be saved?

I believe that to some degree every justified person has a story of their conversion that contains the elements found in this story of the eunuch.

Through the preaching of the Word of God the fact of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, who died for sinners, is personally made real and true to the sinner and the sinner understands that he needs a Savior and that the only Savior is Jesus Christ.

It is a gentle blowing of the wind of the Spirit that you can't tell where it comes from or where it is going but your soul is made alive and you have no other choice but to repent and trust in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Let's define our terms:

EUNUCH

[YOO nook] – a male servant of a royal household in Bible times. Such servants were often emasculated by castration as a precautionary measure, especially if they served among the wives in a ruler's harem (2 Kings 9:32). The New Testament reported the conversion of a eunuch from Ethiopia under the ministry of PHILIP the evangelist (Acts 8:26-38).

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Ethiopia

— country of burnt faces; the Greek word by which the Hebrew *Cush* is rendered (Gen 2:13; 2 Kings 19:9; Est 1:1; Job 28:19; Ps 68:31; 87:4), a country which lay to the south of Egypt, beginning at Syene on the First Cataract (Ezek 29:10; 30:6), and extending to beyond the confluence of the White and Blue Nile. It corresponds generally with what is now known as the Soudan (i.e., the land of the blacks). This country was known to the Hebrews, and is described in Isa 18:1; Zeph 3:10. They carried on some commercial intercourse with it (Isa 45:14).

Its inhabitants were descendants of Ham (Gen 10:6; Jer 13:23; Isa 18:2, "scattered and peeled," A.V.; but in R.V., "tall and smooth"). Herodotus, the Greek historian, describes them as "the tallest and handsomest of men." They are frequently represented on Egyptian monuments, and they are all of the type of the true negro. As might be expected, the history of this country is interwoven with that of Egypt.

Ethiopia is spoken of in prophecy (Ps 68:31; 87:4; Isa 45:14; Ezek 30:4-9; Dan 11:43; Nah 3:8-10; Hab 3:7; Zeph 2:12).

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Candace

Candace is a title that means queen of Ethiopia.

Much the same as Pharaoh is not a name but the title of a king of Egypt

Philip

Philip was one of the seven men chosen by the church to serve tables; the daily distribution of food to the widows.

We have studied how Steven, one of the seven, was martyred because of his witness to the fact of Jesus of Nazareth, as the Christ, who the Jewish leaders murdered.

Acts 6:1-7

Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ² Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

⁷ Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

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So we have an Ethiopian Eunuch and Philip.

Is anyone else present? Yes, the Holy Spirit is there doing what He alone can do; show who Jesus Christ is to a guilty sinner.

Back to our basic question: How does a person get to be justified?

Maybe we should first ask why anyone needs to be justified.

We need to be justified because of sin.

Every person is born in a state of sin and is lost.

You are either a lost sinner or and saved sinner, but you are a sinner!

SIN is not so much what we do, but what we are:

“A great many of us need to revise our notions of what it is to be lost. The common conception seems to be that to be in hell is to be lost. The true view is that to be in sin is to be lost. Sin is worse than hell and makes it what it is. Hell would not be the awful place it is if it were not for the sin that is there. And so Jesus came, not to save people from a place called hell, but from a state of being and character, and a course of conduct called sin. ‘He shall save His people from their sins.’ (Matthew 1:21) It is sin that has cut the cable between God and man, and thus shuts man off from that current of divinity in which alone is life, holiness and peace; and left him to death, misery and ruin.”

{ Author unknown }

The person who does not trust what Jesus has done for his only hope of salvation is still a lost sinner.

But in the infinite mercy of God He has given a people to Jesus, the Son of God.

John 17:1-5

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ² as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴ I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

And those given to the Son will come to believe in Jesus Christ.

John 6:35-42

³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

⁴¹ The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." ⁴² And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

But there is a huge obstacle for the sinner. John 6:43-48

⁴³ Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, '*And they shall all be taught by God.*' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. ⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life.

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So the terrible need of the lost sinner is to know God the Father and believe in Jesus Christ to be justified.

And God has the answer.

Ephesians 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both* which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him. ¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

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Does it trouble you that it is God's sovereign choice as to who will be justified?

Does the doctrine of election make you uncomfortable?

Have you been taught that it is your "decision" empowered by your "free-will" that is the first cause of your being saved?

If that is where your trust is placed; in something that you have control of, then you are not trusting Jesus Christ!

Romans 9: God's sovereign choice of lost sinners.

Rom 9:1-24

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.

⁶ But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, ⁷ nor *are* they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "*In Isaac your seed shall be called.*" ⁸ That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ⁹ For this *is* the word of promise: "*At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.*"

¹⁰ And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac ¹¹ (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), ¹² it was said to her, "*The older shall serve the younger.*" ¹³ As it is written, "*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*"

¹⁴ What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.*" ¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "*For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*" ¹⁸ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" ²⁰ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?" ²¹ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

²² *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ *even* us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

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Romans 10: God's way of reaching lost sinners.

Rom 10:14-18

¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

*"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!"*

¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" ¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

¹⁸ But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:

*"Their sound has gone out to all the earth,
And their words to the ends of the world."*

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With that as a framework for the justification of lost sinners let's consider the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch.

And we will examine what the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading in the Scriptures.

"The Right Place at the Right Time"

Acts 8:26-33

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*"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.*

³³ *In His humiliation His justice was taken away,
And who will declare His generation?
For His life is taken from the earth."*

The Ethiopian Eunuch was reading the prophet Isaiah at chapter 53.

Isaiah has been called the “Fifth Gospel” and it indeed proclaims the message of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is Christ died for sinners.

The Eunuch asked a great question:

³⁴ So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" ³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

Philip explained the Gospel to the Eunuch from the Old Testament.

The apostle Paul opens the letter to the Romans with this statement:

Romans 1:1-5

Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God ² which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, ³ concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴ *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

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A comparison of Acts 8:32-33 and Isaiah 53 should raise a question.

The question is why aren't the words from Isaiah the same in Acts and in Isaiah?

The answer is that the Eunuch was reading the Septuagint which is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. The words are not exactly the same due to translation from one language to another but the message is the same.

In order for Philip to explain the meaning of the passage in Isaiah to the Eunuch Philip would have explained all of Isaiah 53. Turn to Isaiah 53:

Isaiah 53

Who has believed our report?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
And as a root out of dry ground.

He has no form or comeliness;

And when we see Him,

There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

³ He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.

⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

⁹ And they made His grave with the wicked —
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put *Him* to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
Because He poured out His soul unto death,
And He was numbered with the transgressors,
And He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.

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From the prophet Isaiah, Philip explained the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, the innocent for the guilty.

Philip would have preached repentance and faith.

From what we are given Philip instructed the Eunuch on the correct response to a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. How else would the Eunuch have asked about baptism?

Baptism is for believers; nothing else is baptism!

And an important thing to notice here is the mode of scriptural baptism.

By mode, we mean how much water is necessary for a scriptural baptism?

“They came up out of the water.”

Baptism is by immersion. The subject goes completely under the water to signify a burial. You can't bury someone by sprinkling a little dirt on their head; and you can't baptize someone with a few drops of water on their head.

If sprinkling could pass for baptism don't you know that the Eunuch had skins of water on his chariot? What meaning would this next passage have if sprinkling can pass for scriptural baptism?

³⁶ Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, *here is* water. What hinders me from being baptized?"

³⁷ Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."

And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

³⁸ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. ³⁹ Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

Allow me to make some applications from this passage:

God is sovereign in His choice of who will be justified, BUT God uses the means of preaching the Gospel; the Good News of the message of Christ dying on the cross as a sufficient Substitute for guilty sinners.

The Gospel is based on the Old Testament!

We all need help to understand the Scriptures.

I am over 75 years old and have been a Christian for over 42 years and have been teaching and preaching almost as long. But I need help. I read commentaries and I listen to sermons and I am still learning.

One of the great blessings of being in this local church is to hear other men preach the Gospel. Most Baptist churches have a single pastor and he rarely gets to hear another preacher. But this church has four preachers and you can learn from all of us but best of all we can learn from each other.

Faith in Jesus Christ demands a biblical response.

We ought to baptize the right persons for the right reason. Baptize believers based on their profession of faith in Jesus Christ. And nothing other than dipping is Scriptural baptism.

Has there ever been a “Right Place at the Right Time” in your life?

Has the Word of God entered into your mind and heart to grant repentance and create faith?

Have you been taught by the Holy Spirit that you need a Sufficient Savior?

There was a “Right Time and a Right Place” for the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Is this morning the “Right Place at the Right Time” for you?

Ask one of us to do what Philip did for the Eunuch; take the Scriptures and show you who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for lost sinners.

Repent and believe in the Gospel!