

Conversions 3

Ethiopian Eunuch

I will start each of the lessons in this series with a reminder of what the idea of conversion is, according to the scriptures...

Epistrepho (e)pistre/fw, NT:1994 1

"To turn about, turn towards" (epi, "towards" and No. 1), is used transitively, and so rendered "convert" (of causing a person to turn) in James 5:19-20. Elsewhere, where the KJV translates this verb, either in the middle voice and intransitive use, or the passive, the RV adheres to the middle voice significance, and translates by "turn again," Matt 13:15; Mark 4:12; Luke 22:32; Acts 3:19; 28:27. 2

Acts 8:25 3

25 So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

This is shortly after Peter and John have come to Samaria so that the Samaritans could receive the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. Simon believed and obeyed, then the allure of his lust and desire drew him away from his faith and commitment and he sought to buy the ability to pass on the gifts of God. He sinned in his presumptuousness and Peter condemned him of that sin,

Acts 8:22 4

23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

I want to take a moment to look at this. Peter tells us that Simon was in the...

5

"Gall of bitterness"

This term gall is defined by Webster's as...

6

1. A bile; especially : bile obtained from an animal and used in the arts or medicine
B something bitter to endure
C bitterness of spirit : rancor.
2. Brazen boldness coupled with impudent assurance and insolence.

Strong's defines the Greek, where this word is translated from as...

Chole (khol-ay'); NT:5521 7

Feminine of an equivalent perhaps akin to the same as NT:5514 (from the greenish hue); "gall" or bile, i.e. (by analogy) poison or an anodyne (wormwood, poppy, etc.):

I'm not sure about you, but I don't see anything in either of these definitions that looks good. Bile, defined by Webster as...

8

1. A yellow or greenish viscid alkaline fluid secreted by the liver and passed into the duodenum where it aids especially in the emulsification and absorption of fats—called also fel.

Gall, bile, is a destructive substance that the body uses. That is what Peter uses to illustrate to Simon the destructiveness of sin that creeps into the hearts and minds. He tells Simon that the bitterness of his desire to have the power that the Apostles had was eating away at his faith and ultimately was putting him into...

9 *“The bondage of iniquity”*

Therein is the danger of sin. It is such a destructive force that eats away at everything that we are or can be. It destroys faith, it hardens hearts and consciences, it separates man from God, it puts man under the penalty of spiritual death. Sin is the prison of the heart and soul and that’s what Peter tells Simon he needs to break out of, and the way to break out of that prison is to come to God...

Acts 8:22

10

22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you

The only way that man can tear down the bars of the prison of sin is to allow the power of God manifested in Jesus Christ and revealed through the Spirit in His Word to come into our hearts and be the source of the power that we use to break the bonds of sin.

This brings us to the next conversion we want to look at in this series...

Acts 8:26-27

11

26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.) **27** So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, **28** and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

This is one of the more well-known accounts of conversion in the scriptures, the Ethiopian Eunuch. An angel comes to Philip and tells him to go to the Eunuch who is traveling home after coming to Jerusalem to worship. Philip goes and intercepts the Eunuch as he is traveling on the desert road.

Remember the points that we want to look at as we study these conversions...

12

- 1) The Opportunity
- 2) The Character of the Convert (s)
- 3) The Nature of the Message

Philip has gone to intercept the Eunuch and sees him riding in a chariot, the Spirit...

Acts 8:29

13

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

Here then is...

14

- 1) The Opportunity

Philip has gone to the Eunuch, he has joined him in his chariot and as he does...

Acts 8:30

15

30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet,

Philip finds the Eunuch reading from the book of Isaiah and he asks him if he understands what he is reading. The opportunity that was presented was that the Eunuch was showing an interest in what God had to say. There are so many people out there that truly do have an interest in what God is saying. The challenge is finding those that truly have an interest in everything God has to say and not just a portion of it. Therein is the task that each of us as Christians face. How do we make the opportunity that is out there work so that we have a chance to share the whole truth of God with someone who might just listen? Philip did just that when he asked a question...

Acts 8:30

16

30 "Do you understand what you are reading?"

This brings us to the next point we want to think about...

17

2) The Character of the Convert (s)

In some of these accounts, the opportunity seems to be what is focused on, in others it is the character of the convert. When we looked at the conversion of Simon very little is said about him other than he believed. We see a little more after his sin, but again his character isn't really the focus or explored. What we see here with the Eunuch is more of a discussion of who he is. He has just left Jerusalem where he had gone to worship God according to those scriptures...

Acts 8:27

18

27 and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,

He illustrates his character in his desire to worship God. Now there is an appointment here that needs to be noted. The Eunuch was a Jew. He did not come from the lineage of Abraham, he was not subject to the Law of Moses, yet, he became a proselyte to that Law, he made the choice to practice it because he had heard that wanted to serve the God the scriptures told him about. The next sign of his character is that he is reading God's Word, he is trying to increase his knowledge to better understand how he can serve. So when Philip asks him if he understands what he is reading, and he says...

Acts 8:31

19

31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?"

What greater sign of a good and honest heart than having a great desire to learn God's truth?

Matt 6:33

20

33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

What we see here with the Eunuch is someone who is seeking first the righteousness of God, he is exhibiting the type of character that Jesus described in the parable of the sower, a good heart. Let's consider for a few moments some of the other three conversions that we have already looked at.

Acts 2:37 21

37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

Those on the day of Pentecost became convinced of their complicity in the crucifixion of Jesus, their guilt led them to ask what they needed to do to remove that guilt.

Acts 8:6 22

6 The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

In this account the scriptures put emphasis on the intentness of the listeners, they were giving attention, while in Acts 2 the emphasis is placed on their desire to remove the guilt, what must we do. These aren't necessarily separate; they work in conjunction with each other. Recognition of our guilt, understanding that that guilt brings with it a burden, a penalty that has to be paid is step one. Then listening, actually hearing what the Word says and how it can lead us to Christ and the saving power of His blood is step two. Conversion is a process. It's a process that can take years or it can take moments. There is no way that the length of time for each individual can be determined. That is what Paul is saying in...

1 Cor 3:6 23

6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

This passage comes up often in any discussion of conversion because it so adequately illustrates the process. Paul planted the seed, Apollos continued the process, teaching further and expanding the understanding of the listeners until the listeners came to the conclusion of those in Acts 2, it was time to do something about the teaching, about what the Word says.

Then in...

Acts 8:12-13 24

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. 13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip,

Those in Samaria and even Simon are said to have believed. This is the obvious and natural response to...

- 25 A) Recognition of our need
B) Hearing the message of hope
C) Believing that message

In our discussion of the conversions that we have looked at so far, this is the process that we see taking place. In the conversion that we are looking at in this lesson, the Eunuch, we have looked at his character and seen how he desires to know God and follow God, we have seen how he has given himself to God in his worship of Him. But the Eunuch was seeking God through Judaism, and while before the coming of Christ that was ok, afterwards, he was still worshipping according to the Old Law, so Philip uses his answer as the spring board to teach him Christ. The Eunuch's answer...

Acts 8:32-33

26

32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this:

"HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. 33 IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."

This passage that he was reading comes from Isaiah...

Isa 53:7-8

27

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

The Eunuch's desire to know as much as he could about God's Word is the testament to his character, this is what Philip uses to lead him into...

28

3) The Nature of the Message

Acts 8:35

29

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

Philip preached Jesus to him. While that may sound simplistic, we don't want to diminish the power of the message just because it seems simple in nature. Philip preached Jesus. Jesus in the life He led, the faithfulness He showed to His father, the death He died, the sacrifice He offered, His resurrection and His ascension. He preached Jesus in the message of salvation He brought and the Church He established. How do we know this?

Acts 8:36

30

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, Look! "Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

Philip preached Jesus and make no mistake, Jesus can't be preached without everything He did being taught, without everything He established, and without the response He demands in faithful obedience, nor without love. The love He showed for us, the love God showed for us, the love He wants back from seen in our obedience. He doesn't want much, just everything we are. Our response to His request is determined by our character. Do we...

31

A) Recognize our need

32

B) Hear the message of hope

33

C) Believe that message