

(e) Believe, obey, and live; disbelieve, disobey, and die.

V. **Three Schools of Psychology:** The Mystics, the Naturalists, and the Intellectualists. Their systems may be styled, Mysticism, Naturalism, and Intellectualism.

1. **Mysticism**, as applied to faith, is the doctrine of direct spiritual influence. It assumes that man is depraved, and utterly unable to come to God, and that his mind must be illuminated by direct light from God without the preaching of the word of God.
2. **Naturalism** contends that faith in a supreme being is an intuitive faculty of the mind. That man needs no other revelation than the one from within—*ab intra*. All *ab extra* revelation is rejected.
3. **Intellectualism**. This is the true psychology. Regulated by the word of God, it gives glory to God and responsibility to man. It requires use of the intellect in order to hear and believe the word of God.
 - (a) Intellectualism receives, as an unalterable truth, the dictum of Paul, "Faith cometh by hearing." (Rom. 10: 14, 15, 17.)
 - (b) Intellectualism, leading the way, uniting with emotion and will, is reason hearing God, believing God, and obeying God.

VI. The Elements of Faith:

1. These are six. (1) The subject of faith, (2) the object of faith, (3) the ground of faith, (4) the motive of faith, (5) the influence of faith, (6) the effect of faith.
2. Their combination and result, these are six: (1) the subject is the believer; (2) the object is the proposition believed; (3) testimony is the ground; (4) the motive of faith is the desire of life and the fear of death; (5) the influence of faith is the obedience resulting therefrom; (6) the result is salvation from danger.

VII. Illustration—Israel at Red Sea Saved By Faith. (Heb. 11: 29.)

1. The Israelites were the subjects of faith—the believers.
2. The God of Israel, his word, the object of their faith.
3. The testimony afforded by Moses, the ground of their faith.
4. The desire of life with the fear of death, the motive of their faith.
5. The forward movement, the influence of their faith.
6. Salvation from their enemies, the effect of their faith.

VIII. Application of These Principles:

1. Man, the sinner, is the subject of faith. (Heb. 11: 6.)
2. Christ, the Savior, is the object of faith. (John 20: 30, 31.)
3. The testimony of the word of God is the ground of faith. (Acts 10: 43; John 5: 37; 5: 39; Rom. 10: 17.)
4. The desire of spiritual life and life eternal is the motive of faith.
5. Obedience to God's authority is the influence of faith. (Acts 2: 38; Mark 16: 15, 16; Matt. 7: 21; Acts 22: 16; Gal. 3: 26, 27; Rom. 6: 17.)
6. Salvation from sin is the effect of faith. Faith, like a guardian angel, leads men to repentance, confession, baptism, salvation, progression, and education in righteousness. Let us cherish a faith which—

"Bears us through this earthly strife,
And triumphs in immortal life."

(This outline was suggested by a sermon preached by William J. Barbee in San Antonio, Texas, about 1876. Brother Barbee was a graduate of medicine taking the degree of M.D. in 1836.—W.G.J.)

Bible Lesson for Sunday, March 15, 1953

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An Example of Conversion

Text: Acts 8: 26-40

Introduction: The examples of conversion in the book of Acts bear the double stamp of approval by the Holy Spirit. (1) The preaching was done by inspired men; hence, if any error in the terms laid down by them, it must be charged to the Spirit, not them. (2) The inspired historian was directed by the Spirit to select the examples appearing in Acts. These accounts of con-

version are genuine, and are infallible examples for any to follow who seek salvation.

The law of induction into the kingdom of Christ is the same now as in apostolic times. What sinners did then to be saved from guilt of past sins they must do now. Nobody has any right to change the plan. The conversion of the eunuch is about the simplest and clearest account of a New Testament conversion. Any honest soul can read and understand it.

1. **The eunuch; his condition; his need.** This man was a great financier, treasurer of Ethiopia. Doubtless he was intelligent, well educated, honest. Being a very busy man, he must have been quite sincere, else he would not have left his work for weeks to go many hundreds of miles to worship God. The journey was long, tiresome, expensive. He was conscientious, worshipping and sacrificing according to the law. He was devoutly religious, but not a Christian. He was a Bible reader, an honest searcher for the truth, but not a Christian. He was in need of salvation. "Christ did not come to make the world religious, but to make it right religiously."

The eunuch is a fine example to saint and sinner. Many church members, with less important positions, are too busy to leave their work for a day to worship the Lord, or spend a little time studying God's word. Many people are religious but wrong. They should be honest as the eunuch, seek the right way and accept it.

2. **Agencies in the eunuch's conversion.** (1) As seen in verses twenty-six and twenty-nine, the angel and Holy Spirit appeared to Philip, not to the eunuch. The man needing salvation knew nothing of their presence or the part they played. They were simply instrumental in bringing preacher and sinner together. Why not send them to the eunuch? The spreading of the gospel had been placed in the hands of men (2 Cor. 4: 7), and it is God's will that people be saved through preaching (Rom. 10: 13-17; 1 Cor. 1: 18, 21), not by miraculous manifestations of celestial beings.

(2) **Philip** was a great preacher, full of wisdom and the Spirit. The apostles had laid hands on him (Acts 6: 6); he performed many miracles (Acts 8: 13). Philip was different from many preachers today. He had been preaching to great crowds in the city; God sent him to a desolate place to preach to one man. Philip did not complain or refuse to go because there would not be great crowds to preach to. He did not inquire about the pay, or if they had a fine building, or what their social prestige might be. The Lord recognizes the fact that great good can be done by preaching to even one person at a time; he preached to one woman through whom many persons were led to believe on him. (John 4: 39-41.)

(3) **Preaching God's word** was the direct agency in the eunuch's conversion. In no case of New Testament conversion was one saved except through the instrumentality of the word. Christ ordained that the word should be preached to save people. (Mark 16: 15, 16.) Christ, John, Peter, and Paul testify that it is through the word that one is made a believer: (John 17: 20; 20: 30, 31; Acts 15: 7-9; Rom. 10: 13-17.) It is through obedience to the word one is now saved. (James 1: 21, 22; 1 Pet. 1: 22, 23.) No miracles were performed, there were no miraculous manifestations to the eunuch in his conversion; hence, since none needed then, none needed now.

3. **Philip's question; the eunuch's answer.** Philip asked: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" How did the eunuch answer? "How can I, except God reveals it to me in a dream? or the Spirit operates and gives me a revelation? or I see a vision? or hear a still, small voice?" None of these, but "How can I, except some man should guide me." (Verse 31.) His conversion was accomplished entirely through the teaching of a man, without anything mysterious. The eunuch's answer showed a humble spirit; he was ready and willing to learn. He did not demand God's word be made to conform to his way of thinking.

4. **Philip's sermon.** "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Doubtless he mentioned other prophecies, told of their fulfillment in Christ, related facts of his birth, life, great works, wonderful teachings, death, burial, resurrection, and coronation. Philip simply preached the gospel, God's power to save. (Rom. 1: 16.) The only method God has of drawing souls to him is through teaching, their hearing and learning. (John 6: 44, 45; 2 Thess. 2: 14.)

The sermon included (1) facts to be believed (1 Cor. 15: 1-4); (2) commands to be obeyed; (a) believe (Acts 16: 31); (b) repent (Acts 17: 30); (c) confess Christ (Rom. 10: 9, 10); be baptized for remission of sins (Acts 2: 38). (3) Promises to be enjoyed:

remission of sins; (b) gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 38); eternal life (1 John 2: 25; Tit. 1: 2). (4) The threats to those who refuse to obey. (2 Thess. 1: 7-10.)

The preachers of that day "determined not to know anything of you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2: 2.)

A great tragedy today that preachers "have taken away my God, and I know not where they have laid him." He is eclipsed by his sermons on politics, ethics of philosophy, etc. The greatest salvation in the world today would be the preaching of the simple gospel of Christ, *even in some churches of Christ.*

5. The eunuch's question; Philip's answer. "What doth hinder thee to be baptized?" Did Philip tell him they must return to Jerusalem and get the church to vote on him first? and that he must wait an acceptable experience? or first be placed under suspicion for months? or call upon him to pray, shout, beg, plead, and cry at a mourner's bench? Did Philip say he did not need to be baptized? or that he was wholly passive, and there was nothing he could do? Did he call for God, Christ, and the Spirit to come upon and convert the man? What could they have done if they had come? Only preach the gospel, the terms of pardon, exactly as Philip did, and as was done in every case of conversion in the New Testament. (Rom. 1: 16; 1 Cor. 1: 18-21.) Philip did not ask the man if he "believed that God for Christ's sake had pardoned his sins." His answer concurs with Mark 16: 16: "that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He simply confessed faith in Christ, was baptized for the remission of sins.

6. The eunuch's response to Philip's answer. He did not cavil. He was unlike the many today. He did not say: "I am a Jew; I have your story, but if I am baptized, it will reflect on my parents." He did not bother about what the priest would think, his family and friends. He made no excuse; he was an honest man desiring salvation and was ready to obey.

7. Baptism of the eunuch. The record says they came unto a certain water; they went into the water; Philip baptized him, and he came out of the water. He was buried in water and thereby into Christ. (Rom. 6: 3, 4; Gal. 3: 27; Col. 2: 12.) His immediate obedience, as in the case of all other conversions in Acts, the importance attached to it.

Some think this meant "Holy Ghost baptism." No; the eunuch said: "See, here is water." It was not the Holy Spirit in which he was baptized, but water, which could be seen. Philip was not a Methodist preacher, or he would have asked how he wanted to be baptized: sprinkled, poured, or immersed. He was not a Baptist preacher, else he would have taken him back to Jerusalem for a vote of the church and to get permission to baptize him. He was not a Holiness preacher, for he would have called for three baptisms: Holy Ghost, fire, and water, while Paul says there is only one. (Eph. 4: 5.) In the preaching of Christ the eunuch understood he must be baptized in water. One cannot fully preach Christ without including the necessity of baptism.

8. What church did the eunuch join? He did not join any. He does not join the Lord's church. Upon obedience to God's terms of pardon, one is by him added to his church. (Acts 2: 47.) There is only one body (Eph. 4: 4); the body is the church (Col. 1: 18); therefore, only one church to which he could be added. It is the church for which Christ died. (Acts 20: 28; 1 Cor. 5: 25.) Christ is the head of it. (Eph. 1: 22, 23.) All the saved are in it. (Eph. 5: 23, 26.) To enter Christ is to enter the church, which is his body. (Gal. 3: 37; 1 Cor. 12: 13; Col. 1: 24.)

Since the church is the body of Christ, and he is the Saviour of that body, it is necessary for you, sinner friend, to obey the Lord's will and enter it to be saved eternally.

9. What did Christ do for the eunuch? He did exactly as he promised—that those who believe on him, repent of sins, confess sins, and are baptized shall be saved. (Mark 16: 16; Acts 2: 38; Heb. 5: 9.) Christ can be trusted to keep his promises. (Heb. 10: 23.) For one to refuse to be baptized unless Christ saves him is to distrust the Lord.

The eunuch was able to rejoice after obedience in baptism. I read of a Presbyterian preacher who went to be immersed. When he would refuse to rejoice afterwards. But when he came from the watery grave he could not restrain himself. Friends, by the eunuch's conversion, do what he did, and the promises are yours.

Hiring Preachers

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Employing a preacher is one of the most important duties and

to make a tragic mistake. Most elders are business men, and they would not think of hiring a clerk, truck driver, or other employee without learning something of the applicant's background, integrity, dependability, and general fitness for the job; but when a preacher is needed, some preacher hears of a vacancy, contacts the elders, tells them he is a gospel preacher, preaches a trial sermon, which is almost always good, and in which there is never any reference to his position on any of the troublesome questions that are hindering the progress of the church, and he is hired. Often, after it is too late, the elders learn that they have hired a troublemaker, who caused a division in the last congregation with which he worked, a fact which they could easily have known by the exercise of ordinary diligence and care in checking the record of the applicant. By the time they are aware of their mistake, the preacher has already caused friction and discord in the congregation, and if the elders take action to terminate the preacher's services, frequently there is a division in the congregation. There is definitely only one solution to the problem. Elders must be more cautious and careful in selecting a preacher. Before a preacher is hired, inquiry should be made of the elders of the last two or more congregations with which the applicant labored. If he was a troublemaker at one place, he is likely to be a troublemaker at other places, and tear down in one year what it has taken several faithful gospel preachers many years to build up. When hiring a preacher, a trial sermon is not enough, if elders are to be sure that they are not getting a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The Battle of the Versions

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(Continued)

Epiphanius and Irenaeus denounced Aquila for his mistranslation of the messianic passages and lay bare his bitter hatred for Christianity. About A.D. 140, Justin Martyr wrote his famous *Dialogue With Trypho*, the account of a debate he had had with a Jew named Trypho. This was about ten years after the date scholars assign to Aquila's translation. In the *Dialogue With Trypho*, Justin argues for many pages over the meaning of *almah* and shows conclusively that the Jews in their recent translations are guilty of deliberate change of the meaning of the word from "virgin" to "young woman" in order to falsify the Gospel of Matthew and deny the virgin birth. He argues powerfully on the context of Isa. 7: 14 that God was predicting a stupendous miracle through this utterance of Isaiah, challenging Ahaz to ask for a sign in the heaven above or the earth beneath, and that the virgin birth of the Messiah was predicted in the promised name of the son: "Emanuel"—"God with us," even as Matthew declares. Justin Martyr goes further than this: he charges the Jewish translators of his time with deliberately mutilating the Hebrew text of the Old Testament in the messianic passages, omitting key words which enabled them to conceal or deny the messianic content. (*Dialogue With Trypho*, LXXII-LXXIII.)

Irenaeus assails Aquila as one of the bitter enemies of the Christian religion whose false teaching would destroy the truth of God. "God, then, was made man, and the Lord did himself save us, giving us the token of the virgin. But not as some allege, among those now presuming to expound the scripture, (thus): 'Behold, a young woman shall conceive, and bring forth a son,' as Theodotion the Ephesian has interpreted, and Aquila of Pontus, both Jewish proselytes. The Ebionites, following these, assert that he was begotten by Joseph; thus destroying, as far as in them lies, such a marvelous dispensation of God, and setting aside the testimony of the prophets which proceeded from God." (*Against Heresies*, Chapter XXI.)

Words frequently change their meanings with usage. It is even possible for a single person to change on a specific occasion the meaning of a word in a significant manner by the change of facial expression or a peculiar lilt of the voice. The raucous defy of the roisterers of the Old West was "When you say that word—smile!" It is all the more possible for a people embittered by controversy to change the meaning of a word. The unanimity of the Jewish lexicons of the Middle Ages and of modern times, in declaring that *almah* means merely a young woman of marriageable age without regard as to whether married or unmarried, whether respectable or disreputable, must be considered in the light of the bitter controversy. The translators do not cite these lexicons; they go back as far as they can—to Aquila.