

# LEARNING FROM SIMILAR CONVERSIONS IN ACTS

## Introduction

- 1) The book of **Acts** contains several cases of conversion of sinners to Christ
- 2) These cases of conversion have similar themes that help us understand how one is converted to Christ then and now
- 3) The four cases of conversion we will be comparing are:
  - a) The conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39)
  - b) The conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:12-18)
  - c) The conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48)
  - d) The conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:11-15)

## I) **The Involvement of God**

- A) The heavenly involvement in the four conversions
  - 1) Angel instructs Philip where to go; Holy Spirit tells him to join the eunuch (8:26, 29)
  - 2) Jesus appears to Saul of Tarsus (9:3-6; 22:6-10; 26:12-18)
  - 3) Angel appears to Cornelius; Holy Spirit speaks to Peter (10:3-6, 30-32; 10:19-20; 11:12)
  - 4) Holy Spirit did not permit initial journey; vision of the man of Macedonia (see 16:6-10)
- B) Please note that neither Jesus, the angels, nor the Holy Spirit did the preaching of the gospel or miraculously convert any of the individuals
  - 1) Sometimes God also provided signs/miracles to bear witness to the message (Acts 8:5-7; 14:3; Heb. 2:3-4)
- C) Today the divine involvement is the word of God fully revealed by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:12-13; Jude 3; Rom. 10:17)

## II) **All Religious Persons**

- A) Every person in the conversions were religious-practicing people
  - 1) Eunuch has been in Jerusalem to worship (8:27)
  - 2) Saul of Tarsus was a devout Jew (22:3; 26:5)
  - 3) Cornelius was a devout man, one who feared God (10:2, 22)
  - 4) Lydia worshiped God (16:14)
- B) Many today are good, religious people, but have not been heard and obeyed the true gospel to be saved by the blood of Christ and joined to Christ in His body, the church
- C) We must not assume that if one believes in God, or even Jesus, that they have heard or obeyed the gospel for the forgiveness of their sins
  - 1) Religious people can be lost (Matt. 15:7-9; Acts 17:22-23, 30)

## III) **None Saved through Prayer**

- A) Many believe that a “salvation prayer” or “sinner’s prayer” is necessary for salvation
  - 1) “When we pray the prayer of salvation, we’re letting God know we believe His Word is true. By the faith He has given us, we choose to believe in Him... So, when we pray, asking God for the gift of salvation, we’re exercising our free will to acknowledge that we believe in Him” ([www.allaboutgod.com/prayer-of-salvation.htm](http://www.allaboutgod.com/prayer-of-salvation.htm))
- B) All persons were involved in prayer
  - 1) Eunuch would have been praying in worship in Jerusalem (8:27)
  - 2) Saul of Tarsus was praying as he waited in Damascus (9:11)
  - 3) Cornelius was a man of prayer (10:2, 4, 30-31)

- 4) Lydia was at a customary place for prayer (16:13)
- C) Praying a “sinner’s prayer” is not found in any case of conversion in the New Testament
  - 1) Their sincere practice of prayer and seeking God was commendable (10:4, 31), but only highlighted their need of the gospel to be saved from sin through Christ
  - 2) Not commanded or even suggested; Saul was penitently praying while he waited in Damascus, but this did not bring the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 9:11; 22:16)

#### **IV) All Received the Gospel Message by the Preaching/Teaching of Man**

- A) Each person heard the gospel proclaimed to them by another person
  - 1) Eunuch taught by Philip (8:30-35)
  - 2) Saul of Tarsus (9:17; 22:12-16)
  - 3) Cornelius heard Peter preach words of salvation (10:6, 32; 11:13-14)
  - 4) Lydia (16:13-14)
- B) The gospel message was communicated to sinners by means of a “preacher” (Rom. 10:8-17)
  - 1) The Holy Spirit directly communicated to apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:3-5)
  - 2) We learn the truth today by reading and hearing the gospel message fully revealed by the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:4; 1 Pet. 1:25)

#### **V) All Baptized in Water**

- A) Each person was baptized in water unto salvation
  - 1) Eunuch (8:36-38)
  - 2) Saul of Tarsus (9:18)
  - 3) Cornelius (10:44-48)
  - 4) Lydia (16:15)
- B) They were not baptized after they were saved, but in order to be saved (Acts 2:38; 22:16)
  - 1) Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius but this was a gift/sign, not a means of salvation
- C) It is sadly ironic that this common action of obedient faith done in every case is dismissed as unnecessary for salvation by many in our religious world
  - 1) How can anyone be raised to walk in newness of life without it (Rom. 6:3-4)?

#### Conclusion

Important lessons are learned when we compare these cases of conversion, and also discern the error of human doctrines not based in Scripture. Let us understand and teach the simple truth about how man is saved