

Jesus Christ the Only Answer

by John Hunter

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as the only answer to finding God and experiencing salvation.

Scripture: Luke 2:30, Luke 12:15, John 5:39, Acts 5:42, Acts 8:35, Acts 9:20, Acts 10:36, Acts 13:38, Acts 17:18, Colossians 2:10, Hebrews 13:8

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "Personal Salvation"

Description

John Hunter preaches about the importance of focusing on Jesus Christ as the ultimate source of peace and satisfaction, rather than seeking fulfillment in worldly riches or religious rituals. He emphasizes that true salvation is found in a personal relationship with Christ, as demonstrated in the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch who found joy and salvation through hearing about Jesus. The sermon highlights the power of preaching Jesus as the central message, as seen in the apostles' and early church's focus on Christ as the key to God's salvation. Hunter encourages believers to center their faith on the living Savior, Jesus Christ, who remains constant and present in every circumstance.

Transcript

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this scripture, preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35).

In these days many people are trying to find God by varying methods, in different places, and by self-thought and beliefs. They are so accustomed to the ways of business, so used to the ways of the world around them, that they associate the Christian faith with a place, a personality, a plan, a program. Very often Christians and church members make the same mistake, that of judging spiritual truth by non-spiritual standards. They have no expanse of vision, they become so spiritually shortsighted that their effectiveness for God and their usefulness in His service are sadly limited. Only the word of God can give us the answer.

In Acts 8:26-29 we read of one who represents man at his very best. He is described as "of great authority" (Acts 8:27), in charge of the treasury department of Ethiopia. Chosen by Candace the Queen, and personally responsible to her, he must have been of the highest integrity for he had control of all her great treasure. Such a man would be of high birth, aristocratic upbringing, of excellent education and professional ability. Naturally he would be very rich and his riches would give him access to all that many men count dear. He must have been fairly young and strong because he had unusual experiences in travel, so rare in those days.

(It is worth pausing here to realize that the Lord Jesus lived His earthly life in an area of 100 miles by 60 miles. Visualize 100 miles, and that was the length of Christ's journeying.)

The man of Ethiopia was a great traveler by standards of the day. He appears to have had everything that could make a man happy, everything to satisfy the human heart -- riches, responsibility, renown, royalty, and yet he wasn't satisfied. He was seeking peace with God, a complete satisfaction of his soul's hunger and desire.

We know what he was seeking by the kind of books he read. This is an important point to realize -- the kind of books we read are a good guide to the kind of things we want! If I see you reading mathematics, physics and chemistry books I will know that you are probably studying eventually for an examination. I can guess your hobbies from the books you read -- sport, photography, gardening, etc.

Show me your books and I will tell you your character. If I see you reading doubtful books which are sexy, debasing and sordid, I will know that is what you want -- a cheap thrill, sin without symptoms! If you read nothing, you are nothing. If you read the Word of God you have the availability of God in your personality. The Ethiopian Eunuch was seeking peace and the answer to grief, sorrow, iniquity and sin, seeking something to meet the hunger of his heart.

There are many people today who are just as hungry for some similar form of satisfaction but they cannot put words to it. So many believe that enough wealth will bring real satisfaction. If only they have enough money to satisfy all their wants and desires, then they will be really happy. The Ethiopian had everything but this peace.

This fact, that riches cannot buy peace, is borne out by today's suicide rate. General statistics show that those who die by their own hands are not those struggling for satisfaction, but those who have made enough to meet all their wants and who then realize that "one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

The Ethiopian, seeking this peace, journeyed to Jerusalem, the center of the religious world in that day. His round trip would be over 2,000 miles made in a chariot without springs, over roads without a surface, under conditions unfavorable to any human comfort. Such a journey was surely a proof of a man's sincerity. He came to Jerusalem to the glorious temple. He would see the most colorful religious services possible. He would hear the singing of the wonderfully trained choirs with the accompanying orchestras. He would move among the most religious people of his day. Everywhere was the opportunity to contact religion, and find the answer to the ache in his heart. But he left the place of religion without the peace of God. God's salvation is not in a place. You may find ritual and respectability and religion in a place, but not God's salvation.

Before he left he bought a copy of the book of the prophet Isaiah. Such a book or roll must have been very expensive, all handwritten on parchment. Here again the price he paid indicates the desire of his heart. As his chariot bumped on its homeward journey he tried to find peace with God in the passages he read, but he failed. It was a closed book to him and he hadn't the key to unlock the message. Thus he had come to the end of his resources. His wealth, high birth, great education, strength and youth, and governmental standing, had all failed to satisfy him. But now God steps in and takes over.

How rapidly events move when God steps in! Philip asks the one question: "Do you understand what you are reading?" (Acts 8:30), and when this great man admitted his failure, then Philip started and preached

from the same Scripture. Philip preached Jesus -- a Person. Into the closed door of the Word of God Philip placed the blessed key which is Christ, and everything became plain. The full message of God's salvation in Christ was proclaimed, and the man believed. What a glorious end -- he was baptized and went on his way rejoicing, and he never stopped rejoicing. He only heard one gospel message in all his life, but that was enough. All he needed was Jesus.

He went back to his homeland without a Bible, without a prayer book, hymnbook or chorus book. He had no church to help him, no minister or pastor to guide him, no religious publications to read, no correspondence courses to follow, no Christian fellowship to comfort and strengthen him, no follow-up work to keep him -- nothing but the knowledge of Christ as his salvation. What an amazing thought! Yet it is challenging to see that history reports that when, in later years, Christian missionaries went to Ethiopia they found groups of people worshiping and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The man's rejoicing was infectious; others caught it, and it never ceased.

The secret, of course, was in the message of Philip. Philip only had one text -- Jesus Christ. He only had one sermon -- Jesus Christ (Acts 8:5, 35). In this he was following the true apostolic tradition.

We read in Acts 5:42 concerning the apostles: "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." They had only one text and one sermon -- God's salvation in a Person. Paul, in Acts 9:20, preached his first Christian message: "Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues." In Acts 10:36, 43, Peter preaches the same message. Paul again in Acts 13:38 testifies: "Through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins." Again in Acts 17:18, Paul preached unto the Athenians "Jesus." Just consider, they had no buildings, no plans, no committees, no programs, no organizations, but they did have POWER. It was said of them: "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too" (Acts 17:6). What a complaint! The point was that all their preaching was related to the Person of Christ, not only His work but His Person. He Himself is God's full salvation.

Today many so called Christians have fallen into the mistake of approaching the spiritual along the lines of the earthly. We seek to reach men in their bitter need by our places (churches), our programs, our plans, our preparations, our peculiarities, our personalities. These things are good and useful in their proper places, but they have no power in themselves alone. They can characterize an organization but never an organism; an organism has life, which no organization has. Without the Person of Christ they are merely social, but when Christ is the only text-the meanest and simplest group becomes charged with the dynamic of God.

There is a famous painting called "The Presence." The artist has painted it as looking from the back of a church. Away at the other end a colorful religious ceremony is being enacted. The altar is bright with candles and crucifixes. The priest and choir are superbly robed and singing with majestic wonder. The congregation, rather small, is attracted to this scene as moths to a candle. But in the back seat, away from it all, a poor woman is bowed, the picture of abject sorrow and misery. Yet standing alongside the woman is the mystic figure of the Person of Christ, His hand laid on her bowed head. How powerful is the message of the painter. Religion can attract, but it cannot heal the brokenhearted.

The Roman Catholic faith centers around the place of Bethlehem. There is the greater, more effective, figure of the holy mother Mary and the tiny, weak, helpless Babe. All true to a point, but when this aspect is magnified the balance is destroyed and Christ only fits into the picture. Gone is the clean, wholesome

fullness of His power. This wasn't the message of the early church warriors.

The evangelical Christian often counters this by concentrating on the place of Calvary, the place of the center cross, the place of the empty tomb. But this, in turn, can limit the truth of God. Hymn writers have written poetically of the cross, "To the old rugged cross I will ever be true."

We know what is the true meaning they seek to convey, but not everyone does. God's salvation is not in a place. God's salvation is not only the work of Christ, but in the Person of Christ -- He is God's salvation. Simeon's famous prayer was: "For my eyes have seen Your salvation" (Luke 2:30). This is not a quibbling over words, but an essential aspect of a vital, dynamic faith. If my faith is fixed to a place it easily becomes sentimental, with a sense of respectable ineffectiveness. But Christ is alive! If He is my salvation, then from this springs all the endless excitement of a vivid, living experience of His life in me.

In John 5:39 Jesus said to very religious people: "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

Jesus Christ is bigger than Bethlehem, greater than Calvary, and more precious even than His own precious Word. Thousands have tried to run their lives by His teachings, quoting or misquoting the Word of God as their guide, but there is no salvation in the Word of God. Some with a fanatical zeal appear almost to worship the Bible. Let us be careful; salvation is not in the Scriptures -- Jesus said so!

"The letter kills" (2 Corinthians 3:6). It is possible to have an intimate knowledge of the Word of God and still be lost. It is possible to know the truths of God's Word and still be a hard, bitter, narrow-minded person without the joyous, powerful effectiveness of the Christ-centered life.

There is such a freshness in relating my salvation to a living Saviour. There is that extra something that triumphs over the weakness of suffering and the weariness of age, that fullness of salvation which keeps me living in the present tense of One who could say, "I am"-- never "I was"; "I am"-- never "I will be." A present tense experience of victory, joy, worth-whileness, the absolute certainty in a Person. Remember it is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). He is always and at all times the same. Churches have changed; denominations have passed away; doctrinal truths have risen and fallen in importance and emphasis, but always "He is the same."

"Lo, I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). What a blessed promise from a blessed Person. If our faith is dependent on the Word of God only, how dangerous that can be.

Geoffrey Bull, an English missionary, was imprisoned by the Chinese Communists for several years. He records in his book, *When Iron Gates Yield*, how he was imprisoned in a terrible dungeon. Then his Bible was taken away, but his faith triumphed because, "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (2 Timothy 4:17). He only had Christ. But Christ was the power who turned the world upside down in apostolic days, and it is Christ who today can make "iron gates yield." If Christ Himself is your full salvation you need nothing more. "You are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10). He is yours and you are His for all times and for all places and conditions.

Living in the light and truth of this fact is the everlasting answer to all testing and temptation, to all sorrow and suffering, even to defeat, and death itself: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me" (Psalm 23:4).

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