

May 25, 2025

Acts 8:26-40

How much would you sacrifice in order to be successful, wealthy, prosperous, and famous? I'm sure many of you have seen how much some will sacrifice. They'll sacrifice their bodies and go days without sleeping or exercising. They'll sacrifice precious, important time with their families and spouses. They'll sacrifice their own souls and lie, cheat, steal, or even sleep with people in order to get ahead. I'm sure many of you have seen how much people are willing to sacrifice, and maybe some of you have made those kinds of harsh sacrifices for success, wealth, and status. Well, the man we see today sacrificed more than anyone today could dare imagine. The Ethiopian Empire at this time, actually wasn't in what's now called "Ethiopia," more like Sudan, and was founded on the Nile river south of Egypt. The Ethiopian Empire at this time, sometimes referred to in the Old Testament as "Cush," was led by a Queen, not so much a king. They called their queen "Kandake," which is where we get our name "Candace." A few hundred years before Jesus walked the Earth, the Roman Empire under Caesar Augustus attempted to conquer that kingdom, and failed- which didn't often happen. The Cushites, Ethiopians were tall, dark-skinned, wealthy, proud, organized, and fierce warriors. And this man was their CFO- chief financial officer. A trusted official which handled all the finances for an empire which was one of the ancient world's leading sources of gold. He would have been one of the most wealthy, powerful people in the world at that time. But it came at a price. In order to let someone who wasn't a member of the royal family work so closely to the royal family, especially the Queen, it had to be certain that he would never attempt to insert his own bloodline into the royal bloodline by procreating with any of the female members of the royal family. And there was one way to make sure that would never happen. In order to have this position of authority, power, prestige, fame, and wealth, this man would have to pay a heavy price: his testicles. That's what a eunuch is. He was voluntarily castrated so that he could have this position of power, authority, wealth, and status. Great wealth, great cost. And he was the first African Christian. That's what we are going to see today- how this man converted to faith in Jesus. We are going to see how **the Gospel changed everything for a Eunuch**. But first, we have to answer this question:

**1. Why was he there?** The text makes it clear, he was in Jerusalem to worship, which at this time would have been for the Passover, the most important Jewish holiday where they slaughtered the passover lamb to remember how God delivered them from death in Egypt, and so he would have been in the city when Jesus was crucified. But why? He wasn't Jewish. He was a dark-skinned African man. He would have stuck out like a sore thumb, not only because of his race, but also because of his wealth. Being Ethiopian, everything he had was probably covered in gold, not figuratively, actually covered in gold. He was also a eunuch, and according to the Law of Moses in the Old Testament, he wouldn't have been able to enter the Temple in Jerusalem to worship- yes, that is a rule in the Law of Moses. This man would be the absolute last person any Jewish person, especially Philip, would ever expect to be worshiping God. But there he was. Here are some things to consider. In the modern day, when a person or couple isn't able to have

children, it's often very sad. But it was different in the Ancient World. To be barren, to have no children wasn't sad, but wretched, cursed. In ancient civilizations, having children was everything and infertility was one's greatest nightmare. You can understand why- it was necessary for your farm or business, it was necessary for clans and cities to have large armies, and necessary for people to be taken care of when they are older. Fertility was not only prioritized, it was worshiped. Baal, Asherah, and the gods that Israel was tempted to worship were fertility gods. That was also the case in Africa, and in some places it still is. The gods that the Ethiopians worshiped were the gods of Egypt, or a version of them, and they also fertility gods. The cultural belief sounded like this: What good is your life if no life comes from you? What good is your wealth if you have no one to inherit it? What good are your accomplishments if you have no offspring? Those cultures were not kind to eunuchs. If you look at ancient cultures where eunuchs were common in palaces, they were often despised and mocked by most people. They were seen as sell-outs. Sure, they had wealth, but sold their ability to have children and their manhood for it. So while everyone celebrated having children, and the gods promised fertility, children, and pleasure- something this eunuch would never be able to have. He had almost all the money the world could offer (not an overstatement). The only reason he would come searching for Israel's God would be that he felt hopelessly empty. And somehow, he had heard of this other God up north in a small, insignificant nation called Israel. And this God not only included, but actually chose and favored infertile people- Abraham and Sarah were infertile, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah. And one of their great prophets, Isaiah, wrote something astounding: *Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say,*

*"The Lord will surely exclude me from his people."*

*And let no eunuch complain,*

*"I am only a dry tree."*

*4 For this is what the Lord says:*

*"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,  
who choose what pleases me  
and hold fast to my covenant—*

*5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls  
a memorial and a name  
better than sons and daughters;  
I will give them an everlasting name  
that will endure forever.*

While every god he heard of promised fertility, children, and pleasure, all things he could never have, this God promised something more, something better, an eternal future, eternal honor, eternal joy. While everyone mocked him, this God promised to glorify him as a member of his people. How did the man get access to an Old Testament, we don't know, but he did and he knew that this God had something for him no one else could give. So he worshiped. And on his way back, he read in that same book one of the "servant songs" that we see in Isaiah. These songs talk

about a special servant of God, first talking about how Israel was God's special servant, but failed to keep his commands," but then in chapter 53 we see God talk about his servant who wasn't Israel, but would be punished in the place of Israel so Israel could be redeemed. And in that chapter, this Eunuch stopped in his tracks when he read, *"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."* A man with no descendants, willingly, but not for wealth and status, but is killed like a sacrifice? Who is this? And according to God's design, there comes Philip: "Do you understand what you're reading," while he's jogging alongside the chariot. And the eunuch says, "Explain it to me! Who is this?" And Philip says, "That's the God we worship." And Philip explains from the rest of the chapter that he was the sacrifice who was punished, rejected by God so that sinners, all sinners, even the outcasts and eunuchs of the world could be embraced and accepted and given an eternal inheritance. And the Eunuch said, "I'm in!" And notice what he says- "Who can prevent me from being baptized?" According to most, his body prevented him from having any kind of meaning or lasting joy, but in the Gospel, nothing could stop him from having the most meaningful, powerful, experience of being known, loved, forgiven, and accepted by the God of the universe- nothing could stop him from being baptized. And so he was. The Gospel changed a Eunuch and gave him eternal joy, salvation, and belonging no other god would dare promise.

**2. What does this mean?** The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith are unlike any other religion in the world. Did you know that more than 90% of Muslims are in the Middle East, more than 90% of Hindus are in India, more than 90% of Buddhists are in East Asia, all roughly where those religions were founded. Do you know what region of the world has more than 90% of the world's Christians? None. You may think America is a Christian nation, but North America only has about 12% of the world's Christians. It's all over the world and most rapidly growing in China, as well as South America and Africa. Christianity is the only religion in the world that has spread and has a major presence beyond where it began. Why? We saw it today: because the Gospel is different. Every other religion says that if you do this, follow these rules, live by these principles, follow the 5 pillars of Islam or the eightfold path of Buddhism, you will be included and blessed. Therefore, all places where those religions are have outcasts. A religion that prioritizes and promises fertility excludes the infertile and eunuchs. The Jewish religion which says if you obey the right laws and have the blood, you will be saved, wasn't kind to foreigners and those who had sinned greatly. American religion that says "if you do your best to be a good person, God will like you" and worships health, wealth, and happiness, tends to make outcasts of the poor, the immigrant, and those who've had hard, sad lives. But the Gospel uniquely includes those whom all others exclude. Because Jesus Christ has been slain for all sinners, those who trust in him will not only be saved, but given the very desires of their and every human heart beyond what they could ever imagine. To the eunuchs, God promises that those who trust in him will receive a more lasting name and an eternal joy. It's as if God is saying, "Let no widow who has lost her husband, or victim whose spouse has abandoned them,

or person who's never married say, 'I will never have the joy of close, intimate companionship. I'll always be lonely and single.'” Because Christ has claimed you as his Bride, and in the joy of heaven your union with Jesus will be infinitely more beautiful, more pleasurable, more meaningful than any human marriage- the fulfillment of what every marriage was meant to be.” Let no one who has sinned greatly say, “God could never forgive me, my sins are too great, I’ve ran away from for too long, he could never accept me.” Because Jesus has died in your place, and even if you suffer judgment in this world, which is right, you will have eternal innocence as God’s chosen child- Christ was punished and you don’t need to be afraid. Let no one who is friendless or struggles for close, intimate relationship despair- because God has declared himself to be your brother. Let no one who has no children, or lost their children, or lost the love of their children despair. Because God has in store for you an eternal name and legacy: “This one belongs to me.” Let no one who’s unsuccessful, unremarkable, unknown, or unaccomplished despair or regret the past. Because when the creator of the universe looks at you, he sees you as if you were as glorious as Christ, and in the New World you will be. Let no one despair whose life was a disappointment or who was rejected in this world- this world isn’t your home and its existence is a blink of an eye compared to what you will have. Because the Gospel is free and saves by grace, it unites people who would otherwise never be together. It humbles those who’d normally be considered a big deal, and exalts the nobodies. It comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable. It changes cowards into confessors, maniacs into missionaries, enemies into brothers, eunuchs into evangelists. The Gospel is the power of God, and it changes everything. Amen.