

Wanted: Willing Worshipers

Joe Slater

How important is worship to you? Entirely too often, we indicate by our behavior that we don't appreciate what a privilege it is to offer our praises and devotion to the Creator of the universe alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We ought to take a lesson from a man in Acts 8 whose example puts many of us to shame. He was "*a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship*" (v. 27). At this time, the man knew nothing about Jesus. Philip would teach him the gospel in v. 35, but for now he worshipped according to the Jewish system. Had this Ethiopian been like many of us, however, he would never have gone to worship at all, and thus never would have come into contact with the gospel. You see, he had all sorts of excuses at his disposal.

1. He was a foreigner. He may have been a Jew born in Ethiopia, but more likely he was a native Ethiopian who had converted to Judaism. Either way, he would encounter considerable prejudice in Jerusalem. The Hebrews (traditional Jews who lived in Judea and used the Hebrew Scriptures) tended to look down their noses at their brethren from other nations and cultures (see Acts 6). Maybe he had better stay at home; they might not be nice to him in Jerusalem.

2. He was a eunuch. Deuteronomy 32:1 forbade emasculated men from entering the worship assembly. He would be limited to one of the outlying areas of the Jerusalem temple. How would you like it if you couldn't enter the auditorium – you had to stay in the lobby? (Not a perfect parallel, but you get the point.)

3. He was important (comparable to the Secretary of the Treasury in our own government). For some reason, when people become "important" in the eyes of the world, they tend to lose their reverence for God (see 1 Corinthians 1:26-28).

4. He was busy. Being in charge of the queen's treasury required enormous quantities of time and immense effort managing a considerable staff. He could easily have said, "I have so much work to do, I just don't have time for worship. Besides, I'm tired!"

5. He was a long distance away. A trip to Jerusalem was over 1000 miles one way – in a chariot! (How far did you say you drive to church?) Granted, he didn't make this trip every week; but it is remarkable that he made it at all!

Happily, in spite of all potential excuses, the Ethiopian eunuch loved God and wanted to worship Him. God saw to it that a preacher was available to teach him the gospel.

May each of us develop the desire to worship and to obey God in all things!

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What's The Difference?

The primary difference between Christianity and other religions is that they believe you must atone for your own sins (you did something bad, so you suffer for it until you've suffered enough, or done enough good to make up for your wrong); but Christians believe God Himself came to provide atonement. He suffered and paid for our sins. This is actually what makes Christianity so hard for people to accept; even for many professing Christians. It is difficult to TRUST someone else to make atonement for the wrong we have done. We still have "karma" or a balancing scale in our mind. We still say things like, "I hope I've been good enough to go to heaven." That's not Christianity, folks. Oh, the joy and bliss when we finally trust that we can be TOTALLY forgiven in Christ!

-- Wes McAdams (Plano, TX)

COURAGE

"For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline" (II Timothy 1:7).

Rosa Parks said, "I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear." Rosa Parks was not rich, did not hold a doctorate degree, and was not famous when she made up her mind to stay seated in that bus. But she knew what was right, and was willing to act on what was right.

One might say that the opposite of courage is a spirit of fearfulness. It is a disgrace to modern Christians, especially those in the United States where we have little persecution, that we let our little fears hold us back from telling others about God and Christ. What do we fear? Ridicule? Humiliation? Being called a "religious fanatic"?

"You have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin," the author of Hebrews reminds us (12:4). No, we are not like the six newly baptized Christians who died in a public park in Pakistan last March 27. They were targeted because they believed in Christ and had gathered to celebrate Easter with other believers. American Christians have opportunities to show and tell their faith to others every day, but we are often afraid.

"Be strong and of good courage," God told the Israelites over and over as they went to fight their battles. The Lord was their leader, and He fought for them and conquered their enemies. All they had to do was put their faith and trust in God and obey Him, and He discomfited the foreign armies that threatened them.

The same God, our Heavenly Father, has promised to be with us always. Can we not have the same faith as the Israelites did as they watched God smite their enemies? Our Father will do the same for us as we go forth to tell His story.

-- Donna Wittlif (Denver, CO)