

Acts 8:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Analysis

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This verse (absent from earliest manuscripts but present in later tradition) captures essential conversion elements: faith, confession, and doctrinal content.

If thou believest with all thine heart establishes faith as baptism's prerequisite. Not mere intellectual assent but wholehearted trust and commitment. The phrase with all thine heart indicates undivided allegiance—Reformed theology's emphasis on total consecration, not partial commitment. Saving faith engages the whole person: mind, will, emotions.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God provides minimal creedal confession. The eunuch affirms Jesus' identity (Christ/Messiah) and deity (Son of God). This brief statement encompasses gospel essentials: Jesus is promised Messiah and divine. Early Christian confessions were simple yet profound, distinguishing genuine faith from heretical teachings.

Though textual evidence questions this verse's originality, its content reflects authentic early Christian practice—baptismal candidates confessed faith before receiving the sacrament. The pattern: proclamation → belief → confession → baptism demonstrates proper ordo salutis (order of salvation).

Historical Context

Textual criticism notes this verse's absence from oldest manuscripts (Papyrus 74, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus), suggesting later addition. However, its content aligns with documented early Christian baptismal practice. Candidates confessed faith publicly before baptism, often using creedal formulas.

The confession 'Jesus Christ is the Son of God' appears repeatedly in early Christian literature as baptismal formula. Whether Luke originally wrote these words or later scribes inserted standard practice into text, the theological content remains consistent with Acts' broader teaching and early Christianity's norms. The emphasis on faith preceding baptism counters baptismal regeneration errors—water doesn't save; faith saves, baptism testifies.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does 'believing with all thine heart' differ from mere intellectual acknowledgment?
2. What essential doctrinal content should baptismal confessions include?
3. Why is public confession appropriate accompaniment to baptism?
4. How should churches balance simple confessions with adequate doctrinal understanding?
5. What does the phrase 'Son of God' communicate about Jesus' nature and work?

Interlinear Text

εἶπεν	δὲ	ὁ	Φίλιππος	Εἰ	Πιστεύω	ἐξ	ὅλης	τῆς
and said	And		Philip	If	I believe	with	all thine	
G2036	G1161	G3588	G5376	G1487	G4100	G1537	G3650	G3588
καρδίας,	ἔξεστιν	ἀποκριθεὶς	δὲ	εἶπεν	Πιστεύω	τὸν		
heart	thou mayest	he answered	And	and said	I believe			
G2588	G1832	G611	G1161	G2036	G4100			G3588
υἱὸν	τοῦ	Θεοῦ	εἶναι	τὸν	Ἰησοῦν	Χριστόν		
the Son		of God	is		that Jesus	Christ		
G5207	G3588	G2316	G1511	G3588	G2424	G5547		

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org