

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

εἴπεν δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος Εἰ Πιστεύω ἐξ ὅλης τὴς
and said And G3588 Philip If I believe with all thine G3588
G2036 G1161 G5376 G1487 G4100 G1537 G3650

καρδίας, ἔξεστιν ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἴπεν Πιστεύω τὸν
heart thou mayest he answered And and said I believe G3588
G2588 G1832 G611 G1161 G2036 G4100

ύιὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐιναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν
the Son G3588 of God is G3588 that Jesus Christ
G5207 G2316 G1511 G2424 G5547

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