

## WHAT PREVENTS ME?

### – Testimonies of Baptisms –

In the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Acts, we are introduced to an Ethiopian eunuch who had a life changing experience while he was riding in his chariot reading from the scriptures. At the same time, an angel of God was taking note of the sincerity of this eunuch and thought to intervene. We read:

“However, Jehovah’s angel spoke to Philip, saying: “Rise and go to the south to the road that runs down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.) With that he rose and went, and, look! an Ethiopian eunuch, a man in power under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, and who was over all her treasure. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship, but he was returning and was **sitting in his chariot and reading aloud the prophet Isaiah.**” – *Acts 8:26-28*

A eunuch, as used in a literal sense, refers to a man who has been castrated and therefore trusted to be an attendant or caretaker of a queen or other ranking women. But in a broad sense, the word can refer to any man who had been assigned duties in the king’s court. Since this eunuch had gone to Jerusalem to worship, he is likely not a literal eunuch because castrated males were not allowed be a part of the worship at Jerusalem. (*Deuteronomy 23:1*)

We notice, too, that the eunuch was **reading aloud** from the scriptures. Perhaps this is what got the attention of the angel, for we have read nothing in the scriptures to indicate that angels have the ability to read minds. This is an important point for all of us. If we want the assistance of angels on our behalf, we will need to make verbal expression of those desires. But back to the story.

Philip obeyed and went to the road as the angel directed. And as he approached, he saw the eunuch’s chariot riding by. We read:

“So the spirit said to Philip: ‘Approach and join yourself to this chariot.’ Philip ran alongside and heard him reading aloud Isaiah the prophet, and he said: ‘**Do you actually know what you are reading?**’ He said: ‘Really, how could I ever do so, unless someone guided me?’ And he entreated Philip to get on and sit down with him.” – *Acts 8:29-31*

The eunuch had some previous knowledge about God as a Jewish proselyte, but was apparently not acquainted with Jesus and the kingdom message. The angel wanted this man to know more – to have his spiritual thirst quenched. And the scripture he was reading was an excellent opportunity to enlighten this curious soul. It is not an accident that the angel directed Philip to the eunuch at precisely this time. We read:

“Now the passage of Scripture that he was reading aloud was this: ‘As a sheep he was brought to the slaughter, and as a lamb that is voiceless before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. During his humiliation the judgment was taken away from him. Who will tell the details of his generation? Because his life is taken away from the earth.’ In answer the eunuch said to Philip: ‘I beg you, About whom does the prophet say this? About himself or about some other man?’ Philip opened his mouth and, **starting with this Scripture, he declared to him the good news about Jesus.**” – *Acts 8:32-35*

As they both rode along in the chariot, Philip began with that scripture in Isaiah and declared the good news about Jesus – his life, his teachings, his death, and no doubt the requirement of baptism as a public declaration of his faith and admission into the Jesus brotherhood. And we read:

“Now as they were going over the road, they came to a certain body of water, and the eunuch said: “Look! A body of water; **what prevents me from getting baptized?**” – *Acts 8:36*

After hearing the good news about Jesus, the eunuch spontaneously and of his own volition wanted to get baptized! When he spotted a body of water, he saw no reason why he should not be baptized. Philip agreed:

“With that he commanded the chariot to halt, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. When they had come up out of the water, **Jehovah’s spirit quickly led Philip away**, and the eunuch did not see him anymore, for he kept going on his way rejoicing.” – *Acts 8:38-39*

After the baptism, Philip was led away. The eunuch had everything he needed – he had entered into the brotherhood and from that point on, the spirit would be teaching him, as John said:

“And as for you, the anointing that you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to be teaching you; but, as the anointing from him is teaching you about all things, and is true and is no lie, and just as it has taught you, remain in union with him.” – *1 John 2:27*

Likely this eunuch went his way and shared the good news he received with others. We do not know for sure, but this new brother may have been instrumental in bringing the good news to the Jews and others in Ethiopia.

The book of Acts relates other stories of individuals who, once they heard the word about Jesus, immediately and spontaneously were moved to be baptized:

Several on the day of Pentecost:

“And with many other words he bore thorough witness and kept exhorting them, saying: “Get saved from this crooked generation.” Therefore **those who embraced his word heartily were baptized**, and on that day about **three thousand souls** were added.” – *Acts 2:40-41*

Cornelius, an Italian army officer in Caesarea, and his family:

“While Peter was yet speaking about these matters the holy spirit fell upon all those hearing the word. And the faithful ones that had come with Peter who were of those circumcised were amazed, because the free gift of the holy spirit was being poured out also upon people of the nations. For they heard them speaking with tongues and magnifying God. Then Peter responded: ‘**Can anyone forbid water so that these might not be baptized who have received the holy spirit even as we have?**’ With that he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they requested him to remain for some days.” – *Acts 10:44-48*

A woman merchant and her family:

“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira and a worshiper of God, was listening, and Jehovah opened her heart wide to pay attention to the things being spoken by Paul. Now when **she and her household got baptized**, she said with entreaty: ‘If you men have judged me to be faithful to Jehovah, enter into my house and stay.’ And she just made us come.” – *Acts 16:14-15*

A presiding officer at the synagogue and his family:

“Accordingly he transferred from there and went into the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was adjoining the synagogue. But Crispus the presiding officer of the synagogue became a believer in the Lord, and so did all his household. **And many of the Corinthians that heard began to believe and be baptized.**” – *Acts 18:7-8*

Even a prison guard, who was guarding the Apostle Paul, and his family:

“But about the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and praising God with song; yes, the prisoners were hearing them. Suddenly a great earthquake occurred, so that the foundations of the jail were shaken. Moreover, all the doors were instantly opened, and the bonds of all were loosened. The jailer, being awakened out of sleep and seeing the prison doors were open, drew his sword and was about to do away with himself, imagining that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul called out with a loud voice, saying: ‘Do not hurt yourself, for we are all here!’ So he asked for lights and leaped in and, seized with trembling, he fell down before Paul and Silas. And he brought them outside and said: **‘Sirs, what must I do to get saved?’ They said: ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will get saved, you and your household.’** And they spoke the word of Jehovah to him together with all those in his house. And he took them along in that hour of the night and bathed their stripes; and, one and all, **he and his were baptized without delay.** And he brought them into his house and set a table before them, and he rejoiced greatly with all his household now that he had believed God.” – *Acts 16:25-34*

But what about now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Do we see such spontaneous requests for baptism by spirit motivated individuals? Are there those today who hear the word about Jesus and almost immediately desire to dedicate themselves to do the Father’s will and get baptized as a symbol of their dedication and admission into the Jesus brotherhood? ABSOLUTELY!

In a previous article on this site, “**The Powerful Message of Sonship**” we wrote about a group of men recovering from various forms of substance abuse and addiction, who reside in various recovery missions in California. These men are receiving the kingdom message of sonship with God with great joy. They are undergoing miraculous changes in their lives and, of their own volition, without prompting, are making the decision to get baptized. Even the pastors at the mission did not know of their plans.

Those missions house mostly recovering male addicts. The female recovering addicts are housed in separate missions, but we have heard from many of them as well. They, too, are undergoing remarkable changes as they take hold of the message that we are all faith-children of God.

Initially, we thought there was only 35 of such men. We now know that number is over 500 and growing, along with about 600 in the associated missions housing the women, just in that area alone. And we are learning that the message of sonship is spreading throughout rehab missions across the U.S. and in 16 other countries worldwide, among both men and women, with an average of about 500 getting baptized or re-dedicating their lives to Christ each month!

We are told that the message of sonship is restoring their dignity and giving them a solid foundation for maintaining sobriety and being real assets to their families and communities. The articles on this site are forming the basis of much of their new curriculum.

We also learned that member of local law enforcement are greatly encouraged by the positive changes in these men and, as a result, have had their own faith re-energized with the message of sonship. By way of the articles, and discussion with these men and their pastors, the officers are realizing that all men, in spite of their criminal activities, are their brothers and should be dealt with with dignity and compassion to the extent possible.

We interviewed some of the recovering addicts about their election to be baptized. We publish their stories here. Please note that they are of different age groups, different races, different social and economic backgrounds, and different religions. Some are even members of rival gangs who now consider each other spiritual brothers and are active in bringing their prior gang associates into a relationship with the Father.

Most of the information was received by email, so we will present the emails in basically the same form as we received them, with some typographical and grammatical changes. And we have changed their names to protect their privacy. Also, note that while some have been in rehab several months, they have only been exposed to the kingdom message of sonship for less than four months.

### **Milton, age 18**

Just about my entire life, I've been involved in some kind of drugs because that's what was all around me. So I drank myself right out of school and didn't even finish high school. So I came downtown about 2 years ago and just did my thing. But the turning point was when I started doing crack. I felt like I was gonna die. I lost so much weight, I decided to check into a rehab mission. At first I was just gonna chill out, pick up a few pounds, and get back to my thang. But God had other plans for me. I started taking thing more for real when I realized that I am loved by my heavenly Father and he loves me in a good way, and he is nothing like my mom and earth dad. I'm a child of God y'all! I have a chance to be with the Christ. There's a place for me in heaven.

So it hit me and some of my homies here to live for God. So we decided to get baptized for real. So we got baptized at the beach and we prayed to our Father and said we want to live and give the rest of our lives to Jesus. And once we said that, it was on! We took turns taking the plunge. I never in all my life felt so good. I've got a reason for living. I can let go of my past and serve my brothers for good.

I am sorry. I am so sorry for the things I did in the past. I didn't mean to hurt nobody. I'm so sorry. Help me, my Father. Forgive me. I know I'm just talking, but when I think of my life then compared to now, it just get to me. I promised God to be a better son of God and help my brothers and sister. I've learned so much from the all the articles in the "**Brotherhood**"

section of the website. So if anybody is reading my story, check it out for yourself. It ain't no joke. I'm serious, my brother, it will change your life. Can I just give a shout out to all my homies in my hood? Give God a chance and we can change the world. God bless my brothers out there.

### **Paul, age 38**

I've lived on the streets for some 20 years, in and out of jail for drug possession. So I checked in to rehab instead of doing jail time. Glory to God! It's because of him I've been sober 5 months with the help and love of some really beautiful folks. I believe I'm going to make it after some intense study of the article "**Moving Forward in the Faith**" and "**The Faith of Jesus.**" There are other really cool articles, but it was these two that really opened my mind and heart. I now have a solid relationship with the Father of us all and I'm his son. You can't beat that!

So me and a couple of the guys in the rehab mission decided to give our life to Jesus, because like our pastor says, "If your mind ain't working right, put on the mind of Christ." So about 3 weeks ago, four of us went to this run down funky motel. We didn't check in, we ask the manager "Could we please use your pool for just 5 minutes." We told him what was up and what we are about to do. He said "You've got to be kidding." So we said "Please trust us, please sir. We have got to get baptized and if we're not out and gone in 5 minutes, you can call the police." He said "If it means that much to you." And as one voice we said "YES."

We had no swim trunks, so we striped down to our BVD's and one by one, we prayed and went down as addicts and came up as sons of God, born of spirit. The manager forgot about the 5 minutes and was so moved he called his wife. That was cool. We told him about the website. I don't know for sure, but the Father might have another son in the manager soon.

As for me, I'm going to live for my brothers and in some way to give back. I'm blessed, my brother, because God never gave up on me. So don't ever stop having faith. We are all loved and have eternal life in Christ.

### **Max, age 39**

I'm so grateful to have been given a second chance to live my life in the Spirit. Most of my friends or now asleep in death, but I've learned that it's ok, that everyone will be remembered by the Father. As I continue getting my mind right, it becomes ever so clear that we've been proclaiming a different message than the Apostles and Jesus and I'm ashamed of myself. It's been in the Bible all this time that we are no longer slave but sons of God.

I've been around and one of Jehovah's Witnesses for 25 years, and that entire time was spent talking some heaven bound soul into staying here forever. Dear God, what have I done. That's what I keep thinking and saying to myself. But as I have learned, help is just a prayer away. So in walking the walk and talking the talk, some friends and I got re-baptized into the death of Jesus.

We went to a WMCA in Santa Monica. We were getting undressed and praying loud, but we didn't care. So one at a time, we went under and came up a new creation. So no more living for myself. So I'm dedicating more of my time trying to spread the message of the Kingdom that we have only one Father and that we are all brothers.

We are blessed to be in a Mission that helps us release the resentment and guilt so we can all move forward. We have spirit tools we use also like the website. It has the most faith strengthening articles I've ever read. We have a bright future ahead of us and, you know, I like being mentally and spiritually sober. Growth is good and I love the freedom to learn. God bless everyone and never give up.

### **Bryan, age 52**

My brief story simply begins with the website. I've been out of my mind for 32 years, mostly right downtown, and doing my hustle thang. I did some things I truly regret. But here is where the love of the Father stepped in. Let me explain for a second.

I started reading articles on the website and in this article entitled "**Who Are Led By The Spirit?**" and many others, just blew my freakin mind! I'm dead serious. For the first time in my life, dude, I know for sure I'm loved by the best and kindest Father of all and he wants me and you to be with him. I'm a Son! That's right. I'M A SON! Nobody can take my Father away from me.

So two weeks ago, June 17, 2012, I gave my life to Jesus and got baptized with 3 others from my Rehab Mission. Let me tell you, everybody in the Church I used to attend were in shock and I think the Pastor's faith in the power of God was renewed. From now on I'm going to serve anywhere I can and preach where ever I am that God is the Father of all of us and we are related by our faith in Jesus.

I feel really good and my family thanks God for his patience with me. It's not to late people we can still change the world.

### **Kyle, age 28**

My story is pretty simple. I was the idiot who said "I'll try it just once." Then, as they say, the rest is history. Man, I hit some crack and it was truly on and crackin because I was stuck right there until I was broke and writing IOU's like I was signing autographs. Let me just say, if your life is bad and you want to make it worse real fast, then crack is for you.

So after trying to do whatever it took to stay high and duck and dodge the drug dealers I owed money to, it just got to be to much for me. So I went to my folks to get help because I was pretty beat up from the dope and could not sleep. So my mom convinced my dad to help me on the condition that I seek help, so here I am.

Now to be honest, I was gonna just check in until I got my health back and then make a run for it. But God had plans for me. I mean, I didn't see the new pastor coming! He started talking about being children of the Father of all and that his children are strong, and unafraid because the whole Universe is friendly and all of the angels in heaven are pulling for us.

And I was, and still am, learning new stuff everyday. Now my mind and heart belong to the Father. This word of God, I couldn't put it down. It didn't feel like religion. This felt like a revelation of God that stuck to my bones. Dude, I was hooked. God put that thang on me and I'm glad he did. Today I'm a changed man. Now I have real purpose. Now I've got work to do.

So as soon as I was able to leave the mission after the probation period, I headed to Venice beach, myself and two other group members, and we got re-baptized. The first time, I was baptized as a Jehovah's Witness. But this time, I was being baptized into Christ's death. This was a spiritual event.

I must say, my family is not supportive of the baptism, but they can't deny the power of change. So I suggested that they look at some of the articles on the website and I gave them "**Who are Led by the Spirit?**" "**Moving Forward in the Faith**" and recently I gave them "**Being Born of the Spirit.**" So I'm hoping they get God's purpose for us all. My hope is to be perfect like my Heavenly Father. Thanks to the new pastor for letting me get this out of me and share it with the universe. GOD BLESS US ALL.

### **Kevin, age 31 / Donnell, age 21 / Nathan, age 25**

We all went to church together and had already made plans to get baptized on Sunday. We even had notified our family and the Pastor had a heads-up on the plans, so word got around. Some of our buddies from the hood came because they couldn't believe the change in us. The church was small, but this day it was overflowing with up to 300-400 people. Someone asked "Who died?" They said "Some dudes are getting born again."

Kevin, being the oldest, spoke and said "Myself and my friends with me today pledge before God the Father and Jesus Christ and you here today to live and breathe the word of God and to live the will of God. And to all who came today who couldn't believe this could happen, get ready for change. We now accept the baptism into Christ death because we love him." The Pastor then asked "What has happen to you guys?" We said "Pastor, we have learned so much about the Father of us all and that he loves us and all his children. And that we are related no matter the color of our skin or what religion we're in. As long as you're a believer in Christ, you are my brother." Then Pastor said "Enough said. Let's do this!" And when we all came up at the same time, the praise was ON!

The Pastor was crying. Whole congregation was on fire. We had copies of some of the articles from the website so we handed them out. But it gets better. Some of our friends who came to our baptism came down to the mission the next day to try to get into the mission so they can get help and find the Father. They want what we got in here.

What we have learned here is the real deal. We told the church Pastor that he needs to check out the website because it has totally changed the way we look at everything. You see, when you're really in it, you become a RFC [*Rehabbers for Christ*] and we told everybody at church the RFC ain't NO JOKE! So anybody and everybody who's got mad problems, we can do this we can change the world. [*As a result of their baptism, at least 8 men from the church admitted themselves into the missions for help.*]

### **Terrell, age 26**

Praise the Father! I feel like just praising God the Father for showing us here that we mean something, that we matter and just because we've had problems doesn't mean we're forgotten.

My mom and brother recently got baptized at the Church they've been going to for years. They think it's nothing short of a miracle that I got the Christ in my heart. They were going to wait for me before they got baptized, but I told them "Please go ahead. Don't ever make Jesus wait. He comes first."

I'm learning more and more each day, God is great. And it's funny how we find God and wherever you find him, please my brothers and sisters, hold on to him because he's all we need. That all I have to say. I know it's not much but it's in my heart, so I give you what I got. Just say NO to this World! [*Terrell had not completed his probation so he could not leave the mission when his mother and brother got baptized. But he subsequently got baptized two weeks later at his mother's church.*]

### **Douglas, age 28**

I have been learning about myself since I entered Rehab for drug abuse, you know, learning the cause and effect of things, the reasons why. But I've got to be honest, ever since the new pastor came here, I've become, along with the rest of the guys, a brand New Creation. And for those who may not know or understand what that is, let me just say it's when you realize just who you are in the big picture of the Universe, that you are loved by the Father of us All and I am his child because of my faith in Jesus Christ.

The knowledge of sonship has changed everybody around here. And not only here, but let me tell you what's happened at home.

I've been spreading the word of God so much that my Dad and two sisters started getting excited about my change. So I shared with them what we Rehabbers call the "triple threat." That is the 3 articles from the website on sonship that explain some of the Christian writings. [***Who Are Led by Spirit?***] "***Moving Forward in Faith***" and "***Holding Fast to the Sacred Secret***" So I told them, "If you want some, get some." So they checked out the website and let me tell you, they were hooked. They each have a different favorite article, but they got the fever and have kept it for weeks.

So we decided to do the right thing and join faith-sons of God that are everywhere and take the plunge. But this is where it gets really cool. Not just me, but ALL of US got baptized. My dad got his Pastor to come to the house and baptize us in the family's pool. It was cool. I'm about as happy as I've ever been, with all of my screw-ups, and there have been tons. But like the new pastor said when I told him what happened, he said "This place and the Kingdom save not just you, but your family." And I agree. Hey world, watch out world, Douglas is back!

### **Damien, age 31**

I'm sorry first and foremost for the pain and suffering I've caused in my family and the crimes against homies that I know now are my brothers in faith. I want it understood to anybody out in the streets or at work who think they've got it going on, let me tell you this, "You ain't nothing without Jesus." Money, houses, women don't mean squat if you're not in the Kingdom.

I was a warrior in the streets, and will continue to be! But on a new team that will fight to change lives. Before I tell you about baptism, in my spirit I just want to apologize to my God and to Jesus.

Now!! Last Saturday, I was blessed to be able to get baptized into Jesus at my sister's church in El Monte. It was cool, but man I was scared because I've come along way and you know how sometimes you feel like you don't know enough yet. But then again you can never know enough. So I prayed. Then my sister said "Let's both do this." So we got baptized together. And my sister's Pastor said "Welcome to the Kingdom." Four of my relatives came from out of town. They couldn't believe it. And for the first time in my life, I broke down and cried like a baby. I feel free. I felt like God has given me a second chance. And if anybody gets a chance, they gotta read the article "**The Faith of Jesus.**" That's what did it for me. How he thought about things. I mean WOW, he is something else. I'll tell you this, Jesus got me and from now on, I got Jesus.

### **Samuel, age 43 / Monty, age 19 / Chris, age 27**

We all feel so blessed to have really found God the Father at the Mission. Since we hang out together we wanted to get baptized together. So we got permission at Monty's church by his Pastor in Silverlake. I can tell you, it's time for change. We have learned so much about the Kingdom and we want our friends to know that anything is possible. If you ask God, he will take you back because he loves all of us because we're his children. We need Jesus in a real way. In spirit and in faith, we belong to God and we are a part of the big family of God.

We want to thank the writers of all the articles like "**Worshipping with Spirit and Truth**" "**Freedom of the Children of God**" and my favorite "**Who Are Led by the Spirit?**" I know there is so much to learn but we just had to do it. We all agreed that we have wasted time and screwed up enough and that it's time to get busy in the Lord's work. GOD BLESS ALL MY BROTHERS.

## Concluding Remarks

We have only scratched the surface of the faith and spirit of these men and their individual baptism experiences. There are so many more wonderful and surprising experiences that we hope to share in the future. We apologize to those men whose experience we were unable to publish in this article. But please do not hesitate to continue sending us emails so that we can share your joy with our readers.

The faith of these men has also moved families and their associated churches to re-dedicate themselves to the Father and get baptized into Christ. We were told by some pastors at one of the mission headquarters that the articles on sonship are having a positive effect on people of different religions nationwide. Many are requesting to be re-baptized to make sure everyone, including the Father, knows that they are baptized into Christ's death, not John's baptism of repentance from sin, and not baptized into any one church or religion. Some said they could not even recall their baptism since most occurred when they were babies who did not understand the heavenly inheritance or their relationship with the Father. They wanted to make their dedication to the Father with full faith and awareness of its meaning.

In one Baptist church, the pastor explained that if any wanted to be re-baptized in the Christ's death, he was certainly willing to do so. The pastor was willing to do that because he did not consider his church to belong to him – he was just a steward. As a result, between 65-70 people from his church were baptized that day.

All of these experiences remind us of the first century ministry when those who heard the word accepted it immediately and with great joy. The men of the recovery missions are specifically due Paul's commendation that he gave to the brothers in Thessalonica:

“We always thank God when we make mention concerning all of you in our prayers, for **we bear incessantly in mind your faithful work and [your] loving labor and [your] endurance due to [your] hope in our Lord Jesus Christ before our God and Father.** For we know, brothers loved by God, his choosing of you, because the good news we preach did not turn up among you with speech alone but also with power and with holy spirit and strong conviction, just as you know what sort of men we became to you for your sakes; and you became imitators of us and of the Lord, seeing that **you accepted the word under much tribulation with joy of holy spirit, so that you came to be an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.**” – *1 Thessalonians 1:2-7*

We pray that the outstanding examples of these men encourage others to undergo the baptism into the Christ – into his death – symbolizing that we are raised up a new creation with everlasting life and a life-giving ministry.

We also encourage our other readers to share their experiences of how the message of sonship has affected them. We will, of course, protect your privacy, but you must know that your experiences will be a tremendous source of encouragement to so many worldwide who may be wavering about taking up their sonship, or who may feel they are alone.

Ask yourself: Was I baptized into the Christ or was it just a baptism of repentance? Did I understand that I was being baptized into Christ' death? Did I understand what that meant? Did my baptism identify me with one particular religious group or did my baptism make me a free child of God – a spiritual free agent? If you have not undergone the proper baptism, we ask: what prevents you?

We welcome your comments.

*“Elaia Luchnia”*