

## **ACTS: I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH (PART 12)**

One of the Christians scattered by persecution was Philip, who like Stephen had been one of the seven deacons appointed in Acts 6.

**Acts 8:5** Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

Philip is called an “evangelist,” not because he ministered to saints, but because he won sinners to God! And he is not even one of the leaders!

**Acts 21:8** And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

At the height of his “revival meetings,” Philip is directed by the Lord to leave the crowd and go out into the desert to meet with ONE person.

**Acts 8:27-28** And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

**Acts 8:35** Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

**BEGIN WHERE THEY ARE – AND PREACH JESUS!** That’s all Philip did, that’s all the church in Acts did, and that’s all you need to do!

**Acts 8:36** And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

Isaiah 53 doesn’t say anything about being baptized, or even about water (!), but please note that when they preached JESUS in the New Testament, that involved being BAPTIZED in Jesus’ name!

**Acts 8:37-40** 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. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

## **“THEY WENT DOWN BOTH INTO THE WATER” = IMMERSION!**

The Ethiopian eunuch would always have been treated as a second-class citizen in the Jewish religion (Deuteronomy 23:1 says he was not allowed to enter into the congregation of the Lord) – and yet he was so hungry for God that he travelled many miles to the temple in Jerusalem. Thank God he found the New Testament church!

**Galatians 3:27-29** For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Philip experiences “supernatural transport,” like the prophet Elijah. Have you ever noticed that MIRACLES, even outstanding ones, are not a “big deal” in the book of Acts? The MESSAGE they preach is the “big deal!” How often do we get that backwards in the 21st century?

Philip was the right man in the right place at the right time, saying the right thing to the right person. AND REMEMBER, PHILIP IS NOT EVEN ONE OF THE LEADERS! You can be powerfully used by God!

**Acts 9:1-2** And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Saul is an important man, highly respected in the Jewish religion, and the High Priest has invested him with authority to persecute the church. The various details of his testimony can be found in Acts 9, 22 and 26 ...

**Acts 22:3-4** I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

**Acts 26:9-11** I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

**Philippians 3:4-7** Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Some thirty years later, Paul would write that Christ had “apprehended him” – he was out to arrest others when the Lord arrested him!

**Philippians 3:12-14** Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul is saying, “Just as much as I pursued the church to persecute it, God was pursuing me to save me ... and I’m so grateful that I am now pursuing Christ with everything in me! I’m running after God’s purpose!”

**Acts 9:3-9** And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

“WHO ART THOU, LORD?” / “I AM JESUS!”

“It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” Jesus is saying, “I have been pricking your heart with the goad of conviction, and if you don’t repent it’s going to be hard for you!” No doubt Saul was instantly convicted by the memories of all the Christians he had killed.

What wilt thou have me to DO? / It shall be told thee what thou must DO.

Saul isn’t SAVED yet. This is the same question they asked in Acts 2:37.

**Acts 9:10-16** And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Please note that the Lord told Saul, “It shall be told thee what thou must do,” and yet the Lord doesn’t tell Ananias what to tell Saul to do! Why? This “omission” only proves that, as a New Testament believer, Ananias already knew exactly what a sinner needed to do to be saved! Peter had preached it in Acts 2:38, and it was what the church continued to preach.

**Acts 9:17-18** And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

Saul has already repented, and now Ananias tells him to be baptized and that he will be filled with the Holy Ghost. Acts 9:18 simply states that he “arose, and was baptized.” But later in Acts 22:16, Paul recounts the actual words that Ananias actually spoke to him:

**Acts 22:16** And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

*“What are you waiting for? Get up and get baptized, and have your sins washed away by having the name of the Lord called over you!”*

**Colossians 2:9-15** For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

**Acts 9:19-25** And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

“And after that many days were fulfilled” ... As Paul records in his later writings, he spent many days alone in Arabia just seeking the Lord. Then he returned to Damascus to preach until persecution forced him from the city. He continued to preach in that region, and it was a full three years before he finally went to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:11-24). He also later records some of the persecutions he faced during his early ministry:

**2 Corinthians 11:24-27** Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

Paul was “unknown by face” (Galatians 1:22) to the church in Jerusalem. It was doubtful they would have accepted him at all, were it not for the recommendation of Barnabas.

**Acts 9:26-31** And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Never underestimate the impact of one obscure saint, like Ananias or Barnabas. And never underestimate the impact of one converted sinner, like Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul!