

# THE CATALYST

## #3 Acts

**Introduction:** A CATALYST is something or someone who causes great change

- Last words of Stephen:

**Acts 7:59** *While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”*

- Stephen became a catalyst for change.
- Today, we look at FOUR characters who were agents of change.

### 1. The Mover and Shaker

- Initially, the gospel was shared only amongst the Jews.
- Their immediate neighbours were Samaritans
  - Mixed race with Jewish blood
  - They believed in God
  - They had the first 5 books of the Old Testament (Torah)
  - Had their own place of worship (not temple in Jerusalem)
  - They were despised by religious Jews because some had embraced pagan practices.
  - To that place, God sent a Believer.

#### (a) Philip's Character

- Philip was a willing servant, NOT an apostle.
  - Full of faith
  - Full of the spirit
  - Full of compassion
    - His work in the church was looking after widows.

**Acts 8:4-8** *Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention of what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came*

*out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city.*

(b) Philip's Purpose:

- Philip went to Samaria because of persecution
  - God is very able to use a difficult situation and bring good out of it.

(c) Philip's Message:

- He preached Christ (v5)
  - "the Messiah / Anointed one had come"
- He preached the Good News of the Kingdom (v12)
  - Strong clash of kingdoms resulted in freedom from demonic forces and healing

## 2. The Great Pretender

(a) Simon's Character

- Simon was a sorcerer
  - Practiced the occult
  - Had a strong following

(b) Simon's Response

**Acts 8:13** *Simon himself believed and was baptised. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw.*

- Notice he "followed Philip everywhere..."
  - What was his focus on?
- Peter and John sent into the situation

**Acts 8:15-17** *When they (Peter and John) arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, they had simply been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

- Up until now, the Samaritan believers had not received the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 8:18-19** *When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."*

- Ask yourself: "what is wrong with that?"
- Answer: motives
  - Holy Spirit can be received freely.
  - Simon wanted the Holy Spirit so he could impress others.

(c) Peter's Reaction

**Acts 8:20-23** *Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps He will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin."*

- Your heart is not right before God
  - Full of bitterness and anger
  - Still captive to sin
- Solution: Repent and pray / confess to receive forgiveness.
  - Jesus has come to set captives free.

### 3. The Enquirer

(a) Ethiopian's Character:

- High ranking official
- Believer in God of the Jews
  - On way home from worship at the temple
  - Reading the scripture

(b) Ethiopian's Dilemma:

- He was an enquirer searching things out
  - If you are hungry for God, then God will answer your prayer.
- Holy Spirit led Philip to a certain road and specific chariot.

Acts 8:32-34 *The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?”*

(c) Ethiopian’s Response:

- Once convinced, he acted on that belief
- He was baptised.

#### 4. **A Terrorist Redeemed**

(a) Saul’s Character

- Saul was anti-Christian.
  - Vocalised murderous threats.
- Had official permission to round up Christians and throw them into prison.
- He had delighted in the stoning of Stephen.
- Can a religious fanatic be saved?

Acts 9:3-6 *As he (Saul) neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground, and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”*

*“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.*

*“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”*

- Who was Saul persecuting?
  - When you are persecuted for your faith, Jesus feels it

(b) Ananias’ Dilemma

- Saul is blind, but praying and fasting
  - He has a vision about Ananias.
- Ananias is called a “disciple”
  - And ordinary Christian with a special job

**Acts 9:11-12** *The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."*

- Ananias begins to question God
- The Lord said: He is a chosen instrument
  - He will represent me before Gentiles and Israelites
  - He will suffer for my name.

(c) Saul's Response

- Received his sight (v18)
- Filled with Holy Spirit (v 17)
- Baptised in water.