

Acts 8:1-8

Cross Brand C3:16

4.29.26

Sources: John MacAuthor/H.A. Ironside/The Bible Knowledge Commentary

I. The persecution begins

Saul agreed with putting him to death.

On that day a severe persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the land of Judea and Samaria. ²Devout men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him. ³Saul, however, was ravaging the church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.

A. Persecution up until that point was only for the Apostles

B. Persecution was orchestrated by Saul

Phil 3:5-6 circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; ⁶regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.

Gal 1:14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.

Acts 9:16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

C. Persecution came as no surprise

John 15:20 Remember the word I spoke to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

D. Persecution did not scatter every believer

Probably only the Hellenistic Jews

E. Persecution did not scatter the Apostles

There was a need to shepherd

Acts 9:26 When he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, since they did not believe he was a disciple.

11:2 When Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him,

There was a need for evangelism in Jerusalem

The “devout men” may have been unbelievers

Mishnah

(Hebrew for "repetition") is the first major written collection of Jewish oral traditions, known as the **Oral Torah**.

F. Persecution was intentional and violent

³Saul, however, was ravaging the church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.

Saul/Paul thought he was doing the right thing

John 16:2 They will ban you from the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to God.

Saul/Paul was brutal in his approach

Saul / Paul would later be saved and feel unworthy to be an apostle

I Tim 1:13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief,

I Cor 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

II. The gospel continues to be preached

⁴So those who were scattered went on their way preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to a^[a] city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. ⁶The crowds were all paying attention to what Philip said, as they listened and saw the signs he was performing. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed

A. The gospel was shared by the people

B. The gospel was shared by specially gifted men as well

Philip was especially talented and gifted to preach above our regular calling.

Ephesians 4:11 states: "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as **evangelists**, and some as pastors and teachers"

He was a Hellenistic Jew

He was the only man in NT given the title evangelist

He went into Samaria to share the gospel

Observations on Samaria

Jews were commingled with Samaritans

They were hated by Jews

John 4:4 He had to travel through Samaria;

He did miracles to validate the message

C. The gospel specifically focused on the story of Christ

III. The overall result of persecution and the gospel

⁸So there was great joy in that city.

The Samaritans were delighted to have heard the gospel

IV. Application

A. Sometimes the gospel will be shared due to what we perceive as negative actions

Joseph

Gen 50:20 You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people.

B. “Bad things” may happen in our life to prompt us to have gospel conversations

The persecution was the only way to fulfill acts 1:8

Phil1:12-14 ¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ. ¹⁴ Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word^[a] fearlessly.

Close:

“Persecution is the compliment paid by a threatened lie to a conquering truth.” **Chapman Cohen** (NOT a believer)

