

Southside Baptist Church
Sunday Morning – 6-21-26
Christianity 103 – Message 8 Part 1
What caused this persecution?

1. Introduction:

a. Taking a look back:

- 1) Think back with me for a moment on Stephen's testimony.
- 2) Stephen understood the call on his life to take the Gospel everywhere God took him.
 - a) This call can include a place you don't want to go, people you may not care for, or cost you something you may not want to pay.
- 3) What do you do with a story like this from the Bible?
 - a) Do you take time to think about them?

b. Taking a look ahead:

- 1) Learning to be alert, attentive, available and ready to respond to the Lord.
- 2) Remember what the church asked the Lord for in Acts 4:29?
 - a) Their request reveals their attitude about their new faith.
 - b) Stephen's death had an impact on the church. We see that impact in Acts 8.

2. Saul of Tarsus. Acts 8:1-3

a. A very prominent Pharisee.

- 1) Verse 1 –
 - a) He is known to us as one who severely persecuted the church.
- 2) Saul was considered a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a son of a Pharisee and a Roman citizen.

b. Why persecute the church?

- 1) For Saul, what better way for him to express his love and respect for the law.
 - a) Galatians 1:13-14 –
 - b) Saul would have argued that persecuting believers was, in his mind, serving God.

2) Luke told us that Saul was "consenting" to Stephen's death.

- a) "consenting" – feeling gratified with.

3) Application – How do you feel about a person like Saul?

- a) Matthew 5:43-48 –

c. "A great persecution" – Verse 1

1) This speaks of the "suffering of many."

- a) To believe in Jesus was to reject the traditions of that day and the Law.

2) Consider what is happening here.

- a) "all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles."
- b) Does this sound familiar to a verse we covered?
- c) "scattered" – to scatter abroad, to sow throughout, to distribute into foreign lands.
- d) We see the fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

3) Why did the Apostles remain in Jerusalem?

4) Application – how would you have responded at this time?

- a) Does persecution expose anything about our walk and faith?
- b) Persecution will expose –

5) A little different take on why the persecution started.

- a) The testimony of Acts is not so much that persecution causes church growth, but that church growth and the spread of the gospel tend to cause persecution.

6) What is the point of persecution?

d. Stephen's burial. Verse 2

- 1) Verse 2 –

- a) “devout men” – worshippers of God.
- e. How Saul was persecuting the church. Verse 3
 - 1) Verse 3 –
 - a) “havock” – working for the total destruction of the church.
 - b) He persecuted both men and women according Acts 22:4.
 - c) “haling” – men and women being dragged out of their homes or churches and taken to prison.
 - 2) This persecution wasn’t hidden, but visible.
- f. The scattered were sowing seeds. Verse 4
 - 1) Verse 4 –
 - a) What did this cost them?
 - 2) The word “scattered” speaks of scattering seed.
 - a) Think about their testimony they shared with people.
 - 3) Is your new life in Christ treasured this way?
- 3. Today’s Takeaway:
 - a. Was it the persecution that caused the church to go and grow or is it true that the church was growing and going and many were being saved and because of this movement of Jesus Christ persecution came?
 - b. We cannot forget that we are accountable to God for this life He has given us.