

WORD

"¹And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ²Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. ³But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. ⁴Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸So there was much joy in that city." **ACTS 4:32**

Greater works and expansion happen even in the midst of difficult situations. Persecution pushed the Christians out of their homes in Jerusalem, and into Judea and Samaria, thus fulfilling the second part of Jesus' command (Acts 1:8). The persecution helped spread the gospel, and God brought great results from the believers' trials. Our experiences today might be different from the believers back then, but we can learn from how they responded. Today, we're going to look at what resulted from the believers' trials.

1 The believers scattered.

"¹And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria,..." **ACTS 8:1**

The believers scattered but God was still with them. Sometimes we have to be uncomfortable before we'll move. We may feel like we're all over the place with so many things to do and problems on every side, but God is in complete control. We may not want to experience it, but discomfort may be best for us because God may be working through our hurts. We believe that God is at work even when we don't see or feel it. What does Romans 8:28 say about how God works?

2 The believers preached the gospel.

“⁴Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ...” ACTS 8:4-5

When the persecution pushed the Christians out of Jerusalem, along with them went the gospel. The believers may or may not have anything on their backs when they scattered, but we know that they had Christ in and with them. And because they understood what Christ had done for them, they proclaimed Christ *wherever* they went – even to people they were not familiar with. Notably, Jerusalem Jews and Samaritan Jews historically hated each other. But because of the example that Jesus set (John 4), and their transformation from the gospel, the gospel was preached in Samaria. How are you preaching the gospel wherever you go?

3 There was great joy.

“⁶And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸So there was much joy in that city....” ACTS 8:6-8

We can deduce from verse 7 that the Samaritans were experiencing another type of oppression – unclean spirits and illnesses. Demons are real and active, but Jesus has authority over them, and He gave this authority to his followers. And so, the Samaritans experienced great healing when Philip, who was driven out of his comfort and was “supposed” to hate these Samaritans, preached the gospel and exercised the authority given to him by Christ. We don’t know what each person is going through, but when we know how the God of peace works in our lives, we could step out in faith to share the love of God to others – even in the midst of personal trials.

APPLICATION

- Are you going through any difficulties right now? How can you ask God to help you through it?
- Do you believe that Christ has given you authority to preach the gospel with power (Matt 10:8; 28:18-20)?
- Do you feel uncomfortable when preaching the gospel? Which part makes you feel uncomfortable?
- How can you share the love and joy of God with someone this week? Commit to pray over that person.

PRAYER

- Thank God for the unspeakable joy, and peace that transcends all understanding even in the midst of trials. Pray for greater sensitivity to His presence in all things.
- Ask God to help you see what He is doing in your life, even in the midst of any present uncomfortable and painful circumstance.
- Pray for His Holy Spirit to empower you to preach the gospel to someone.



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