

Midweek Study



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Scattered But Not Silenced

Acts 8:1-8

I. THE **SETBACK** (Acts 8:1-4)

"Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1, NKJV).

Jesus had commanded, "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Until this persecution, the church had remained comfortable in Jerusalem. God used persecution to accomplish what comfort could not.

"As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison" (Acts 8:3, NKJV).

The Greek word for "made havoc" describes an animal attacking a carcass. Saul was dragging believers by their feet from their homes. Paul later described himself: **"I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man"** (1 Timothy 1:13). An insolent man takes pleasure in being brutal.

II. THE **SCATTERING** (Acts 8:4)

"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4, NKJV).

Michael Green writes, "As early as Acts 8, we find that it is not the apostles but the 'amateur' missionaries, the men evicted from Jerusalem as a result of the persecution which followed Stephen's martyrdom, who took the gospel with them wherever they went. ... This must often have been not formal preaching, but informal chattering to friends and chance acquaintances, in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls. **They went everywhere gossiping the gospel**; they did it naturally, enthusiastically, and with the conviction of those who are not paid to say that sort of thing. Consequently, they were taken seriously, and the movement spread, notably among the lower classes."¹

¹ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, (p. 243) as quoted in Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Acts* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2017), 112–113.

III. THE STRATEGY (Acts 8:5)

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them" (Acts 8:5, NKJV).

This is Philip, the deacon (Acts 6:5), who went from food distribution to evangelism.

Samaria represented racial and cultural prejudice. Yet, Acts 1:8 said that witnesses would go there. Do you remember the Samaritan woman that Jesus witnessed to? Jesus said, *"He needed to go through Samaria" (John 4:4).*

Who is our Samaria? People who don't talk like us, people who don't look like us, and people outside our comfort zone

IV. THE SUPERNATURAL (Acts 8:6-8)

"And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did" (Acts 8:6, NKJV).

Philip *"preached Christ to them"* (v. 5). There's one Hero in the Bible - Jesus. Everything in the Old Testament points to Him; everything in the New Testament preaches about Him.

Hearing and seeing miracles: How do you "hear" a miracle? People were shouting with joy over their deliverance from demons and healing from paralysis.

"And there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8, NKJV).

Adrian Rogers once wrote, "Believe in miracles, but trust in Jesus." Philip didn't come preaching miracles - he preached Christ, and miracles followed. **True faith expects a miracle but does not demand a miracle.** We trust in God's sovereign hand, whether He moves as we want or not.

APPLICATIONS FOR TODAY:

1. **Trust God's sovereignty in confusing situations.** Sometimes we pray for deliverance when God wants us to demonstrate faithfulness in the midst of persecution.
2. **Godly people can grieve.** We don't grieve like those who have no hope, but Scripture shows even devout men lamented Stephen's martyrdom. Remember: *"Jesus wept" (John 11:35).*
3. **Tell the next generation what God has done.** *Psalms 78* commands us to pass along not just God's Word, but also God's works - the miracles and faithfulness we've experienced.
4. **Go everywhere "gossiping the gospel."** In your daily conversations, regular encounters - as you are going, make disciples (*Matthew 28:19, "as you are going..."*).