

Acts 8:1-8 (NIV)

- 1 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
- 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.
- 3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.
- 4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.
- 5 Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there.
- 6 When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.
- 7 With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.
- 8 So there was great joy in that city.

44-08-03-The Scattered Flock

persecution, suffering, evangelism, deliverance

Acts 8:1-8

When Jesus moves our location, He plans to use the move.

INTRODUCTION: (Text as Scripture Reading)

–Jesus quoted an OT prophecy to describe the *initial result* of His arrest and crucifixion– Mat 26:31, Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’” But Christ’s Resurrection reversed that. It gave new meaning to the Cross and to suffering. It changed the concept of death. It even reversed the meaning of ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ We see that reversal here in this **text**.

–Jesus said in Act 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When Stephen was martyred, a similar scattering took place– v.1, *And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Saul didn’t know that Jesus was not only alive and still at work, but He was in the process of reversing the effects of Saul’s efforts to stamp out the Christian faith.* –Jesus didn’t create “a great persecution” but He used it to scatter those through whom He planned to work. **HOM.idea**. He wasn’t done yet then, and He’s not done now, moving us around to share His Gospel.

I. Moves May Be Painful, But God Can Make Them Productive

A. The pain from this persecution parallels the hardships of moving:

1. **Moves** may mean saying “good-bye” to loved ones– v.2, *Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.* (A new location can mean pain from leaving family and friends, but God means to add to our relationships, not diminish them– Mark 10:29-30, “I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, **persecutions**) and in the age to come, eternal life.”) [Why “**persecutions**”? This isn’t *heaven* yet!]
2. **Moves** may mean a disruption of our spiritual comfort– v.3a, *But Saul began to destroy the church.* (Most *moves* mean new *places* with new *patterns* of worship. BUT, what is it that creates ‘church’?–

Mat 18:20, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”... the presence of Jesus defines ‘church.’)

3. Moves may mean extremely decreased mobility— **v.3b**, *Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. (If moves decrease our circle of people and activities, God may want us to increase our focus on more limited numbers of them.)*
- B. Saul’s plan was “to destroy the church” but God planned to transform the suffering—as He did the Cross—into a blessing— **v. 4**, *Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.*
 1. A scattering was always a bad thing in Scripture, but Christ’s Resurrection reversed that, making it a means of missions: a way to move the “Good News” of Jesus to others who needed it.
 2. Preaching the word [*euangelizo logos*, lit., *to share the good news word*] isn’t restricted to pulpit ministry, and it should be translated, *“sharing the word of Good News.”* (That’s best done by personal sharing: **1**) *“Tell me about your spiritual journey.”* **2**) *“Let me tell you of my relationship with God through Christ.”*
 3. They shared about Jesus “wherever they went” (We must remember who we are wherever we are— Jesus said in **Mat 5:14**, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.”... the “hill” is wherever Jesus puts us, wherever He wants us to shine.)

TRANS: When Jesus moves our location, He plans to use the move. He reversed the effect of Saul’s severe and painful persecution. It moved Philip (a *Spirit-filled* deacon, like Stephen) away from his familiar Jewish home to bring the Gospel to a place the Jews despised.

II. Jesus Often Moves Us to Where He’s Not Finished Working— **v.5**, *Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there.*

- A. This wasn’t the first outreach to Samaria (remember the *woman at the well*)— **John 4:39-42**, Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.” (Jesus started something there, and *He wasn’t done yet*.)
- B. People can believe Jesus is “the Savior of the world” yet not have His salvation. (The Samaritans knew what Jesus taught, but they had

not yet received what His Cross and Resurrection brought.)— **v.6**, *When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.*

1. Sinners who know “the wages of sin is death” will pay “close attention” when they hear “the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ.” (There’s no “good news” in a ‘gospel’ with no Cross and empty tomb.)
2. When He visited them before, there’s no record Jesus did any miracles among them. But now, He was verifying Philip’s preaching of the Gospel with “*miraculous signs*.”
 - a. Miracles still happen alongside the Gospel, whenever Jesus wants to show Himself still alive and not yet finished working.
 - b. But His miracles are always in sync with His salvation— **v.7**, *With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. (Christ’s miracles aren’t for show; they have the same purpose as His message: to heal our full humanity: delivering people from spiritual oppression; mobilizing the immobile; and straightening out what’s bent-out-of-shape.)*
- C. The bad news of “persecution” moved Philip to a new location where the “Good News” was needed— **v.8**, *So there was great joy in that city.*
 1. When Philip “proclaimed the Christ there,” Jesus showed up! He wasn’t yet done with the work He began with the Samaritans.
 2. Because of painful circumstances in Jerusalem, those in Samaria got to “hear,” “see” and experience what *Christ’s salvation* was all about— **John 10:10**, The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

CONCLUSION:

—**When Jesus relocates us, He plans to use the move.** When moving hurts, we have to trust that He’ll bring a greater good out of the move. Then, when we’re in that new location, we must remember who we are: “the light of the world,” meant by God to shine Christ’s light “wherever” we go. If God has a new *place*, a new *circumstance*, a new *situation*, a new *environment* for us to be, it’s because He’s been working there already, and **He’s not done yet**. He wants to continue His work there through us.