

THE POWER OF PERSECUTION — ACTS 8:1-8

1 FEROCIOUS PERSECUTION

8:1-3

¹Now 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. ²And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. ³As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. (**Ac.8:1-3**)

- This fierce persecution started with the murder of Stephen. Saul was vicious even toward women (**Ac.22:3-4**).
- Saul demonstrated that he was a leader in this effort in the death of Stephen. When the coats were laid at Saul's feet it shows his authority. Later, when giving his testimony, he admits his role in Stephen's death (**Ac.22:20**).
- The word "havoc" has the idea of a wild bore ravaging a vineyard. Saul had authority of the Jewish leaders (**Ac.26:10**).

2 FORCEFUL PREACHING

8:4-7

⁴Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. ⁵Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. ⁶And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. (**Ac.8:4-7**)

- This fierce persecution led to more preaching. "Therefore" states a matter of fact. Therefore those scattered preached. Therefore they got scattered and they preached where they got scattered.
- Many escaped with only the clothes on their back. They did not hide in some isolated place. They preached.
- When there is no persecution, we tend to settle into a comfortable place in the culture.
- Some say, "I do not have the gift of evangelism." Evangelism is not a gift. It is a command. Jesus said to "Go" (**Mt.28:19**), and "you shall be witnesses" (**Ac.1:8**). Some might argue this refers to the apostles. The apostles stayed in Jerusalem. It was typical persecuted folk who preached Christ everywhere.
- Persecution promotes the very thing which it means to destroy. It disconnects the church from its comfort and sends it out in dependency. Persecution is good for the church!

3 FRUITFUL PRODUCTIVITY

8:8

⁸And there was great joy in that city. ⁹But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, (**Ac.8:8-9**)

- The first fruit of salvation is joy. When people believe the gospel and are saved, their experience is that of joy.
- It is the experience of believers to be joyful (**Jn.15:11; Ro. 14:17; 1Jn.1:4**).
- We have preaching as the result of persecution, and that preaching leads to salvation, spiritual fruitfulness. It is inwardly and outwardly seen as joy.
- We do not have to fear persecution because it accomplishes the purposes of God. We need to proclaim truth in the midst of persecution. We should not underestimate the power of persecution.