

# **“Those Who were Scattered Went Everywhere Preaching the Word”**

(Compiled by Paul R Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. Acts 8:4; 1Thes. 2:14
- B. “The people doing this evangelizing were not elders, deacons, and preachers. They were disciples, great hosts of them, seeking a place of refuge from the destruction of Saul. As they found places to sleep or stay for a few days, they would have to explain the purpose of this plight and flight. In so doing, they went everywhere telling the bad news of their persecution and the good news of salvation in Christ” (Reese, New Testament History: Acts, p. 317).
  - 1. The message of salvation and resurrection was strongly opposed, and persecution increased progressively - Acts 4:1-3, 4:21, 5:40, 7:54-60
  - 2. Progression of persecution: arrested, threatened, beaten, stoned
  - 2. Stephen's death drove many Christians out of Jerusalem - Acts 8:1-3
  - 3. But as Christians were scattered abroad, so was the gospel - Acts 8:4-6
  - 4. The gospel went north to the Samaritans and south with the Ethiopian eunuch - Acts 8:4-40
- C. Persecution was counterproductive for those who practiced it; they only succeeded in spreading the Gospel. Persecution that was begun by Saul precipitated the spread of the Gospel throughout the world.
  - 1. The Adversary, for all of his cunning, has never figured out why the short term gains of persecuting a few leads inexorably to the eternal goal of the salvation of many

## **I. “THOSE WHO WERE SCATTERED...”**

A. In Stephen’s sermon of Acts 7, he exposed the Jewish council guilt in the death of Christ and enraged them to the point that they stoned him to death. On the day he died, unimpeded persecution broke out against all of the church. Even as they grieved over Stephen’s death, Christians were dragged out of their homes and put into prison. Ultimately they had to flee Jerusalem to avoid death. The lives of the early Christians had been radically changed and would never go back to what they were. Before this, they were all in Jerusalem worshiping together under the leadership of the apostles. Now the apostles were in Jerusalem, and the believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. In a matter of just a few days, they:

- 1. Lost an important evangelist and deacon,
  - 2. Lost their safety and security,
  - 3. Lost their close fellowship, and
  - 4. Lost direct guidance from the apostles
- B. What would be the thoughts and responses of many professed Christians today under similar circumstances?
- 1. “God has forgotten us.”
  - 2. “We have angered God, and He is punishing us.”
  - 3. “The Adversary is in charge of all of this.”
  - 4. “The church isn’t strong enough to survive this.”
  - 5. “We’ve got to stay together in one place to be effective.”

## II. NEVER OVERLOOK THE WORD “THEREFORE”

### A. Why were the Christians driven from Jerusalem?

1. Stephen was stoned to death, the church was under attack with Christians dragged out of their homes, put into prison, and scattered out of the city -- “Therefore...” What did they do?
2. Notice that the text says: “Those that were scattered,” not “Those that scattered.” They didn’t scatter themselves; they had been scattered by another cause and purpose
3. Scattered is from “diaspeiro - meaning to sow throughout, distribute in foreign lands, to scatter abroad” (Strongs).
4. It is from the same root as in the parable of the sower who scattered seeds (Matt. 13:1-23). The sower sows the seeds, and they fall in many places to produce a crop wherever they land.
5. Acts 8 is that parable in action. God is sowing Christians around the world to grow a crop of the saved in other places
6. While the Adversary may have perpetrated the persecution through Saul, God used the persecution to scatter the church into the world so that Christians could carry the Gospel everywhere.
7. And, the first century Christians saw it that way, too!

## III. “WENT EVERYWHERE PREACHING THE WORD”

### A. The Gospel could not be preached in all the world as long as they stayed together in one place.

1. As long as the church stayed in Jerusalem, it was relatively safe, the believers had close fellowship with each other, and they saw many people added to the church.
2. But what about Antioch, Athens, Alexandria, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome, Hookstown, Weirton, East Liverpool, South Africa, India, Canada et al?

### B. The church was much more effective scattered abroad than gathered in a megachurch of 5000.

1. There were only so many people who would ever travel to Jerusalem. But by being scattered, they could reach the whole world.

### C. They continued to do the things that got them into trouble in the first place.

1. They preached the Gospel of salvation and resurrection; the same Gospel that got Stephen killed and many of the Christians imprisoned or driven from the city

### D. What resulted from being scattered to preach?

1. The first sermon was preached in Jerusalem in the late spring of 33 AD
2. Christians were driven from the city when Stephen was killed in 35 AD
3. Col. 1:5-6, 23 - Colossians was written in 61 AD. Therefore, from when Christians were scattered from Jerusalem going everywhere preaching, the Gospel was preached in the rest of the world in 26 years.
4. Christians in the United States have been preaching the Gospel since 1804 (first written record is in Cane Ridge, KY) for 213 years, and we have yet to preach the Gospel in all of the world
5. Perhaps we need a good “scattering.”

- E. The Adversary miscalculated - Acts 8:25, 40, 9:32, 11:19-21
1. The Law of Evolving Systems Dynamics - "Once you open a can of worms, the only way to re-can them is to use a much larger can."
  2. The Adversary cannot find a can large enough to confine Christianity; not then, and not now!
- F. What if persecution like in the first century arose here in Central Florida?  
What would you do?
1. "I would get out of town just like they did!" Then what?
  2. Would you slip away quietly, go about your business in a new place, and avoid mentioning you came from the place where Christians were driven away?
  3. Would you moan and complain about all you lost?
  4. Would you angrily denounce those who ran you out of town?
  5. Would you resent God for letting such an injustice fall upon you?
  6. Or, would you rejoice at the opportunity to suffer for Jesus and tell others about the joy of being saved and seek to convert them to Christ?