



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Study 14: EVERY BELIEVER REACHING EVERY CREATURE FOR CHRIST Acts 8:1-4

This chapter is such a special chapter, a transitional chapter, a gateway to the next phase of Christ's plan for the Church, that we cannot hurriedly read through. From man's perspective, it begins with the death of Stephen, in God's plan, it reveals the dispersion of the saints. Men raised persecution against the Church but God turned it to proclamation of the gospel to save multitudes of sinners. **"Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee"** (Psalm 76:10). The outbreak of persecution which would have destroyed the Church actually produced positive results, moving the Church forward to further fulfil the Great Commission.

From this chapter, the Church took a giant step towards fulfilling Christ's plan of preaching the Gospel to every creature. The Church had remained in Jerusalem until this time. Through the persecution, gospel-preaching extended to Judaea and Samaria, following the pattern of expansion previously outlined by Christ, the Lord and Head of the Church (Acts 1:8). Though many Christians were scattered, they became preachers, witnesses and soul-winners for Christ everywhere they went. Many people repented, believed and turned wholeheartedly to the Lord.

GREAT PROGRESS DESPITE GREAT PERSECUTION

Acts 8:1-3; 9:13,14;26:9-11; 9:26-28; 11:22,27-30; 12:24,25; 15:1-6; 16:4,5; 21:17-22; Romans 15:19,25-33.

"At that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem." From the earlier chapters, there had been great persecution against the Apostles, the leaders of the Church at Jerusalem. They were threatened, beaten and imprisoned (Acts 4:3,21; 5:17-21,40-42), yet thousands believed, the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly and they filled Jerusalem with Christ's doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. With this renewed wave of persecution, the believers **"were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the Apostles."** The persecution was so intense that only the Apostles remained in Jerusalem. These Apostles, the pastors, who had already suffered much persecution were not intimidated or frightened to flee Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Church was drastically reduced in number but the Apostles kept on preaching and ministering. The Great Commission was worth living and dying for. Saul, the great persecutor, went **"into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison."** That did not weaken or stop the Apostles' resolve to **"preach the gospel to every creature."** Why should messengers of Satan be more zealous than the ministers of Christ? Soon, there were thousands of true believers won to Christ in Jerusalem.

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION BY GOD'S PEOPLE

Acts 8:4; 11:19-24; Psalm 68:11; Mark 16:15,16,20; Luke 8:38-40; John 1:40-49; 4:28-30,39-42; 1 Peter 1:1-5; 2 Peter 3:9; Acts 17:6,30,31.

"And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem; and they were ALL scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the Apostles." Persecution scattered the believers. They were driven away from their houses and dispossessed of jobs and properties. They lost much of this world's goods but the suffering did not lead to backsliding. Instead of becoming backslidden cowards, their loss turned them to courageous preachers. **"Therefore..."** (Acts 8:4; 14:1-3; 26:21,22). The word 'therefore', means that their preaching was because of their scattering abroad. Persecution should never lead the believer to compromise, fear of man or backsliding. It should always drive us to greater prayerfulness, consecration, heavenly-mindedness and courageous preaching. The Lord had commanded, **"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."** They had been negligent and disobedient. Scattered abroad by persecution, they **"went every where preaching the word."** Their salvation was real and genuine. They knew the value of their souls and counted earthly loss or gain to be nothing in comparison to 'eternal life' which they possessed. **"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"** They were persecuted but they kept preaching to offer salvation to sinners.

GLORIOUS PATTERN FOR GLOBAL PENETRATION

Acts 8:4; Luke 9:6,59-62; 10:1-3,17-20; John 4:34-38; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10; 1 Corinthians 9:16-22; Matthew 24:12-14; Romans 10:17,18; 2 Corinthians 5:10,11,17-20; James 4:17.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” is a command, Christ’s command. Christ gave that command to all believers, not only to the Apostles. All those Apostles have died but believers are still alive to obey Christ’s commands. Even if pastors, ministers and all other believers are obeying Christ effectively, you must still render obedience to the Lord. He commands us to love God and our neighbours. Even if all other believers love as He has commanded, their obedience will not excuse you. You still must do as He commands. Personal evangelism is every believer’s duty and responsibility; nothing else, however good and commendable, can be an acceptable substitute. Personal salvation, church attendance, Bible reading and praying, heart holiness, faithfulness in Christian work in the church are all good and necessary; yet, ***“preach the gospel”*** is a command that must be obeyed. Our obedience to a few of God’s commandments must not be used as excuse for disobeying another commandment of God. Faithfulness in the church will not excuse unfaithfulness at home, at work, in the society, in the community. Everywhere you go, ***“preach the gospel to every creature.”***

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