



Scattering the Seed of Jesus

Acts 8:1-24
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The Big Idea: The Church is most **obedient** when it is being persecuted and pressured. God always gives us the opportunity to voluntarily choose to obey Him. If we are resistant to His commands the Lord often arranges our circumstances in such a way that we obey, but only after He applies the necessary level of **pain** into our lives.

Acts 8 (ESV)

8 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a **great persecution** against the church in Jerusalem, and **they were all scattered** throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ²Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. ³But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

⁴Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸So there was much joy in that city.

⁹But there was a man named Simon, who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great. ¹⁰They all paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." ¹¹And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic. ¹²But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

¹⁴Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, ¹⁵who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

¹⁷Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!" ²¹You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²²Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." ²⁴And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

²⁵Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

5 THINGS WE LEARN FROM THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

1. Don't write off anyone, saying "they will never be saved." No one is beyond the reach of **Jesus' grace**. We meet Saul as the Chief Persecutor of the Church and Hater of Jesus. Watch what will ultimately happen in his life.
2. Hardships and persecution are never enjoyable, but they are often the powerful instruments of the Lord's **sanctifying** work in our lives.
3. God's "scattering" of His people is never intended to push us into isolation. We carry Jesus and His Gospel wherever we are, and to all people, even the ones we don't naturally like. Our mission, regardless of our address, is always to **plant** the **seeds** of the Gospel in the lives of people.
4. Where Jesus is known and preached and His power is released, there is **great joy**.
5. Saying the words, even "praying the prayer" and being baptized don't mean a person is saved. Salvation and the power of the Holy Spirit are the gracious gifts of the Father to those who genuinely **repent** of sin and **trust** Christ alone as Savior.