

**They Went Everywhere Preaching**  
**Dr. Wayne Mack**  
**Acts 8:1-5**  
**July 14, 2013**

He implemented, at the Masters College, a biblical counseling program. The Lord has used him to really be a foundational teacher and instructor in really the reformation, the modern reformation that has happened in the last 40 years, 50 years really, where the Bible has returned to the church in the counseling room. For so long, churches were farming people out, they were sending them to psychiatrists, to psychologists, the pastors used to be taught that you refer people out. Jay Adams, and Wayne Mack, right alongside him were saying, “No, the Bible has the answer. The sufficiency of Scripture is clear in the Bible. Everything we need in Scripture, God has given us.” So he has been a part of the development of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors that started in the 70’s. He was one of the charter members, now a member of the academy. He has written more than 20 books on biblical counseling and Christian living, including a number of those that you probably read: Strengthening Your Marriage, Sweethearts for a Lifetime, How to Counsel Biblically with John MacArthur, God’s Solutions to Life’s Problem, The Fear Factor, Down but Not Out, Humility of Forgotten Virtue, It’s Not Fair, Finding Hope When Times are Tough, and Maximum Impact: Living and Loving for God’s Glory.

In January of 2006, he and his wife Carol moved to Pretoria, South Africa, after 50 years of effective ministry in the United States. Some people would retire, he went on the mission field. So he and Carol have been ministering in South Africa for the last seven years. They went there so he could teach biblical counseling to pastors, and aspiring pastors in the region. The Lord is doing some great work in South Africa. It is a country that has been ravaged by AIDS, and by poverty, and racial strife through the years, and the Lord is doing a great work through the Gospel. The Gospel is the only thing that can meet the needs of man’s heart. So the Lord sent Wayne and Carol and they have been ministering for God there, along with two of their children, Beth, her husband Sybrand, who is one of our missionaries, and then also Josh and his wife Marta. Two families, three Mack families basically, they are ministering together in South Africa. Over these last six years, it has been a great joy to have him preach for us, and to minister God’s word here. We’ve all been enriched with our relationships with Wayne and Carol, but I want you to know what a great blessing he has been to my life and ministry, and to Patti and me, he and Carol are examples of faithful and humble service to the Savior, faithful to the end, and we rejoice in having him bring God’s word to us today.

Thank you, Pastor Ty. Carol and I want you to know it is just a privilege for us to be here. We love you people, pray for you regularly when we are in South Africa, and even here. We are grateful for your prayers on our behalf as we serve the Lord in South Africa. We have appreciated just the contact that we've had with you and we just want to express our thankfulness to God and also our gratitude to you. We arrived this summer, on May 29 I think it was, and I preached here on June 2, and then from here we went to Little Rock, Arkansas where we were involved in ministry at the Bible Church of Little Rock. From there we went to Ft. Worth where we were involved in ministry at Calvary Bible Church which is pastored by Pastor Daniel Kirk. Then we went to San Antonio where we were involved in ministering in two churches there, Redeemer Church, and also Believers Fellowship. They have a great ministry there in San Antonio. It was a privilege to do that. From there we flew to Cleveland, Ohio, and we have a supporting church there called Cornerstone Bible Fellowship. Pastor Glenn Dunn is the pastor of the church there and is just a wonderful story how the Lord raised up that church and provided for them even a facility. From there we went to Pennsylvania where we ministered in a church that, at one time, was pastored by Ted Tripp, but Ted has turned the ministry over to a young man by the name of Ted Bennett. We were at Grace Fellowship Church in Hazelton, Pennsylvania. From there we have come back here to Atlanta, and tomorrow, with the help of Phil Bambrick, we are going to be flying back to South Africa at about 7 or 8 tomorrow evening.

Phil will be our pilot and we look forward to seeing Phil over in South Africa. He makes the route from Atlanta to Joberg quite frequently, and he's our courier. If there is something that we need from the United States of America, we have our own personal pilot who brings that material to us. So he brought books to us, one of the things that the women don't have in South Africa are chocolate chips, so you can't make chocolate chip cookies. They don't have brown sugar either, would you believe it? For some of the things that my wife, and our daughter, and daughter-in-law make are in need of brown sugar. So we have Phil Bambrick, who picks those things up and brings them over for us.

We are looking forward to having a group from Providence Church with us in August. That is going to be a great time. South Africa is a beautiful country. Whether you know it or not, it is the country in the world that mines more platinum, and sells more platinum than any other country in the world. And copper, and gold, and that kind of thing. Plus, God is doing some things in some of the churches, and it has been our privilege, Ty mentioned that we'd been there for seven years. Actually, now it is eight years, and for eight years we've had the privilege of teaching, and also I'm a pastor/elder at Linwood Baptist Church, and I

usually preach there at least once a Sunday, along with my son-in-law. Either he preaches in the morning, and I preach in the evening, or he preaches in the evening and I preach in the morning, but it is a privilege. We are right now in the middle of expositing the wonderful book of 1 Peter. We did the first five verses thus far in four messages, and when we get back we will move on in 1 Peter.

So, at any rate, I want you to turn with me in your Bibles today to Acts 8 and in particular, as we begin, I'm going to read Verses 1-5. Acts 8:1-5. We'll, as we go on with the message, look at some other parts of Acts 8, but right now Acts 8:1-5. This is an account, of course, that happens right after the stoning of Stephen, which you have at the end of Chapter 7. Whilst Stephen was being stoned, Saul was giving his ascent to the killing of Stephen. This morning in the Bible hour, Steven Gaines was talking about persecution. Well, here is a persecution of the church before the Roman age of which he was primarily referring. But anyway, Acts 8:1-5:

***Acts 8:1-5 ~ Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him. 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. 4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.***

*Heavenly Father, we come to You, we bow before You. We are thankful that You are the God of the word and that this is the word of God. We pray that You would take that which is Your word and You would do with it what You want to do with it, namely use it to teach us, use it to reprove us, use it to correct us, use it to train us, use it to make us thoroughly adequate unto every good work. We pray that You would use Your word, which is quick, it is powerful, it is able to pierce, it is able to divide asunder, it is able to convict us, it is able to motivate us. And so even today, Lord, we bow before You, and ask You to do, in our hearts and lives, that which no man can do. We pray that You would simply go to our hearts and put Your word in our hearts. We pray and give me the assistance I need to be able to accurately and appropriately apply and explain the word of God. We pray in Christ's name, amen.*

Now in Psalm 76:10, the Bible says that God is so great that He can take the wrath of man and turn it to the praise of His name. Then it goes on to say that the remainder of wrath He will restrain. In other words, whatever man does that can't be turned to the praise and glory of God, He won't allow to happen. Charles Spurgeon, who says, in reference to Psalms 76:10:

*This verse means that our God is so great that He can take the worst that men can do and make it bring glory to His name, and that whatever evil things man can do, that He cannot use to somehow glorify Himself, He will not allow to happen.*

Now in God's word we have many illustrations of how God actually overrules the wickedness of men, and uses their wickedness for His own praise, and for His own glory. One of those examples of course is found in the book of Genesis in the case of Joseph. Remember in Genesis 37 you had the brothers of Joseph who were very jealous of Joseph, and so when they got the opportunity they sold him into slavery. The first thing they thought about doing was killing him. Then one of his brothers said, "Hey, I don't think that is a great idea," and then it just so happened, in the providence of God, that there was an Egyptian group of men who were coming by, and one of them was Potiphar. Potiphar was willing to pay money for Joseph, so Joseph was sold into slavery. Then when he was in Potiphar's home, you remember the story of how Potiphar's wife lied about him and told her husband that he was really trying to rape her? The result being that Joseph ended up in prison and then in prison he had some troubles there.

One of them was a cupbearer there who had an official positioning with the king previously, but for some reason displeased the king and was put in prison. In prison, Joseph interpreted some of the dreams of the cupbearer, and as a result of that, he said to the cupbearer, "When you get out of here," because the cupbearer thought he was going to get out. "When you get out of here will you take a stand and tell him that I am in here unjustly?" At any rate, it wasn't too long after that that the cupbearer forgot the promise he had made and there Joseph stays in prison. But in the providence of God, he is finally released because he was able to interpret the dreams of the Pharaoh. So God turned the wrath of man into the praise of His name because Joseph became the Prime Minister of Egypt, and he was of course, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. God turned the wrath of man to the praise of His name in the case of Joseph. So much that Joseph said to his brothers, who initially sold him into slavery, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

Then of course, the ultimate example of how God turns the wrath of man to the praise of His name is found in the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The enemies of Christ lied about Him, they condemned Him, they nailed Him to a cross, and when they did that they were expressing their wrath, but God turned the wrath of man to the praise of His name. In Acts 2, this all was ordained by God, and it was ordained by God because it was God's way of saving us, Jesus Christ paying the penalty of our sin. Jesus Christ then being resurrected as well.

Now when we turn to Acts 8, the passage which we just read a few minutes ago, we have another tremendous example of how God can turn the wrath of man to the praise of His name. In this particular text, we find the enemies of Jesus Christ, with Saul as a leader, bringing great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. As a result of that, they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. Now the Lord had said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel," but after the crucifixion, and even the resurrection of our Lord, it would seem that the early believers kind of huddled in Jerusalem, and they weren't going to Samaria, and to Judea, and to the outermost parts of the earth. So that brought persecution upon them, and the result was that they were persecuted, and they were scattered around in that particular area. Now, God took that which was meant for evil and used it to bring glory to His name. Our text says, "They went everywhere preaching the word." And, *Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.*

Now I want us to notice several facts that I believe are very clearly taught by this passage of Scripture, and I will do that because I trust that God will use this to motivate us, to teach us something about the way that we should live, and something about what we should be doing.

First of all, as I look at this passage I see that these Christians, they went preaching. I noticed that preaching was considered to be the universal task of every believer. It was not just the task of the apostles, it was the task of every believer. They were scattered everywhere except the apostles. The apostles were back in Jerusalem preaching to be sure, but here these Christians were forced out of Jerusalem, and what did they do when they were forced out? They went out preaching. Now I've discovered from observation and conversation, that many religious people, even believers, often have to sets of standards for the way that professing Christians live and what they do. They seem to think that God has certain expectations for church leaders, and other people who are members of the church, well they have a different set of expectations for them. They had the idea that church leaders should always put Christ first. They should put the Lord before

their family, before comfort, before pleasure, but somehow that doesn't apply to those who are not church leaders. They have the idea that church leaders, such as elders and pastors, should attend every meeting of the church. They ought to be here every time the church has a meeting. They ought to be here for a prayer meeting, they ought to be here for Sunday school, but then as far as other people in the church, God doesn't have those same expectations.

They even have the idea that there are some things that are all right for Mr. and Mrs., or Miss Average Christian, but they should not be all right for church leaders. "If you are a church leader, you shouldn't be doing those kinds of things," but it doesn't matter nearly as much if you are not a church leader. They have the idea that church leaders should be completely dedicated. They seem to have the idea that Matthew 6:33 applies more specifically to church leaders than it does to others. It says we are to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. They say, "Yeah! That is what church leaders ought to do. They ought to seek first the Kingdom of God." But other people, well, maybe if they want to, but God has two sets of standards for His people.

2 Timothy 2:15 says we are to study to show ourselves approved unto God workman who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of church. "That is for church leaders. They need to study to show themselves approved unto God. And the rest of us, well, if we have time we could study." In Luke 9:23, the Bible says, "That if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." "Well, that is for church leaders. They are to deny themselves. They are to take up their cross daily," which means they say, "No," to themselves and, "Yes," to the Lord. They die to their own wishes. They die to their own desires, and they put the Lord's desires first. They have the idea that Matthew 28:19-20 which says we are to go and make disciples of all nations, and we are to teach them to observe everything that the Lord has commanded us. "Well that is for church leaders, but it is not necessarily for people who are not church leaders."

Well, my friends, I want to go on the record as saying that I don't believe God has any idea in His word that there are two sets of standards for His people. The Bible does not simply have two sets of standards, one for church leaders, and another for other Christians. One for super saints and another for regular saints. When Peter wrote his epistle, he wrote in 1 Peter 1, "Be holy as obedient children, as I am holy," says the Lord. He said it to all Christians, not just church leaders. "You are a chosen generation. You are a royal priesthood, and God has saved you to make known His praises. The one who has called you out of darkness, into His

marvelous light.” That is for all Christians. We are to shout forth His praises because He has called us out of darkness into the light.

In Romans 12:1-2, Paul says, “I therefore beseech you, that you present your bodies holy to the Lord as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. And don’t you be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, that you might prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.” That is for all of God’s people. It is not just for some of His people.

Or in Matthew, the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, where the Lord Jesus speaks to His disciples and to us as well. He says, “That whoever will confess Me before men, I will confess before My Father who is in heaven. Everyone who confesses Me before men, I will confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny him before My Father who is in heaven. He who loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.” Now He uses the word ‘*everyone*’ and the word ‘*whoever*’, which means that what He is saying here is for every Christian, and it is not just for church leaders.

Now in the Bible, God has no two sets of standards for His people. In Ephesians 4, the Lord says that He has given to the church gifts in the form of pastors and teachers. That is Verse 11, and then in Verse 12 of Ephesians 4, He tells us why He has given pastors and teachers, as well as apostles, and prophets, and evangelists to the church. He has given pastors and teachers to the church for the equipping of the saints so that the saints can do the work of ministry. It is not that the pastors and teachers are to do all of the work of the ministry, it is the whole body of Christ that is to do the work of the ministry, and it is the pastors’ and teachers’ responsibility, elders’ responsibility, to get the church ready to do the work of the ministry which is building up the body of Jesus Christ. That is evangelism, that is edification as well. So the task of the church is given to all of the people of God and then all of us are to be involved in His ministry.

Now sometimes I’ve heard it said that some Christians can go, some Christians can give, and all can pray. Well it is certainly true that all Christians should pray, but also it is true that all people should go. Perhaps they won’t go to a foreign land. Perhaps they ought to think about whether God wants them in the foreign land, but at least they should think about, “How does God want me to go? Where does God want me to go?” God’s command to go in Matthew 28:19-20, and Mark 16:15, is

to all His people, and it is true of all of God's people, of course, that they should give. Some may be able to give more, some less, but all can give something. All can give time, and all can give effort.

Now we notice in Acts 8 that when persecution was brought on the church at Jerusalem, all of them except the apostles, except the leaders, were scattered abroad. What did they do? Well Verse 4 tells us what they did. Those who had been scattered about preached the word. Now the word which is translated '*preached*' here in Acts 8:4, is not the usual word in Scripture for '*preaching*'. The usual word for '*preaching*' is a Greek word '*kerugma*', which means '*to herald, or to proclaim the word of God*'. But here, the word is '*euaggelizō*', which is part of '*evanzo*'. They went, what did they do? They evangelized. That is what it is saying. They evangelized and who was it that did the evangelizing? It was everybody but the apostles. That doesn't mean that the apostles weren't doing it back in Jerusalem, but in this instance, the apostles were not there and it was the people who were sharing the good news of the Gospel.

Now one example of someone who did this is given to us in Verse 5, and then throughout the rest of the chapter, and that was a man, Philip. Now what all of this tells us about the early believers is that they were convinced that telling people about Christ, evangelizing, witnessing, was the universal task of every believer. What this tells us is that the early believers did not have a rule which said that unless you have committed at least two years at the Jerusalem Bible Institute, and unless you have studied under Professor So-and-So, you can't be a witness for Christ. In Acts 8 there is no mention of any educational background. Certainly they must have had some of them who were well-educated, but there were probably many of them who were poorly educated, and yet there is no indication that any of them could use their lack of education as an excuse for not sharing the Gospel.

Now in South Africa, in the church in which I am a pastor/elder, at least 50%, probably 60% of the people there are black, and they are from some of the tribes, and some of them come from Zimbabwe, some of them come from Zambia, some of them comes from Mozambique, and some of them come from Namibia as well. Some of them are very poorly educated, but even though they haven't had schooling, such as almost probably all of you have had, they are still responsible to share the Gospel. They are still responsible to evangelize, and it is our responsibility as pastors and teachers, to get them ready to do the work of evangelism. I'm certainly not against people getting a good education, especially a good education in God's word, and that is one reason why we are doing what we are doing in South Africa. We have a Strengthening Ministries Training Institute



and primarily, of course, we would like to have pastors coming to be trained. There are hundreds of pastors in South Africa, and throughout Africa, who have never had the opportunity of going to formal schooling, and so we are offering to them an opportunity to be trained in the word of God, but we offer that kind of teaching and training not only to pastors, but to others in the churches who want to know the word of God so they can use it in their own lives, their families, as well as with their friends.

Please keep in mind, when it comes to this matter of sharing the Gospel, what Acts 4:13 says about Peter and John. It says that Peter and John were unwanted and they were untrained men. In other words, they hadn't had a great education, Bible education or otherwise, but they were still sharing the word of God. It says in 1 Corinthians 1:26 that God has not called many wise, many mighty, many noble according to the flesh, but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. He has chosen to base and despise people of the world, and nullify the things that are of no value to man so that no man should boast in himself, but everyone should boast in the Lord.

So as we come back to Acts 8, I hope that you will see that one of the things God is saying is that it is all over your responsibility, that every one of you who names the name of Jesus Christ, should be involved in evangelism, should be involved in missions, should be involved in reaching others for the Lord Jesus Christ. The question that you need to answer is: Are you? Are you? How many people did you talk to this week about the Lord Jesus Christ? You rubbed shoulders with them in your neighborhoods, you rubbed shoulders with them where you work, and you should see that you are a missionary, and you have been sent to bring the Gospel to these people. So that is one thing that I see in Acts 8, that they considered the task of evangelism, missions, to be the universal task of every believer.

Secondly, as I look at this particular passage, I see that God is saying to us that sharing the Gospel should be the natural task of every believer. Not just the universal task, but the natural task. As you read Verse 1 and Verse 2, where they are persecuted, where they are scattered abroad, it would not be surprising if you read in Verse 4, "Therefore, those who were scattered went everywhere and they never opened their mouths to talk about Jesus Christ again," because the reason they were scattered abroad was because they did that, and now they're forced out. They've lost their home, they've lost their job, they lost their friends, and all that kind of thing. They're lost. They're sent out, and it wouldn't be surprising—this is what a lot of people would do—and say, "I'm never going to open my mouth to talk about Jesus Christ again. I know what happened to me back then, and I'm

afraid that'll happen to me again." They might have reasoned, "I'll never talk about Christ again," or they might have thought, "You know, I'll live privately a Godly life. I will. In my home, I'm going to be very Godly. I'm going to be very holy. But outside of my home, I'm not going to talk about Jesus Christ. I'll privately worship. I will talk to my family. I'll talk to my closest friends, but I'll do it privately." Or they might have said, "If talking plainly about Jesus Christ as Messiah, if talking about His death and His resurrection, if talking about the need for repentance and faith, if talking about the fact that apart from Him there is no hope of salvation, if telling people that He is the only Savior, I'll tone it down. I'll talk about something that's less offensive and that's more palatable."

They might have said, "Look, we know there are Pharisees around here, and the Pharisees don't like us to talk about Jesus Christ being the Son of God. They don't like us talking about Jesus Christ being the Messiah. They don't like us talking about the need for the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. The Pharisees don't like this talk about salvation by grace through faith. They don't like us telling people that salvation doesn't come through keeping the Law, so I'm not going to talk about those things anymore, because I don't want to get the Pharisees upset with me."

They might have said, "Hey, there are a lot of Sadducees around here." Now, the Sadducees were a group who didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead, and so, "We won't offend them and we won't talk about the resurrection of the dead." I say that after reading Verses 1 and 2, we might expect that these Christians who were persecuted decided to stop talking or change the offense elements of the message, but they didn't. Instead, they went everywhere. They went everywhere preaching, evangelizing the gospel. In Acts 4:18, we're told that when Peter and John got in trouble for preaching about Christ, they were commanded to never speak in His Name again. That's Verse 19, but then they go on to say, "Whether it be right to obey you or to obey what God says, you be the judge. As for us, we must obey God rather than men," and so even though they were warned, they went on to publically preach about Jesus Christ.

Now, what's my point? My point is that what was true of Peter and John in Acts 4 was true of these believers in Acts 8. They couldn't stop talking about Jesus. It was natural for them to talk about Jesus. And the question is: Why was it so natural for them to speak about Christ? Well, they really believed the message of the Bible. They really believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. They really believed that God was real. They believed that men are lost. They believed that Christ rose

again. They believed that hell is real. They really believed that Heaven is real, and they were convinced that Jesus Christ is man's only way to get there.

Now, I hear people sometimes saying, "Well you know, such and such a person really believes in his heart, but he just doesn't talk about it." Or I've even heard some people say that certain pastors who don't clearly preach certain biblical doctrines, "Well, they in their hearts believe them even though they don't preach it," especially when it comes to the doctrines of grace. Or, "They believe these doctrines, but they just don't preach them." Why? Because people would be offended. Well, my friends, the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:13, "I believe, therefore I speak." He's saying, "What I believe has to manifest itself in what I say in my language, and if I don't talk about it, you know why I don't talk about it? It's because I don't really believe it. I believe, therefore I speak."

Some time ago, I heard Paul Bubar who was Director of Word of Life Bible Club Movements speak at a graduation banquet for Seniors. On that occasion, he began by asking these Seniors some questions. He said, "How many of you believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior?" As far as I know, every hand went up. "How many of you believe that people are sinners and need a Savior?" Every hand went up. "How many of you believe that hell is a real place?" Every hand went up. "How many of you believe that unless a person repents of his sin and believes on Christ, he'll go to hell?" Again, the hands went up. He said, "How many of you play on athletic teams in your High School?" and then a few hands went up. Then he said, "How many of you believe that the people in your class at school are lost and going to hell unless they hear about Jesus, and repent and believe?" And at that particular point, again, people raised their hands, but then he said, "If that's so about what you've said you believe, how many of you have talked to these people about Jesus Christ and urged them to repent and believe?"

At that point, almost no hands went up, and he said, "Are you telling me you play with these people on an athletic team week after week? Are you telling me you go to classes with these people week after week, and you've never talked to them about Jesus Christ? You're telling me that you believe they're on their way to hell, and you've never talked to them about Jesus Christ?" And then do you know what Paul Bubar said? He said, "I don't think you really believe what you say you believe about hell, because if you did, you would talk to your friends about Jesus Christ."

Now, some people may reject to Paul Bubar's bluntness, but he did have a point, and the point is that if we really believe that Christians have the answer to the problems of people, if we really believe that Christ is who the Bible says He is, if we really believe that men are lost, if we really believe that apart from Christ there is no hope, wouldn't it be logical, wouldn't it be just natural for us to do what these early believers did? Wherever they went, they talked about the gospel.

I remember talking to a friend of mine about a certain man who had a relative in the hospital, and that relative was very sick and might possibly die. He said this man didn't think that the relative was a Christian, and was afraid that he might die without Christ. So this man with a relative in the hospital said to this friend of mine, "I know he might die, but I hesitate to talk to this man about Christ and his need to repent and believe, because I'm afraid if I do, he and the other relatives may be offended. Do you think I should talk to him about his spiritual need?" To which this friend of mine said, "No, I don't think you should talk to him about Christ, unless of course you want him to go to hell." We realize that people are going to hell. They're lost without Christ. How can we be ashamed of Christ?

Now friends, if we really believe what the Bible says about Christ, if we really believe what the Bible says about the absolute importance of people repenting and believing on Christ, it should be a natural thing for us to do what Peter and John did in Acts 4, and what the other Christians did in Acts 8. Paul said this in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed," of what?

***Romans 1:16 ~ I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation.***

It's the only power of God unto salvation. Why should we, why are we ashamed of the gospel? Not too long ago, a certain friend of mine, a very close friend of mine with whom I had worked for a number of years in the cause of Christ, turned away from Christ, and I sat down and I wrote a letter to him when I found that that was true, and I pleaded with him. I admonished him. I told him why it was wrong from a biblical perspective. I warned him about his future and the future of all apostates. And after he got my letter, he wrote me and he said, "Don't ever write to me about Jesus Christ again. Don't ever rebuke me. Don't ever admonish me." And at that point, that man was asking me to do something that was impossible. He was asking me to do something that would be unnatural for me, unnatural because my life is Christ. How can I not talk about Christ when Christ is my life?

I showed that letter to my wife, and my wife said, “You know, he’s asking us to do something that we cannot do, because our lives are Jesus Christ.” So it’s natural. It’s as natural for me to talk about Christ as it is to breathe. That’s who I am and that’s who my wife is as well. So you hang around me long enough and I’ll talk to you about Jesus. I love to do it. That’s what these early believers did in Acts 8. It was natural. To tell them not to talk about Christ was to tell them to do something that was unnatural. Christ had invaded their lives. Colossians 1 says, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” If any man be in Christ, then Christ is in us. So it should be natural for us to talk to others about Jesus Christ.

When we look at Acts 8, we see that witnessing, evangelizing, is the universal task, and it should be the natural task of every believer. It’s not something you’re forced to do. “Oh, I’ve got to do it.” No, if Jesus Christ is so real, I can’t help but do it. I can’t help but talk about Jesus Christ. Do you realize what He is to me? He’s my Lord. He’s my Savior. He’s my everything.

One other thing that I see as I look at this passage is that this matter of witnessing was the supreme task of these believers. In Verse 2 and 3, it says they were all scattered. In Verse 4, it says:

***Acts 8:4 ~ Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.***

They went everywhere, and what did they do? The King James version says they went everywhere and they preached or they evangelized. That’s the word. Now, know what these verses don’t say. It doesn’t say they went everywhere and did a number of things. It doesn’t say they went everywhere and looked for new homes. It doesn’t say they went everywhere and looked for new jobs. They had just lost their homes and they had just lost their jobs, but it doesn’t say they went everywhere, and the first thing on their mind was finding a new home and a new job. It doesn’t say they went everywhere and tried to develop new friends, and that in addition to that, they did a little bit of evangelism.

Now, I’m sure they did all these things I’ve mentioned. I’m sure that they did eventually look for a new home. I’m sure that they did eventually look for a new job. I’m sure that they did eventually develop new friends, but that was not the main thing they were concerned about. The main thing they were concerned about was sharing the Lord Jesus Christ. These people needed Christ, and their supreme task was to present Christ to them.

Before William Carrie went to India and became a missionary that God used in a remarkable way to reach people and to translate the Bible into one of the main languages of India, he had worked as a laborer in England. Well, on one occasion somebody asked him while he was still in England working as a laborer, “Mr. Carrie, what is your business?” Now, remember that at this point, Carrie was not a preacher. He had not been ordained. He was not a missionary. He was a shoemaker, and when he was asked that question, he responded, “My business is to preach the gospel, but I’m a cobbler, a repairer of shoes, to pay expenses.” For him, everything else he did was secondary to the task of telling others the good news. Well, so it was with these believers in Acts 8. They went everywhere evangelizing. They went everywhere sharing the good news. This was so true that when the Holy Spirit wrote their epitaph, in one sentence he said this: *They went everywhere evangelizing Christ with people.*

Now Verses 2 and 4 give us a general description of what believers who were forced out of Jerusalem did. But when we come to Verse 5, Luke decides to focus on one of the believers, and in a sense, he’s giving us a typical picture of what one of these believers did, and this was Philip. Now, we don’t have time to look at the rest of Acts 8, but you know the story if you’ve read it before. Philip went down and he went out into the wilderness, and there was a man riding in some kind of chariot, and it looked like an important man there. He came up to him and he saw that he was reading something. Then he asked him, “What are you reading?” and he found out that he was reading Isaiah 53, and he said, “Well, do you understand what you’re reading?” The man said, “How can I unless someone explains it to me?”

Now, at that point, would your curiosity be piqued a little bit? “How did you get out here in the wilderness? Where did you get this chariot? Where are you going?” I mean, there are a lot of questions that Philip could have asked this Ethiopian eunuch. When he found out he was an Ethiopian eunuch, he could have said, “That means you’re pretty important back there in Ethiopia. You have a high position. How did you get to be the Treasurer of the Ethiopian Queen?” He could have asked a lot of questions, but he doesn’t say that. Now, he may have talked to him about all of those things, but those things are somewhat incidental. They’re just a warm up for getting to the real point. What he did was he opened the Scriptures and he talked to this man about Jesus. That’s what this man needed.

Now, in Verse 36 of Acts 8, we have an interesting verse. All of them are interesting, but this is interesting in particular, because it says:

***Acts 8:36 ~ As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?”***

Now, where did this guy get the idea that now that he had believed, he should be baptized? Maybe he got it back in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit came upon thousands of people there and they were converted, and he saw that after they believed, they were baptized. Maybe that’s where he got the idea. There’s nothing in the passage which indicates that Philip had actually talked to him about baptism. Maybe he did, but that wasn’t the main thing Philip wanted to talk to him about, because that wasn’t the main issue. At any rate, he talked to him about Jesus. This man now believed, and he wanted to express his faith. He wanted to commit himself to Christ. We just don’t know why in Verse 36 he brought up the subject of baptism, or why the Holy Spirit has not chosen to give us that information. But we do know for sure that when Philip met him, his main concern was to tell him about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, my main reason for mentioning this episode of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch is to draw attention to the fact that Philip is just one example of what according to Verse 4 all believers who were forced out of Jerusalem did. Back in the year 1978, I remember visiting a Chinese Christian, who at that time was very sick. She had a disease that made it extremely painful for her to be in a place where there was no light. She was called the Queen of the Dark Chamber, and Chinese people from all over that area of Pennsylvania and even as far away as Washington, DC, would come to visit this woman, and when they came into her presence, she just bubbled over with joy. She was not grumbling. She was not complaining, and when you were in her presence, it wasn’t long before she was talking about Christ.

She said that when people would come to her and she would begin to talk to them about Christ, many times they would ask her, “Why do you talk so much about Christ?” and her response was to ask another question. Remember, she’s mainly talking with the Chinese people who have come, and she said she would say to these Chinese people, “Why do you eat so much rice?” Now, rice is to Chinese people what *pup* is to Africans. If you don’t know what *pup* is, come to Africa and you’ll find out. But the Africans eat *pup* for breakfast, for lunch, and for dinner. I mean, it’s their main thing that they eat, and rice is the main thing that Chinese people often eat.

She said, “Why do you eat so much rice?” and then she went on to say, “You eat rice because you like rice. You love rice, and that’s why I talk about Jesus Christ, because I love Him. He’s God’s Son. He died for me. He rose again.” I’ll never forget that visit. It took place outside of Lancaster, Pennsylvania a long time ago in 1978, but it was such a blessing, such a challenge to me, such a reminder to me of what should be the focus of my life. And what we have in Acts 8 is a reminder and a challenge to us as believers, that telling people about Jesus is the universal task of every believer. It’s not just for pastors and elders, it’s for every believer. Telling people about Jesus should be the natural task of every believer, because the Bible indicates that if you’re a believer, Christ has come to live in you. He is your life, and it should also be the supreme task of every believer. That’s why you’re still here if you’re a believer. God could have taken you home to heaven the moment you got saved, but He left you here and He left me here. Why did He leave us here? So that we might tell other people about the Lord Jesus Christ. That should be our supreme task.

Philip Ryken had an excellent commentary on the Book of Luke. He’s talking about that incident in Luke 5 where Jesus comes, and the disciples have been out fishing all night and taken nothing, and Jesus says, “Move out from the shore and let down your net for a big catch of fish,” and they obeyed. Then Jesus said, “From now on, you’re going to catch men. You’re going to be a witness. Your job is to be a witness.” Philip Ryken says:

*What does God do with our witness? That’s His business, but our business is to be a witness. This means supporting the mission of the church locally and globally. It means inviting friends to church.*

When is the last time you invited someone to come to church with you? I read recently where they did some interviewing and found out that 80% of the people in the United States have never been invited to church by someone.

*It means praying for people in need.*

It means having a gospel presentation ready at a moment’s notice. If you have an opportunity, do you know how to present the gospel? What would you say to people? How would you evangelize them? Ryken says:

*It means praying for lost family members. It also means getting involved with ministries that share the gospel, and it means speaking up and not staying silent. So launch the gospel boat. Cast your net into the teeming shoals of humanity and see what God will catch by His divine grace.*



Well, that's what the early believers were doing here in Acts 8. They were testing the gospel net, evangelizing. And as I close today, I want to ask you: How are you responding to this message that I've preached? Now, it might be that some of you were saying, "I wish that guy would get done. I want to get out of here and go home. He's talked too long already." Or maybe you've said, "Well, that's an interesting story what those early Christians did when they were scattered abroad, but it has nothing to do with me." Or as I've been preaching, I wonder if you've been examining your own life and have been drawn to making some conclusions.

For example, as you've heard me expositing a bit of Acts 8, have you really embraced the concept that you are responsible to present the gospel, to evangelize, as Pastor Ty, and Pastor Blackburn, and Pastor Mitchell, and anyone else who's in leadership here? You're just as responsible to do that as they are. It's the universal task. You say, "Yeah, it's my task. Absolutely. And this week, I'm going to go out and I'm going to be praying, and I'm going to be looking for opportunities when I can just talk to people about Jesus Christ." As I've been preaching this morning, have you thought about being a witness to Christ, being natural, thinking of sharing Christ being as natural as it is for you to breathe? Or it's almost as natural for you to share the gospel with others as it is for you to get hungry?

As you've looked at Acts 8, did you say, "You know, it's not a natural thing. I have to be forced into talking to people about Jesus Christ"? Well, if that's true of you, then I encourage you to say to the Lord: Lord, I really don't know anything, or at least not much about the experience of the believers in Acts 8. I really can't say it's natural for me to talk about Jesus Christ. I encourage you also to ask the question: Why isn't it natural? Why isn't it natural for me? I call myself a Christian. Why isn't it natural for me to share the gospel? Is it because maybe I'm not really a Christian? Is it because Christ doesn't and never really has lived in my heart? Or is it because as in Mark 4:19, Jesus says that people sometimes respond to the word, and then in the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, they get distracted and more concerned about these things than they are about Jesus Christ? Well, whatever the reason, if it's not natural for you, then ask God for forgiveness, and plead with God that by His Spirit He would help you to make that commitment, that from here on, I'm going to make it. It's going to be natural for me to share with people about Jesus Christ. Then the last question that I ask you is: Can you honestly say that you think of being a witness as your supreme task? Above and beyond everything else that you do, sharing the gospel with people is the most important thing you will ever do, whether it be your children, whether it be your relatives, whether it be someone with whom you work. That's why He's left us here is to go and preach the gospel and tell others about our Savior.

Well, my brothers and sisters, I want to say three things as I close. One is I love Christ and I want to see Him exalted more and more in our lives, and I hope you do as well. The second thing is I love you in Christ. If you're a Christian, I love you. You're my brother, you're my sister, and I want you to experience more of the fullness of Christ. Thirdly, my prayer is that God would increasingly make each of you, including myself, people who are a part of Providence Church, that God would increasingly make us more and more like these Christians in Acts 8 who went everywhere preaching the word of God, telling people about Christ. It was their universal task, it was their natural task, and it was also their supreme task.

*Heavenly Father, we come to You, and we know that only You can bring true conviction and true change in our hearts and lives. Lord, the question is how many people have we honestly, earnestly talked to about Jesus Christ? Can we honestly say what Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," so that wherever I go, I'm constantly looking for opportunities and taking those opportunities to tell lost men about the only One who can save them, and the only One who can forgive them of sins, the only One who can bring them into the right relationship with God, and give them a real purpose and meaning for life? Lord, please, by Your Spirit, work in each of us and stir us up to be more like these people of whom we read in Acts 8. For Jesus Christ's sake we pray, amen.*

This audio presentation, description, and transcription by Providence Church in Duluth, Georgia, USA, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License.

 Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Attribution:

Based on work at Providence Church, Duluth, GA, USA and found online at <http://www.providenceduluth.org>. Permission for use beyond the scope of this license may be requested by contacting Providence Church, Duluth, GA through their website.