

God's Purposes in Persecution: How the Gospel Goes to Judea and Samaria

2022.05.22 Morning Sermon in Acts 8:1–8

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Main idea: In this age God is overruling even (and especially) persecution to spread the gospel with saving power and divine joy.

¹ Now 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. ² And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

³ As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

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

Introduction: Men resist the idea of God's sovereignty, but the Bible teaches it very strongly in some places, and everywhere else the Bible just displays the sovereign God working sovereignly.

1. Why a great persecution arises

- a. **The elect in Jerusalem were largely gathered in** (cf. Ac 18:8–10).
- b. **The remaining wicked hated Christ and His church.** Everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2Tim 3:12)—
 - i. **both by the world** (cf. 2Tim 3:11)
 - ii. **and in an imperfect church** (cf. 2Tim 3:13, 1Cor 11:19, 1Jo 2:18–19).
- iii. Application: where did the cross come from? Yes, the hatred of wicked devils and men, but that is not the primary place. **It came from the love of God and His plan to save** (A purpose to adopt, redeem, and apply redemption from before time—and fulfilled in successive covenant administrations so that especially now in the age of the application of redemption, all persecution must serve this). And so it is with every one of your persecutions, dear Christian.
- c. **To send the Gospel where it was going next.**
 - i. **Geographically—missions.** They were all scattered (v1). God is determined to apply the redemption of Christ to all for whom He died. 1:8 reminds us that this persecution is not so much Satan's counterattack as it is phase 2 of Christ's plan. The Lord humiliates His enemies. Application: if we love our land and the churches of it, let us fear for it (churches of Asia Minor, North Africa, Europe, etc.)
 - ii. **Sometimes generationally—revival/reformation.** (Covenanting Scotland v.s. Dutch further Reformation). Application: God can use persecution to squeeze the nominalism out of our generations, rather than allow our Christianity-lite to condemn us and our children with us.
 - iii. **Sometimes even to the persecutors themselves. Saul!** He went from an anti-apostolic every house ministry (v3, cf. 5:42) to the "in public and from house to house" apostolic minister of 20:20
 - iv. Application: in world history and in your life, the story of the moment is never the persecution so much as whatever Jesus is doing at that time to apply His salvation.

So, **let persecution make us not more timid but more bold**, for we see how it connects to the work of God, and we rejoice to participate in that work!

2. What persecution sends

a. Apostolic message.

- i. Not the apostles themselves (v1) but **their message**; eventually, the twelve went many places, but it is their message that has gone into all the world making them Christ's witnesses.
- ii. **"The Word" in v4 is "Christ" in v5** (and in v12 "the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ"—that it is not just a prophet like Moses but indeed Yahweh Himself as King and Savior from the line of David). The point of the Word is Christ. **Not just the New Testament, but the Old Testament** (cf. John 5:39–40; Luk 24:25–27). Just as the apostolic message has been since Pentecost: **Jesus is both Lord and Christ!** Persecution didn't silence the gospel; it multiplied where it was preached.

b. Apostolic power.

- i. **Hearing and seeing miracles.** Casting out demons and raising up paralytics. God authenticates the apostolic message with apostolic power, especially because the apostolic writings are not yet completed (cf. Heb 2:4 and the implication that such miracles had ceased even before the close of the canon).
- ii. **The multitudes with one accord heeded Philip.** This is marvelous against the Samaritan background (and we'll see even more so next week). **Pentecostal power is seen in people being cut to the heart and repenting (rather than murdering!).** And this Pentecostal power is still exercised today. When we pray for repentance and faith from the preaching in church, we're praying for Pentecostal power. When we pray for the repentance and faith of our children during family worship, we're praying for Pentecostal power. Because Christ is the Sender of His Word and His Spirit, you don't have to have the original apostles there for apostolic message and power. Hallelujah! Jews had stopped heeding the Word, but the power of God is such that it can bring even these mixed-breed, poor-theology Samaritans to heed the Word. Hallelujah! And His Pentecostal power is such that it can bring even 21st century Americans to heed the Word. Hallelujah!

c. Apostolic joy.

- i. In the midst of the raging of the peoples and the lamenting of the bereaved was apostolic joy but now not only in Jerusalem but in Samaria. Christ had revealed Himself to a multitude and revealed to them that they had been eternal objects of His love and recently objects of His love at the cross. What joy now was theirs!
- ii. The raging and the grieving were in service unto the great joy. Application: have this mixture now, because it will be unmixed later!
- iii. **Not just in moments, but on a large scale, the raging of the nations brings the joy of Christ and His people on the last day.** The grief of the martyrs under the altar brings the joy of the completed and perfected multitude on the last day. Now these three abide: faith, hope, and love. But there is coming a day when faith will be sight, and hope will be realized, and love will be fully satisfied. We will no longer deal with the raging of the nations; every tear will be wiped from our eyes. And how great will our joy be then! When we see moments in which their raging and our grief serve gospel joy, we're getting a little taste of what history as a whole looks like.

Conclusion: when persecution arrives, it is not so much the end of one era of God's saving as it is the beginning of the next one!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Acts chapter 8, verses 1 through 8. Let us take heed. How we hear these words for. They are the words of God. Now, Saul was consenting to his death at that time. A great persecution arose against the church which was a Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.

Except the apostles and devout men carried Stephen, to his burial and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church entering every house and dragging off men and women committing them to prison. Therefore, those who are scattered went everywhere, preaching, the word Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them and the multitudes.

With one accord, he did the things spoken by Philip hearing and seeing the miracles, which he did for unclean spirits crying out with a loud voice. Came out of many who were possessed and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.

Amanda sends this reading of God's inspired and inerrant word. We were dries to know that he adds his blessing to the preaching of it. Please be seated.

Men, resist. The idea of the existence of God. This is what those who are in their first, father, Adam do by nature. They are fools who although they can see the evidence to the contour and actually have the truth of the existence of God, put into their hearts, by God himself Tell themselves in their hearts.

There is no God and sometimes they will very cheekily but very wickedly in rebelliously point out that the Bible does not spend a lot of time arguing for the existence of God. No, it just declares what he is doing and who he is and what he has promised to do and so forth.

It assumes God from cover to cover. Well, people also resist, the idea of the sovereignty of God that God rules and overrules and all things that there is no man or devil, not even Satan himself, who can accomplish in what they do, whether good or evil, and apart from converted men independence, upon the grace of God.

It's all evil that they can accomp not accomp that they can accomplish nothing. Even in all the evil that they wickedly do, except that which God has ordained by which to do the good, that he has determined to do. You would think that after 6,000 years, Satan would give up.

After every single thing he has ever done has been turned on its head for the glory of God in Jesus Christ. And the good of those whom God is redeeming, but it's not just those who are outside the church who resist, the idea of the sovereignty of God that he is the one who works, all things.

According to the council of His will, as Ephesians 111, says, even within the church, There are those who prefer to try to preserve the freedom of man, by getting rid of the freedom of God, They say not only as man free to do as he wills. But that man even apart from saving grace is free to.

Will that which is good and they try to get man a freedom that he does not have an atom and that Scripture testifies that he does not have and they rob God of the freedom that he does have to drag people to Christ to drag people to faith to work in then, in whom there is no righteousness at all.

And no life at all a spiritual life by which they get safe in order that they get righteousness. That is only from the Lord Jesus Christ And the great liberty of the freedom of God to save sinners. And there are passages that actually argue for the sovereignty of God, perhaps in part because it's been argued against in the church.

And not just because there was a very sound methodical biblical teacher, whose name has gotten attached lately. To this truth Calvin that Armenianism didn't start with our minus because the apostle was dealing already with those who wanted to rob God of his freedom in order to give man a freedom.

He doesn't have you have sections like in the middle of Romans chapter 9, which if you did your undergrad, at a Armenian liberal arts college, your New Testament theology. Professor May or may not have skipped over as he was going straight through the New Testament. But there's a similarity in how for the large part, Scripture handles.

The sovereignty of God. Although there are some passages in which God's sovereign rule that the good God does good things. Even through when wicked men are doing wicked things, as he has ordained. So that the wicked person or devil is the author of his wickedness and yet God is the author of His overruling good.

In his goodness. The the scripture most of most of the time just displays a sovereign god working sovereignly. And so you can you can look at how much wickedness there is in the scriptures and yet every page and every season of the work of God in history, You see that it is exactly as God had purposed and plant and never, are we more in need of this doctrine of God's sovereign ruling and overruling.

God doing infallibly unstopably, the good that he because he is good. Has determined to do, never do. We need that more than in times of persecution. And so, it is a help that, although the gospel up until this point in the book of Acts has received a fair amount of opposition, at least, from the religious leaders that the point at which it says at that time, a great persecution arose, it would be in fulfillment of a very specific prophecy of the plan of the Lord for the spread of his gospel.

And so the first thing that we'll see or consider in this passage is why, why did this great persecution arise against the church that was in Jerusalem and having answered that word principally, having answered the purpose behind the persecution arising. Then we'll see some more details about what specifically God produced in that purpose, or as it's titled on your outline, what persecution sends.

So why great persecution comes or arises and what persecution sends? Well, one of the reasons that great persecution arose is that the church in Jerusalem was largely formed that God has people whom he is going to save. This is one of the things that makes missions and evangelism. So exciting, especially it's one of the things that makes family worship so exciting.

Because he's already decided to put that kid in your house, and he's already put himself in this external relationship to them by putting them in your house. He put them in his church. He put them under the means of grace and you cry out but all those things can't do them any good except for the work of the Holy Spirit in them, you say you mean the same Holy Spirit who chose their parents for them and who set them apart from the world.

I will take those to speak incorrectly against the theology of this passage. I will take those odds. And so it's exciting to know that God has people in a particular place. It doesn't always tell us how many there are. He's gonna do that later in the book of Acts when Paul is in Corinth in chapter 18 and he's used to getting completely abused and being in a place for a few days or a few weeks before he has to run for his life or his left dead and has to you know, get up, go into the town.

Say goodbye to the church. That's just been planted and leave, But when he gets to Corinth, the Lord gives him, what must have been a news of a fairly welcome rest. And he says, After many Corinthians have heard and believed and were baptized in verse 8, along with the synagogue ruler, who believed in the Lord with all his household.

It says, now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid but speak and do not keep silent for. I am with you and no one will attack you to hurt you. And what a relief that must have been to the Apostle who was repeatedly attacked and hurt.

Why though? At the end of verse 10, for I have many people in this city. Well, did God. Not have many people that he was in the process of saving in Jerusalem, as he would later in Corinth in chapter 18. Well of course he did. But what we've seen from the day of Pentecost until now at the beginning of chapter 8 is thousands, being saved and thousands more being saved and the gospel multiplying greatly and now you've got those who are in the church and those who are out of the church.

And it's not just Saul who consents to Steven's death. And it's not just the council who have murdered him But generally speaking. Those outside of the church are extremely hostile at this point to those who are in the church. And so it's not just Saul consents but everyone else seems to be consenting at that time, a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem.

So humanly speaking. Historically speaking that that's one of the reasons in the context of the book of Acts. This was not a small church but it was now a greatly persecuted church. And of course, the big reason that the church's persecuted at any time is that the wicked of the world?

Hate Christ. And His people The remaining wicked hate Christ and His church. In fact, the apostle says in second Timothy 3 and verse 12, everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ. Jesus will be persecuted And this includes the persecution of the world, which we expect in Scripture tells us in other places through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God.

And if, so they treated the master, why do you think they're going to treat you any differently and American Christians say well we'll just act less and less like the master so that they'll treat us more and more differently. We don't want that distinction and that persecution. But the persecution does not come only from outside.

The church, the apostle refers to those and second Timothy 3:11, persecutions afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch and ephesus and Lystra what persecutions I endured and out of them. All the Lord delivered me But then having said, yes and all who desire to live godly in Christ. Jesus will suffer persecution.

He goes on to say and not just from outside of the church. Timothy verse 13 but evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse deceiving and being deceived. And so, he'll talk later in chapter 4 about Alexander the coppersmith and so forth. And so we live in an age in which the nation's still, rage and kings and people's plot and vain.

And we've just heard in first Thessalonians 5 that those who live in darkness, and not light will be overtaken by the day of the Lord, like a thief. They'll be saying peace and safety. And Christ's appearance will not be good news. It will be disaster for them nations, rage and kings, and people's plot and vain.

But God is not intimidated And from now until that time, even the church itself will be imperfect. Not only what we've just read in second Timothy 3:13, but first Corinthians 11, verse 19, which tells us one of the reasons why churches aren't unified that there are factions. So that those who may not, who are not approved by God will be exposed and then first John 2 verses 18, through 19, describing how even in the apostolic churches.

There are those who go out from them. Why? Because they are not of them. He says, it's not just churches who are doing badly and walking unfaithfully that have troubles, but churches that our faithful will have troubles. Because there are unbelievers, even in Apostolic, churches and save that the rest of that thought.

And that idea for next week was Simon Magus. Who is going to make us feel very uncomfortable almost like Matthew Mead's book in the hallway. Next door it's going to make you feel very uncomfortable. If you read the almost Christian discovered and find out just how much may be true superficially of a member of the church.

And Him not be saved onto Everlasting life And so because the world is wicked right up until the end, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ. Jesus will be persecuted And because the church is imperfect, Those in the church, who wish to live a godly or life in Christ.

Jesus, We'll suffer persecution even within the church. But is God. Therefore not controlling, not ruling and overruling but goes on in history. And what goes on in his church. Of course he is, is the story of Acts 8:1 through 8. The story of the beginning of the end for Christianity, A great persecutor roles, or is the story of Acts.

Eight one through eight, The story of phase. Two of the Lord Jesus's worldwide redemption program. You remember what he had said? You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. And so we have very early in our passage.

They were all scattered throughout The regions of Judea and Samaria verse 1. And what did they do? Therefore, those who were scattered. Went everywhere preaching, the word, and then he gives us one of the examples. Philip, preaching Christ in verse 5. And what was the result? Verse, 6, and the multitudes.

With one accord heeded, the things spoken by Philip. So what's the story of activate one through eight? Is it a story of persecution or is it a story of evangelism and redemption and the mighty advance of the kingdom of the Great King? Jesus. Well, the answer is yes, it's both.

But if you're reading in the way that the Spirit teaches us to read with eyes upon God, with eyes upon Christ, We see that, the primary story is what Christ is doing, isn't it? He gave us in the introduction of the book Jerusalem chapters 1 through 7. All Judy and Samaria chapter 8.

Well, not even to the end of chapter 8 And then to the ends of the earth. If you know where you are in the outline, then you know what? You're supposed to see and hear and read. This is where the cross came from, isn't it? Why did Jesus die children?

Yes. He died because wicked devils and men hated him. The refused to men, refused to believe that he was. God demons believed that he was God and hated him for it and took their opportunity because of the incarnation to attack him, But was the hatred of wicked devils. And men, The reason that the cross happened, I mean, it's true to some extent, isn't it?

Didn't, they hate, Jesus. Didn't they want to kill him? But you don't think that when you think of why did Jesus die on the cross. Why did Jesus die on the cross? Because God, loved sinners and God was saving, sinners, and God had decided from before time. Began that he would redeem for himself to be His children.

Exactly. Made like Jesus by the last day in the last day and full of His Spirit and knowing Him as their father. That he was gonna do that. And indeed, That's one of the reasons for the first sin and so that it would be redeemed, sinners and that Christ would be glorified as God Himself equal and glory with the Father, the same and substance but equal in glory.

And so, when you say where did the cross come from? You say the purpose of a God, who is determined to love and redeem? Sinners, and you come to Acts chapter 8. If you say, where did this persecution come from and you can give answers, like, we have just given mining the data of the book of Acts.

But the story of history is not the human events as much as it is, what the God who has determined to save for his glory was doing in those human events. The persecution comes from where the cross came from a purpose to adopt, and redeem and apply redemption that had begun in God himself.

So that everything he's done in all of history, has served that as we see through the different phases of his redemption through which Stephen actually walked us through to a large extent in last week's passage. Now I ask you a question is at any different with the persecutions of churches today is the plan of God on hold is the age of the pouring out of his Holy Spirit and the gathering in through, giving people life and faith in Jesus Christ and making them righteous before.

God and adopted as his children Is that on? Hold in any of the persecutions of today is not everything that happens. Aiming at that. He said, where is the persecution in China coming from her? Where is the persecution in Nigeria coming from? Or where is the persecution in Europe and America, and Canada and Australia coming from Well, you can give earthly answers and you won't be wrong in the instrumental reasons.

But if that's your primary answer, you will be missing the points. Won't you? It's because God is applying the redemption that Jesus has accomplished. You see Christian history as we've been learning the last couple weeks and Sabbath school understands everything in the present, it Every moment in light of the beginning and the end God who created so that he could glorify himself as Redeemer in history and especially in the last day.

So great persecution arose because the elective Jerusalem or largely gathered in because the remaining wicked hated Christ in, in his church and his church rather and a great persecution. Also arose in order to send the gospel to where it was going next. This happened geographically in our passage and we see this They were all scattered.

God is determined to apply the redemption of Christ to all for whom he died. And we've seen that, it's phase two of of Christ's plan that he stated in Acts chapter 1 and verse 8. But we can also look at church history. And we can see different times that persecution, arose, or churches, died.

And God took his gospel somewhere else. There's seven letters to churches in, what's called Asia, Minor Turkey. At the beginning of the book of Revelation which is very weird for us when we study Revelation, light of the last hundred years or so of odd teaching about it in the church because it's a book that is introduced seven times by God, The book introduces itself, it tells you its purpose itself.

It tells you what the application's supposed to be itself and yet for our purposes here, We note that the that place where once were seven of the most well-known churches, There are no more even. Just one of those cities even largely exists as a metropolis anymore. God takes his gospel, different places.

At one point North Africa, for a couple of hundred years was the most Christian place in the world and there were things that happened from Egypt across to what we would call Morocco now that that God is responding to. But one of the ways in which he decided to take the gospel to the next place that it was going was with Muslim invasion and persecution.

The Lord still does that with Islam. Islam has been a mighty weapon in the hand of God, by an unwitting devil, who presses and squeezes his people and sends the gospel to different places. Of course, Westerners are so stupid that 1500 years of consistent history. Can't teach us. What Islam is, But God, spreads the gospel, sends the gospel, where it's going next?

Sometimes persecution sends the gospel to another generation. He doesn't just produce missions. He produces revival and reformation. So it's one of the reasons why we are the associate. Reformed Presbyterian Church in the 17th century in Europe. There was a further reformation and it took in Scotland and it didn't take in the Netherlands, you know, one of the reasons there's a lot of reasons why we're not going to do a ton of history.

Right now, One of the reasons was persecution in Scotland In the Netherlands. The the church was enmeshed with the civil government And there were aspects of Christianity and purity of worship and doctrine and vitality of Christian, Christian life as not just an outward form, but an inward reality, that that were missed In Scotland.

There was a king in England who Well there's also a guess that times in the 17th century depending on what decade you're in King and Scotland, and he wanted to rule that church. And so, he squeezed and he squeezed with all of his earthly authority and has murdering power and God used it to squeeze the impurity out of his church And the further Reformation that fell by the wayside in.

The Netherlands was actually infused into the church, It took by means of the persecution that they face Parents, who had two lightly held on to biblical Christianity. When push came to solve the Lord sanctified, not just them, but their children. And this devotion to the right doctrine, and the right way of worshiping, God that we have here.

Now, not necessarily to the extent that they did, But as in part because a persecution, Some of you have heard or maybe even said these things that we're about to find out who the real Christians are, when it actually becomes costly and we find out who's willing to pay the price.

Well, there's something else that happens when you pay the price for something Often in God's mercy and providence. He makes you more willing to take good care of it. You see God can use persecution to squeeze the nominalism out of our generations Parents who are happy just to go back and forth to church.

Maybe once on Sunday, maybe twice on Sunday, go through the motions, you finish, eating suppers open the Bible, you read a chapter, you close the Bible, it's done, you have rules of the house, but there's no life and there's no vitality, there's not the lighting in the Lord throughout his day.

There's there, there's not children seeing mom and dad as wrecked sinners and rebuilt rejoiceers who live a life out of thankful loving joy in the Lord. Jesus Christ where worship is not just opening and closing the book, but it's when the, the whole family come together. And remember again for the thousandth time who we were without the grace of God, and what grace has been that has taken us from the last time, we sat down together to this time and that tongs out of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because God is determined to bind. A people to himself. He said what does covenant theology and almost nobody knows what it is. We're trying to fix that a little bit by a little bit, especially in the Roman series. But covenant theology is what children learn Morning and evening every day as they are bound to a living, God was saved them by the blood of Christ.

And before it's ever a reality in their heart, they experience what it's like to be at a table where it's a reality and dead and mom's heart. You know, what happens to a lot of churches that have covenant theology. It becomes a superficial external form. And then at least one season God, used persecution, to squeeze all that externality off.

So that six and eight. And 10 year old girls, His family has had been murdered or who had been pulled from their families who were left yet alive. Could give a better answer for who Jesus is and what he wants from her and why she would never give that in order to be spared a little pain for a little while or to be get get a little pleasure of property for a little while.

How could I give up Christ to his so much to me? We say, oh, I wish we could have that for our children again. Well, use the Lord's means that he's prescribed and if we have lost, the means that he has prescribed may he be merciful enough and has providence to send the persecution that will send us back to.

Those means Sometimes he saves not just in different places and across different generations, bringing revival and reformation. Sometimes he even saves the persecutors, Some of you love this. When you read church history and martyrs whom God actually uses to convert those who are oppressing them and torturing them and killing them.

Well I think we have the first such instance here, don't we? Right at the beginning of our passage. Now Saul was consenting to his death and then verse 3 as first Saul he made havoc of the church entering every house and dragging off men and women committing them to prison.

You say who is this? Wicked soul is the Apostle. Paul, he wrote more of the books in that Bible in your lap than any other one, man. He is the one whom God appointed as apostle, to the Gentiles 11 apostles for 10, 11 apostles, for all of the Jews, and one apostle, for all of the Gentiles.

If you, if you like to despise the Jews, remember God gave them 11 apostles. He gave all the rest of us, just the one but that's the one in this passage. He wasn't converted by. This was he his converted later, but how this would stick in his mind and his heart, as he calls himself, the chief of sinners and as he becomes the Apostle through whom the Spirit.

So beautifully opens up to us. The completeness of the grace of God. Was he not being prepared to be so repentant and so amazed by the grace of God, even to a sinner such as he so that he could offer that grace to anyone. There's no one whom he would ever consider unsaveable and this is what you love about.

Those biographies that you've read of Corrie ten Boom. And others, the God used their persecuting others even as an instrument to save them those oppressors. In fact, there's a delicious there are a couple delicious things there in verse 3, dragging off men and women Saul is an equal opportunity persecutor and then in Samaria next week's passage the the baptizing of men and women, God is an equal opportunity.

Covenant sign, applicator now. But I love this entering every house. He's the anti apostle at this point, right? Because we've read about Acts 5:42 and the apostles. Ministering the Word of God, not just in the temple, but in every house. Well, now you get from five verse 42, to 8 verse 3 and here's Saul making havoc of the church entering every house.

He's the anti apostle and then won't be too long will be hearing about him in Acts 20 verse 20, telling the Ephesian elders. How they remember how he was with them, not just in public but from house to house withholding nothing that was profitable. You see God announcing his grace to save even persecutors.

So if this, these are the kinds of things that God does by persecution, let me ask you children. Now that you know what's happening When persecution against God and his church arises, Should it make you more timid or more bold? If you know that this is something that God historically and biblically uses to expand his church, to apply the salvation of Jesus, to send it through different to different places to purify His religion in places that are established and even to bring persecutors themselves to the faith, so that they might be used by God, if that is, what is happening.

Should we be more timid or more bold when persecution arises You see what a good biblical doctrine of the sovereignty of God and history to carry out his plan of redemption can do for you? And do you see again, the marvelous love of the Lord to this congregation? Who does things like overlap.

The Sabbath school teaching the last couple of weeks to where we happen to be in the book of Acts live your moment. Oh, what an awful. 21st century. Twitter. Sounding thing Live. Your moment not under the persecution of those who hate Christ but under the goodness of Him who overrules their persecuting The second place what persecution sent, First of all, it sent the apostolic message.

Those who were scattered went everywhere, preaching the word. It's the apostles were not scattered up in verse 1, we see, but their message was scattered eventually. The 12 meant many places, but when he says you will be my witnesses in chapter 1 verse 8, and then we see in chapter 8 verse 1, this curiosity that the apostles didn't go and Peter and John only come down and next week's passage once they hear that the gospel has gone, we get an understanding of what he means.

When he says, you will be my witnesses in Judea, or sorry in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria into the ends of the earth. And then you, you get the the mockers and it's going to the both the liver come to America. Well, Apostles did go. Lots of places Timothy when as far as India.

Paul went as far as a Spain, and and other things, But even when it went to Judia and Samaria, it was the apostolic message. It was the preaching of the apostles, not the persons of the apostles, at least not at first. So listen to the Bible, before we come to it with, with our really silly and Rebellious questions about oh, did they really go?

Yes, The word has gone out to the ends of the earth just as there is no language. That does not hear the Son proclaim the glory of God in the heavens. According to the Psalm, There is no place on earth that will not have the message of the gospel of God.

Go, Every language will get it. That's why there's such a thing as a Wycliffe. That's why the great missionary enterprise of the last 500 years was spurred by the Reformation because suddenly we recaptured the God, who saves and the gospel by which he does that saving We have a promise that we're laying old of as we go everywhere and translate into every language.

The apostolic message Notice that the apostolic message is the message of Christ And when everywhere preaching, the word, verse 4 and we know what the word is by now, because we have eight chapters worth of Apostolic preaching. So, we're not surprised that the word in verse 4 is the parallel to the Christ in verse 5, therefore, those whose were scattered everywhere, scattered went everywhere, preaching, the word.

And then in verse 5, then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them and we'll hear a little bit more next week. Lord willing that Philip preached things concerning the kingdom of God. Not just the kingdom of David that it's got himself who came as the Son of David, and the name of Jesus Christ, that the Christ has not just a man, but Yahwe himself who saves and so, so much more of the content there in verse 12, but it doesn't surprise us coming out of verse 4 and verse 5 because I went to preaching the word that is the apostolic message.

And what was the apostolic message from day one? In Pentecost, that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. The Jesus is Jehovah, who pours, at his spirit, Jesus is Jehovah upon whose name. Everyone who calls will be saved, and this would have been amazing in Samaria. Wouldn't it because in Samaria, they had the first five books.

They didn't really believe in all those other books that they considered, you know, those two Judean books, those Jewish books. We Samaritans, we follow Moses. We don't use temples made by hands like those Jews. We have a mountain because we Samaritans are not like those Jews and all of their late liberal stuff.

The Samaritans view the Jesus liberals. Samaritans, were the original conservatives Nothing after Moses but Moses has prophesied a prophet? Who would come from among them and they would listen to him and we just heard about that last week with Stephen. The Samaritans were hostile. This is one of the reasons why the conversion of that city near that.

Well, in John chapter 4 is so amazing because The Jews didn't think the gospel was forced. Samaritans and God the Son. When he came to save, He engaged a Samaritan woman at a well. And then, well, the Jews were largely rejecting Christ in the gospel of John. This entire city comes to Christ and more has happened since then and we'll get to that again with Simon Megax next week.

But that's part of the miracle here. Yes, the Apostolic message goes to today, in Sumeria, but also the apostolic power, It will take them out of chronological order at least or literary order in our passage Hearing and seeing the miracles which he did for Unscreen spirits crying with a loud voice came out of many who were possessed in many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.

Philip was doing the kinds of signs that, by the time, the New Testament was done, being written even during the writing of the New Testament had already started to diminish. Hebrews chapter 2 describes God, testifying by miracles and signs to the authenticity of the apostolic message as something that is pretty much past tense at that point.

But before they had a bunch of New Testament books, before you could test the authenticity of the apostolic message. By comparing it to the apostolic writings. There were apostolic signs Apostles hadn't gone into Judea and Samaria. But what did The casting out of demons and the raising up a paralytics?

And so it's not just apostolic message that goes out, but Apostolic power hearing and seeing miracles, You say, that's why I want to see miracles in my church. That's what I want to see demons cast out. That's why I want to see cripples healed, But that's not the first or greatest demonstration of Pentecostal power.

Even in the passage before us verse 6 and the multitudes with one accord heard, the things spoken by Philip. Do you see that in Samaria over against what's happening in Jerusalem in verse 1? Pentecostal power, comes by cutting men, to the heart. Like he did at Pentecost to give them repentance and faith.

What happened when they were cut to the heart by Steven's answer at his trial, was a repentance and faith in a multitude of conversion. No, They were cut to the heart and they murdered him. And so even in Acts chapter 8, God the Holy Spirit to saying yes, there were authenticating signs.

That authenticated the apostolic message, but the great Pentecostal power came by giving faith in Jesus Christ by the hearing of the word. And so when we pray for repentance and faith from the preaching, in our pulpits, we're praying for Pentecostal power when we pray that our children would not only hear that, but every time we come and we gather to God in the means that he has provided in our family worship that they would come to faith.

We're praying for Pentecostal power because Christ is the sender of his word and his Spirit, You don't have to have the original apostles there for Apostolic message. You don't have to have the original apostles there for Apostolic power. You need the spirit of the Word of Christ for the message, and the spirit of Christ for the power.

And that is what you have For. As many as are led by this, the Spirit of God. These are the sons of God. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His Every single believer with a Bible. Has everything that is necessary for the exercise of apostolic power and the preaching of the apostolic message and those who pretend to honor the Holy Spirit by coming up with authenticating signs, whose time had passed by Hebrews chapter 2 or not.

Honoring the spirit or honoring the Word, their denying, the apostolic power of Jesus Christ. In the ordinary means of His grace by which the Spirit has now been working for almost 2,000 more years. And when you have the apostolic message and its responded to with apostolic power, what is it that God gives verse 8, apostolic joy and there was great joy and that city There are very few arrangements of Acts chapter 8 that stop after verse 8 and you'll see all the overlap Lord willing helping me preach and you hear next week but we're stopping here.

Not just because this was more than enough for when week, But because this is the third grade in the passage. We are to see the greatness of this joy over against the greatness of the persecution verse 1 and the greatness of the lamentation in verse 2. You see this is the age in which there is still sin.

There's still sickness, there is still Satan and there is still sorrow. Not. So in the new heavens in the new earth, right? Sin sickness. Satan sorrow gone from the new heavens and the new earth. Those things can go to the lake of fire prepared for the devil in his angels and into, which all who do not believe in.

Jesus Christ will be cast. But even now, when there are still those things, there is still joy, the great persecution arise, Yes it did. But what did the Lord send by means of that persecution. The apostolic message with the apostolic power. And we should really say, Christ's message there, his apostles Christ's message, Christ's power producing Christ's joy.

And other times when we have great grief, absolutely, if you don't grieve over your remaining sin and if you don't grieve over the remaining sin in the church. And if you don't grieve over, what's done to believers in this world? Then you are not those blessed, two more who will be comforted and yet even in the age when we mourn with those who mourn we are to rejoice in the Lord.

Always great persecution. Great lamentation. Great. Joy, apostolic joy. So it's not wrong. When there's persecution to say, oh Lord, how great is the hatred and the wickedness that is being done And it's not wrong. When there's persecution and loss to say, oh Lord. How great is our grief. But with those things, we must have that greater joy say.

Oh Lord. How great is our joy that you are still saving that you are still using, even this to save, Even this to send your gospel to save others, who were like, who are like, what I was. And to give them the joy of Jesus Christ. You see? This doesn't just happen on a large scale in the raging of the nations.

That brings the joy of Christ and His people on the last day when Jesus appears. It happens. Also, in moments, we are in an age in which grief continues, the martyrs under the altar in the in the fifth seal and Revelation chapter 6, how long? Oh Lord, they're grieving and he says until the number of your brothers is complete.

We are in an age in which grief is mixed with joy. Now, these three abide faith, hope and love Faith. Why? Because there are still some things unseen and we must have the evidence of it. Hope why because there are still, some things expected that we don't yet possess.

But there's coming a day when faith will be sight and hope will be realized and love will be fully satisfied. There will no longer be raging nations. There will no longer be believing tears. There will be only fully satisfied joy in the Lord Jesus Christ and that's what all the stuff in the world and all the stuff in your life.

There's accomplishing for everyone for whom Jesus has died. So you see When the persecution arrives, The focus is not so much on the end of one era of God. Saving were the grief that comes with that persecution but on the beginning of the next thing that God is doing and the joy that it will bring to all those who come to faith in Jesus Christ.

A man. Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you that.

You have given us these broad brush strokes in history and your word. And then this zoomed in detail and this particular portion of your word, so that we might have a better understanding of your sovereign rule and the work of your redemption in history. And how to think about and respond to what you are doing even in times of rising persecution, we're grateful to you that even in days where we can see some of it in our own place and time you have caused us to come under the preaching of a portion of your word that addresses, the very thing.

So blessed to us your word, make your spirit. We pray grant your spirit to make your word penetrate, our hearts that we would be emboldened, that we would be gladdened even under persecution and even in the midst of grief for, we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.