

Acts 8.

v.1 **Now Saul was consenting to his death:** In Philippians 3:6, Paul said of his life before Jesus that he was so zealous in his religious faith that he persecuted the church. Saul's supervision of the execution of Stephen was just one example of this persecution.

Consenting describes Saul's attitude, but the English translation probably isn't strong enough. The idea behind the ancient Greek word *suneudokeo* is "to approve, to be pleased with." Some people are reluctant persecutors, but Saul wasn't one of these; he took *pleasure* in attacking Christians.

Paul – later came to deeply regret this persecution of the church. He later wrote, *For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God (1 Corinthians 15:9)*.

Acts 26:11 described what perhaps Paul regretted most: *And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities. Paul may have suffered many sleepless nights thinking about those whom he compelled...to blaspheme.*

- the persecution from Satan to stop growth only served to spread the gospel- Saul in his fervor to stop the church actually became instrumental in spreading the gospel

- they had been told to go but they hadn't, so this was necessary, if God tells you to go somewhere or do something- OBEY

- This was the first persecution of the Christians as a whole. Before, the apostles had been arrested and beaten and persecuted; here, every believer was threatened with violence and perhaps death.

- On Sunday, January 8, 1956, on the shores of a lonely river deep in the jungles of Ecuador, natives murdered five missionaries who came to tell about Jesus. To many, this death seemed like a senseless tragedy. Many could only see five young missionaries who had their careers cut short or the five widows and fatherless children. But God did an amazing work through those five men, even in their deaths, and the blessing still reverberates through people like Elisabeth Elliot – one of the five women whose husband was murdered.

Scattered: there are two different words in the ancient Greek language for the idea of "scattered." One has the idea of scattering in the sense of making something disappear, like scattering someone's ashes. The other word has the idea of scattering in the sense of planting or sowing seeds. This is the ancient Greek word used here.

ii. In Acts 1:8 Jesus clearly told His followers to look beyond Jerusalem and bring the gospel to Judea, Samaria, and the whole world. But to this point, Jesus' followers had not done this.

v.2 carried Stephen- only time this Greek word is used in the New Testament, spoke of bringing in the harvest

-**Made great lamentation over him:** Since Jewish law prohibited open mourning for someone that had been executed, Luke's record suggests that these **devout men** publicly repented of Stephen's murder.

v.3-4 He made havoc: This uses an ancient Greek word that could refer to an army destroying a city or a wild animal tearing at its meat. He viciously attacked Christians, including women. "The tense of that verb, whether 'ravage' or 'destroy,' is imperfect, which means that he ravaged it and kept on ravaging it." (Boice)

v.4-8. the focus was not a social gospel but the Gospel. Most people don't come to Jesus through a professional preacher or an evangelist; they come to Jesus through people just like us.

"In every church where there is really the power of the Spirit of God, the Lord will cause it to be spread abroad, more or less. He never means that a church should be like a nut shut up in a shell; nor like ointment enclosed in a box. The precious perfume of the gospel must be poured forth to sweeten the air." (Spurgeon)

v.5- 600 years before this, the Assyrians conquered this area of northern Israel and deported all the wealthy and middle-class Jews from the area. Then they moved in a pagan population from afar. These pagans intermarried with the lowest classes of remaining Jews in northern Israel, and from these people came the Samaritans.

- Philip **preached Christ to them.** We find that Philip is pushed beyond his capabilities, he is stretched

v.7-8 the gospel comes in power

1Thess 1:2-5 (NKJV) 2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake

v.9-13 we can't look simply to the signs and wonders

Simon is not just a magician or sorcery, but someone who claimed to have a special anointing and power from God, v. 10 says it is the power of God personified

- Signs and wonders can be deceitful, we need to be guided by the Word and seeing if teachings match up with Scripture

v.12-13 power of the Word

v.14-17 baptism of the Holy Spirit is a subsequent experience

v.18-20 people still try to buy the things of God

- *Acts 3:6-silver and gold I do not have, but I do have I give you, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk*

- *Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira*

v.21 Are we holding back God's power and anointing because our hearts are not right? *Jas 4:2-3 (NKJV) 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Are we ready to minister?

Are we willing to minister?

Are we obedient to minister?

Are our hearts right to minister?