

Acts 8:4

Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

When you read today's verse, in a sense it is the results of what the church was going through. So, what were they going through? Let's go back a few verses and find out.

† **Acts 8:1-3** *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. 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.*

We could also go back to chapter 7 in Acts, because that is where Stephen was stoned for sharing the gospel and he is known as the first martyr after Jesus rose from the dead. And as we just read that "*Saul was consenting to his death.*" And if you are familiar with the bible, then you know that Saul, became Paul, and met Jesus on the road and was converted from a Christian hater to a Christian teacher.

But think about all that was going on when you read verses 1-3, and think if it were to happen in your church today, how we would respond? Honestly, we would probably be a bunch of cry babies complaining how we are being wronged and not liked and that they should not treat us this way and wah-wah-wah, blah-blah-blah. We seem to forget that Jesus said:

† **John 15:20** *Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.*

Jesus also said.

† **Luke 21:12-13** *But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.*

With the key verse being verse 13 "*But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony.*"

But the early church was not like how we would be, and instead of complaining about what they were going through, they used it as an opportunity to share the gospel. "*Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.*"

When we go through trials and storms and are rejected and made fun of for the gospel's sake (not because we are jerks), we have one of two ways we can respond. We can either run with our tails between our legs, whine and complain to everyone about it, post on social media about all the

wrong that is happening to us. Or we can bring glory to God through it as we share with others what God is doing in our lives as we go through this.

It reminds me of a story of a man who had lost his job and was out of work for over seven months. When he first got laid off, he just told people that God would do a great thing during this time that he had off from work, and that God would use him during that time off for God's glory. Eventually this man got a job, and the pastor told the congregation that he had gotten another job. The pastor also reminded the congregation that this man did not complain or whine nor did he try to have a pity party, nor did he ask anyone for help or for money, and that some probably didn't even know he was out of work for that long because he didn't whine and complain about it, he just went about serving in the church just like he did when he had a job. And this was told to the congregation, not to say how great of a man this was, but rather how great this man's GOD is, and to encourage others.

So as the storms or trials happen in your life, ask God to help you use them to be an encouragement to others. Who knows, a Saul may hear about it and turn into a Paul. Or someone who was ready to just give up found encouragement in it to keep on walking with and serving the Lord.

- † **Proverbs 10:21 (NLT2)** *The words of the godly encourage many, but fools are destroyed by their lack of common sense.*
- † **Colossians 4:8 (MSG)** *I've sent him to you so that you would know how things are with us, and so he could encourage you in your faith.*
- † **1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT2)** *So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.*