

ACTS: To the Ends of the Earth

Study 16: The Paradox of Persecution

READ Acts 8:1-8 and **LISTEN** to the [sermon](#) by Pastor Craig.

The martyrdom of Stephen set off a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem. Instead of harming the church, persecution actually served the mission of God by scattering believers to those places Christ commanded His disciples to take the gospel. As they went they proclaimed and lived out the gospel, resulting in much joy being experienced in cities previously unreached with the gospel.

Big idea: Persecution serves the great passion of God to reveal His glory to the ends of the earth through a gospel proclaiming and gospel living people.

Questions:

1. What do you think it means to be persecuted for the faith?

Describe a time when you were persecuted for the faith. In what ways was God's mission advanced or hindered by persecution in the first century?

2. A paradox is something that seems self-contradictory, but in reality expresses something quite true. Read Acts 1:8 and 8:1-8; how might persecution and the mission of God form a kind of paradox and why is this significant?
3. Read the following passages and describe the intensity of Saul's persecution against the church: Acts 8:3; 26:9-11; Gal 1:13. From 1 Tim 1:12-14, describe the type of forgiveness Christ offers the repentant sinner.

How might you answer someone who says their sins are too great to be forgiven?

4. Since the apostles stayed in Jerusalem (v.1), who then was it that primarily carried the gospel beyond Jerusalem? What did they do as they went (v. 4)?

How might this encourage and challenge you as you consider that God has purposefully placed you in your particular home, work, or neighbourhood?

5. Who was Philip (Acts 6:5) and what did he do in Samaria? What was the response of those he ministered amongst (v. 6)?
6. **Challenge question:** Considering the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, what is significant about Philip, a Jewish convert, taking the gospel to Samaria? See Rom 1:16.
7. The result of Philip ministering in Samaria was that "there was much joy in that city" (v. 8). In what way have you found joy from receiving the gospel and why? Try to list as many things as possible with a corresponding verse.

STOP AND PRAY:

Adore: Christ for His completed redemptive work and continual rule over everything

Thank: the Lord for His continual presence while we are suffering for faithfulness

Pray: for the grace, conviction and resolve to stand for Jesus each day