

023 - Acts 8:1-4 Everywhere Telling the Good News
originally preached 2012-05-20
revisited 2022-06-05 after NHBC family camp

INTRODUCTION

We have heard the good news! There is forgiveness from God! [expound]

Many have not heard the good news, or have *heard* but not *believed*.

So, we keep up the good newsing. Week in and week out in the congregations, we preach the good news. In our homes, we make the good news known to the members of our households many times. In our private conversations with other people, we take every opportunity to tell the good news to anyone who is interested.

When times are good, and we are in a state of peace, prosperity, and stability, good newsing the word about Jesus takes some effort, but is relatively easy. But when hard times come, when we have trouble in our lives, the temptation comes to focus on those troubles, and forget about telling the good news. We have seen that when troubles come, a congregation might stop assembling; or a preacher might stop preaching the good news of Jesus in favor of something more popular; or parents might concentrate all their energy on their problems, and leave off evangelizing their children; or an individual might think and speak much more about his troubles than about the good news.

Look with me at the history of the primitive or early church at Jerusalem, in the first generation. We'll see how severe troubles came upon them, and how they responded.

TEXT

Acts 8:1-4 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.

BODY

I. The Believers of the First Generation in Jerusalem Were Faithful, But Still Had Trouble (1b)

A. Think of how these people were living

1. they were worshiping God, including much prayer in the name of Christ
2. they were devoting themselves to the apostles' teachings about Christ
3. they were selling their possessions to provide for the poor

B. Then see how they were treated

1. one was killed (1a)
2. there was a great persecution
3. some were dragged from their homes and put in prison (3)

C. Notice what they had to do (1c): they had to flee and were scattered

D. APPLICATION: You know the same thing might happen to you and to me

1. you live as a Christian in your job, and you get fired
2. you live as a Christian in your family, and your family rejects you
3. you live as a Christian in your church, and you are asked to leave
4. you live as a Christian in your society, and you have trouble with the authorities

E. APPLICATION: When these kinds of things happen, you might even find yourself encountering the same difficulties this early church in Jerusalem encountered

1. you might you have to flee
2. you may have to leave your town, selling or losing your possessions
3. you may have to leave your fellow church members, whom you love
4. even in this church, which is a very small sample of all the Christian church in the world, this has happened to some people in the past, and is happening to others even now
5. among our close friends and relatives, we know of many others who have experienced the same thing

F. APPLICATION: Often we mistakenly believe that if we live devoted Christian lives, loving the Savior and loving each other, we should expect only or mostly pleasant things to happen to us; that events will go how we would like for them to go. But, of course, many times things don't go the way we would like for them to go!

1. When things go wrong, we are tempted to some sinful thoughts:
 - a. maybe we shouldn't be preaching the way we are preaching
 - b. maybe we shouldn't be living the way we are living
 - c. maybe we should do more like what everyone else does
 - d. the person who is having bad things happen to him must not have God's approval; if he were as righteous as I am, things would go better for him
2. But recall that Stephen and these other believers in this early church in Jerusalem had been living exemplary lives, and were full of the Holy Spirit; they were worshiping, praying, sharing, fellowshiping, loving, studying, learning. They were doing everything as God had commanded; they had God's approval!

The believers of the first generation in Jerusalem were faithful, but still had trouble

II. The Trouble That the Lord Was Bringing On His Beloved Church Was for the Spread of the Gospel (1c)

A. See that because of this persecution, the believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria; recall what the Lord Jesus had commanded the church:

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

B. This was God's plan, and Jesus' command to the church; yet up until that time, the church had borne witness to Jesus Christ only in Jerusalem; now, it is by persecution that the Lord sends the church to all Judea and Samaria

1. recall also that when Paul was put in prison unjustly, two different times, in both cases God used his imprisonment as a way to reach sinners with the gospel
 - a. in Philippi, the jailer and his family
 - b. in Rome, all of the imperial guard and the emperor's household
2. recall that when Paul was shipwrecked, God used that shipwreck as the means to take the gospel to the people of the island of Malta
3. consider what Paul wrote to the Galatians, that it was because of an illness that he first came to be there and preach to them (Gal 4:13)

C. If in God's providence we have trouble in our lives, we must understand that God does what He does not primarily for our comfort, but for the working out of His plans through us

D. APPLICATION: So, let us expect that God's providence will be working toward the spread of the good news of Jesus Christ, not merely our comfort; and let us accept this way of God's, and rejoice in Him, not be bitter toward Him about it

The believers of the first generation in Jerusalem were faithful, but still had trouble

The trouble that the Lord was bringing on His beloved church was for the spread of the gospel

III. Corrupt Religious and Government Leaders Showed That They Can Be Cruel When They Trouble the Church (3)

- A. We have seen the officials of the church, its apostles and a deacon, arrested in public while engaged in their duties; they were first threatened, then beaten, then killed; this is certainly bad enough
- B. But now we see that Christ's enemies are breaking into people's homes and dragging them out, and not only the men but also the women
- C. These imprisoned are punished, so that they might deny Jesus Christ
- D. Understand in this cruelty the fury of our great accuser, the devil, satan
 - 1. the bible tells us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of darkness in high places
 - 2. he hates God, hates His creation, and especially hates His church
 - 3. he prowls around like a lion, seeking whom he may devour
 - 4. yet Jesus Christ has the mastery over him; he is a defeated foe; any harm he manages to do to Christ's church is only what God in wisdom has already decreed from before time began
 - 5. when I was treated cruelly by people, I had a very hard time for about two years coming to grips with what they had done; what they had done, the way they had done it, was so wicked, so cruel, that I was perplexed by it
- E. Understand also in Saul's cruelty the evil person you would be if left to yourself
 - 1. If your party had power, and the government authorized you to use any force against them, what would you do?
 - 2. Wouldn't you, if left to yourself, be just such a persecutor?
 - 3. Doesn't your flesh flash angry at your fellow man, and wish him harm?
 - 4. Does a person possessed of such evil, wicked inclinations need forgiveness of this sin from God?

The believers of the first generation in Jerusalem were faithful, but still had trouble
The trouble that the Lord was bringing on His beloved church was for the spread of the gospel
Corrupt religious and government leaders showed that they can be cruel when they trouble the church

IV. The Early Church's Response to Trouble Was Evangelism (4)

A. The believers were unwillingly scattered; they had to flee Jerusalem, at great inconvenience and sorrow and expense and loss

B. But wherever they went, they kept up the preaching of the word

1. *euaggelizomenoi ton logon* good newsing of the word

2.

C. APPLICATION: You feel the temptation, don't you? Whenever you have been mistreated by someone, and it has caused you trouble; someone will ask you how you got into the difficult fix you're in; your temptation, the natural urge of sin in your flesh will be to rail against the ones who did this to you. Take instruction and encouragement here: whenever you speak to people that you deal with because of your troubles, tell the good news of the word of God about Jesus Christ

e.g. Q: Why did you have to leave your home in Jerusalem? What did those people do to you down there? A: I have good news for you! There is forgiveness of sins before God in Jesus Christ, who has been killed, but has risen from the dead!

D. APPLICATION: To the extent that we are already scattered from Jerusalem, we must evangelize where we have come. If we are scattered by any unplanned circumstances, we must evangelize where we have to go.

CONCLUSION

The believers of the first generation in Jerusalem were faithful, but still had trouble

The trouble that the Lord was bringing on His beloved church was for the spread of the gospel

Corrupt religious and government leaders showed that they can be cruel when they trouble the church

The early church's response to trouble was evangelism

Having that good example of the Lord's work in them, let us do the same. Whatever troubles come upon us in our generation, let us respond to them by evangelizing, telling the good news of Jesus Christ, knowing that our Lord is working through our troubles to spread that good news to those He is saving.

Rita - Prelude

Rita - Trinity 87 "Holy, Holy, Holy" - Andrew lead

Allison - Trinity 217 "Look, Ye Saints"

Allison - Trinity 724 "Only Trust Him" - Alex lead

Stephen - Call to Worship and Opening Prayer - Isaiah 6:1-3

Willie - Scripture Reading - 1 Chronicles 16:23-29

Thad - Congregational Prayer

Jeff - Benediction - Matthew 28:18-19

Scripture Reading: Zechariah 2:1-13

Confession of Sin: Psalm 51:12-15

Sermon: “Everywhere Preaching the Word” Acts 8:1-5

Benediction: Revelation 14:6-7

V. When men preach, it must be Christ they preach (5)

kayrooso to herald, as an official spokesman

But wherever they went, their main subject of conversation was not complaint against the corrupt government of Jerusalem, but telling the good news, the word of God about Jesus Christ

euaggelizomenoi ton logon good newsing of the word

this is not “preaching” in the sense of a man chosen by the church and set apart for the work of preaching, as Philip in verse 5

this is the telling of the good news that is appropriate for every believer

Verse 1b

Poole:

especially such as were teachers amongst them (besides the apostles) were forced to remove from Jerusalem, and by this means did publish the gospel in all places whither they came; so that what was intended for the hinderance, God did overrule towards the furtherance, of the gospel;

Verse 4 “went everywhere preaching the word”

euaggelizomenoi ton logon

RWP:

Evangelizing or gospelizing the word (the truth about Christ)

In Act_11:19 Luke explains more fully the extent of the labours of these new preachers of the gospel. They were emergency preachers, not ordained clergymen, but men stirred to activity by the zeal of Saul against them.

Barnes:

Greek: “evangelizing,” or announcing the good news of the message of mercy, or the Word of God. This is not the usual word which is rendered “preach,” but it means simply announcing the good news of salvation. There is no evidence, nor is there any probability, that all these persons were “ordained” to preach. They were manifestly common Christians who were scattered by the persecution; and the meaning is, that they communicated to their fellow-men in conversation wherever they met them, and probably in the synagogues, where all Jews had a right to speak, the glad tidings that the Messiah had come. It is not said that they set themselves up for public teachers, or that they administered baptism, or that they founded churches, but they proclaimed everywhere the news that a Saviour had come. Their hearts were full of it. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and they made the truth known to “all” whom they met.

Gill:

which was good news and glad tidings, of peace, pardon, righteousness and salvation, by Jesus Christ.

Calvin:

[not quoting] Christians must not be made silent or despondent by persecution, or the need to flee, or exile, but should see these things as opportunity for evangelism

MacLaren:

These fugitives were not officials, nor were they commissioned by the Apostles to preach. Without any special command or position, they followed the instincts of believing hearts, and, as they carried their faith with them, they spoke of it wherever they found themselves. A Christian will be impelled to speak of Christ if his personal hold of Him is vital. He should need no ecclesiastical authorisation for that. It is riot every believer’s duty to get into a pulpit, but it is his duty to ‘preach Christ.’

evangelizo (G2097):

M.Renihan: “legitimate activity of all Christians” “talking about the life, death, and

resurrection of Jesus”

JRY: John the Baptist; Jesus; a leper prohibited from doing so; the twelve; man possessed of legion of demons, commissioned by Jesus to do so;

kayrooso (G2784):

M. Renihan: to announce or proclaim as a herald, with authority, in an official capacity; by “men appointed to office”

kayroogma (G2782) as Mat 12:41

proclamation, esp. of the gospel; the content of the gospel itself;

M. Renihan: “the content”

Savastio:

Philip preached Jesus

Mark Chanski:

“ravaging” suggests a beast-like cruelty
this opposition is really from Satan

Hodgins:

“preach” is not the right translation; they didn’t preach in an official capacity; “they were constantly speaking of Christ”

Philip seems to have been an Evangelist, capital E, “the apostles’ representative”

Confession, chapter 26

11. _____ Although it be incumbent on the bishops or pastors of the churches, to be instant in preaching the word, by way of office, yet the work of preaching the word is not so peculiarly confined to them but that others also gifted and fitted by the Holy Spirit for it, and approved and called by the church, may and ought to perform it.

([Acts 11:19-21](#); [1 Peter 4:10, 11](#))

JRY:

v. 1a If we live full of the Holy Spirit, worship in a high degree of purity, care for each other’s needs in the church, give convincing proofs of the message of Jesus Christ, and defend ourselves convincingly against accusers, the result might be that we are all horribly persecuted.

v. 1b God’s providence is aimed at working out His plan in us

v. 3 The church’s enemies can resort to extremes of cruelty

Do you see in Saul the evil person you would be if left to yourself?

If your party had power, and the government authorized you to use any force against them, what would you do?

v. 4 The church’s reaction to persecution should be the proclaiming of the word.

v. 5 When men preach, it must be Christ they preach

To the extent that we are already scattered from Jerusalem, we must evangelize where we have come.

If we are scattered by any unplanned circumstances, we must evangelize where we have to go.

Acts 22:4-5 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, (5) as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

Acts 26:9-11 "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10) And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. (11) And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.