



Adult Life Groups & Care Groups

Shively Baptist Church | Louisville, KY

Life Group Leaders Handout For Sunday July 20th, 2014

Planned Schedule:

- 0900-0910 – Meet & Greet in Life Groups
- 0910-0915 – Focus (TBD)
- 0915-0930 – Teaching Time (Life Group Leaders)
- 0930-1015 – Care Group Time (Care Group Leaders)



God's Church on the Move "Adversity and Growth – Part 1"

Acts 8:1b-4

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

(Comments below based heavily on a commentary by Bob Deffinbaugh)

What a remarkable chain of events.

- The problem of the neglected Hellenistic widows was solved by the appointment of seven men. Prominent among them are Stephen and Philip.
- Stephen's ministry exploded and expanded beyond overseeing the care of widows to the powerful proclamation of the gospel, accompanied with signs and wonders.
- This ministry led to opposition, which ultimately led to his execution.
- And Stephen's death snowballed the animosity into a massive reaction toward the entire church in Jerusalem.
- This intense persecution which broke out against the church caused the saints to scatter. All but the apostles fled.

The result was a massive missionary expansion,

- without any missions committee
- without any "support,"
- and (remarkably) without the leadership and presence of the apostles.

Acts 1:8 was being fulfilled in Acts 8:1, but not in the way we would have expected.

- The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 was given in the form of a command.
- Acts 1:8 was given in the form of a promise.



- In reality, the evangelism of the Samaritans and the Gentiles did not take place because men actively sought to obey the command of our Lord, expressed in the Great Commission, but rather providentially, brought about by the Sovereign Head of the Church, through persecution.
- The saints went about, sharing the gospel, not so much out of obedience as out of necessity.

Persecution brought about proclamation.

According to Luke's account, the persecution of the church in Jerusalem which brought about the Samaritan revival was, in large measure, the result of one key individual—Saul.

- No other names are mentioned.
- And, after the conversion of Saul, the persecution ceases, and a new era of peace commenced (Acts 9:31).
- I take it that Saul was therefore one of the driving forces behind the persecution of the church in Jerusalem.

The significance of this must not be overlooked.

- As the ringleader of the opposition to the gospel and the persecution of the church in Jerusalem, Saul was instrumental in the first “missions thrust” of the church. Granted, this was not his intent, but it was the result.
- How often we tend to think of the evangelization of the world of that day as the result of Paul's “preaching,” rather than as a result of Saul's “persecution.”
- Both are true.
 - The sovereign God can just as easily employ the intense opposition of an unbeliever to spread the gospel as He can the faithful preaching of one of His saints.
 - A sovereign God does not need the obedience of men to achieve His purposes, but how blessed it is when men obey, becoming a willing participant in God's plans and purposes!

Acts 8:4 - *Those who had been **scattered preached** the word wherever they went.*

- scattered – “diasparentes” - “Being-thru-sown”
- preached – “euaggelizomenoi” – “Well messaging” – “Good news-ing” - Evangelize