

Acts 8:1-8

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[0 : 00] Even the New Testament, this evening, the book of Acts. Acts chapter 8.

Leading up to this, y'all, y'all heard me, up now, you know, I like to kind of catch you up. Where we'll be teaching or preaching from.

Leading up to Acts chapter 7, or Acts chapter 8. The first seven chapters of Acts, which begins pretty much with the ascension of Jesus Christ.

And Acts chapter 2, we have the true, blue birth of the church in Acts chapter 2. Now if you'd like, you can go back to Jesus Christ and the disciples being the birth of the church.

It's the real birth of the church, took place in Acts chapter 2 when the Holy Spirit came in the upper room, amongst about 120 believers in Jesus Christ.

[1 : 03] And this was the true birth of the church. Acts chapter 3, you see Peter and John going up to the temple, and Peter heals a lame man there at the temple.

And we can go on and on, but all this is leading up to Acts chapter 8. And immediately preceding Acts chapter 8 is, of course, Acts chapter 7.

We see beginning, really, in Acts chapter 6, this man, Stephen, who is known as the first martyr of the church, delivering a scathing message, a scathing sermon to the hierarchy of the Jews.

And he goes through basically the entirety of the history of Israel in this sermon. He just kind of condenses it all in a real tight-knut shield.

And he then tells those Jews that are there listening. He says, you're no different than those that persecuted the other prophets.

[2 : 10] You're no different than they were. You're no different than your fathers were when they prosecuted the prophets of the Old Testament. And, of course, they didn't like that. So they had, they stoned Stephen.

And if you're familiar at all with the Bible, you know that account. They took Stephen out, they stoned him, and Stephen looked up. He saw the son of man. He saw Jesus cross standing at the right hand of the father.

And he asked him, he prayed, and he said, may not this charge to their account, may not this charge to them, that they're stoning me to death here.

So this is what leads up to Acts chapter 8. We're just going to read the first few verses, about the first eight verses of Acts chapter 8 here. So with that brief introduction there, we'll begin at Acts chapter 8, beginning at verse 1.

It says, And Saul was consenting unto his death, and at that time there was a great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

[3 : 20] And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women, committed them to, and committed them to, I'm sorry, let me re-read that verse.

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women, committed them to prison. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad, when everywhere preaching the word, then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

The people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unpleamed spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them, and many taken with pauses, and that were lain were healed, and there was great joy in that city.

We'll stop our reading right there here in Acts chapter 8, but if we go back to verse 1, it begins with, and Saul was consenting unto his death.

This Saul, you read at the end of Acts chapter 7, he held the garments of those people who were stoning Stephen, who were stoning the first martyr off Christianity, the first martyr of the believers in Christ.

[4 : 43] Saul stood there, Saul, whom in Acts chapter 13 would let her be known as Paul, and we see in Acts chapter 13 where Saul not became Paul, Saul was still the same man as far as the human being is concerned, but he's again to be called Paul, just a few chapters from where we're at now, but this was the same man, but it says, and Saul was consenting unto his death.

And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, so Saul was consenting to the death of Stephen here. Stephen, as I've already said, had delivered this scathing sermon to the Jews that were present there.

They didn't like what they heard, so they killed this man, Stephen, and Saul was consenting. He approved of the death of Stephen, Saul, this man who was a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

He was a Jew of the Jew, the Bible tells us, he was of the tribe of Benjamin, the Bible tells us there was no man that kept the law, this was Paul's own words.

He said there was no man that kept the law like he did, this man who depended upon the law, this man who had his faith in the law. He had salvation tied up in the law that Almighty God had given over in the Old Testament, and folks there's people in the church houses now, there's people all over this world, whether they go to church or whether they don't, they're tying salvation up in the law.

[6 : 15] They're mixing the law and grace, and folks we cannot do that. Salvation is not of the law, condemnation is of the law. Salvation is of God, salvation is a gift of grace of God.

Salvation is a pure gift of God, and it is pure grace that comes from God. There is nothing that we can do to earn salvation, there is nothing we can do to be reconciled back to the Father who has cast us off, there is nothing that we can do to be redeemed.

There is no law that we can keep that can get us back into a right relationship with Almighty God, but this man Saul who was concerning unto the death of Stephen, he thought that he was doing good by God.

He thought that he was doing God a favor by holding the garments of those who were stoning this Christian man named Stephen to death. He thought that he was doing well, he thought that maybe he was getting a check mark up in heaven.

He thought that God was smiling down upon his actions, but how much wrong, how much more wrong could he have been in his assumption because grace had come at this time, Jesus Christ had been crucified, he had been buried, he had been resurrected and the beginning of the book of Acts he had ascended unto the Father.

[7 : 36] Grace had come into the picture and I praise God for the grace that he shows us fallen man. I praise God for the redemption that we have, not in our own works, not in anything that we can do but we were depending upon ourselves to keep the law.

Everybody in here under the sound of my voice would still be headed on the road straight to hell but because of the grace of God I don't depend upon me, I don't depend upon my good deeds, I depend upon the good work that Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross that carried it 2,000 years ago and that's all that I can depend on. Hallelujah!

This man Saul, he was consenting under the death of Stephen, says at that time there was great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles and it says that Saul he wreaked havoc upon the church and he went in and he was hailing the men and women, the Christians and he was imprisoning them. We all know this account of Saul, if we've been in the Bible any amount of time we all know that he hated the church, he persecuted the church of God, he persecuted the believers in Jesus Christ he sought to imprison them, he sought to kill them, he sought to have them arrested, he sought to do harm to the plan that Almighty God had in place since the beginning of time and folks I'm glad to report to you that there is nothing that can stop the plan of Almighty God this man Saul didn't do it, the devil himself cannot do it, every army of demons that's out there doesn't have the power to stop the plan of God for salvation for falling men and I say praise God for that, no one can stop God's plan as they Saul tried and Saul wasn't the only one, there were others that we read about in scriptures that tried to put an end to the plan of God tried to put an end to the salvation Satan himself has tried, the demons have tried, human beings have tried

I'm sure influenced by Satan and influenced by those demons before nothing can stop the plan of Almighty God we read in verse 4, therefore they were scattered abroad, when they were scattered abroad, when everywhere, preaching the word folks persecution may come our way dear Christian friend, persecution may very well come our way, it's already here in the states not like we see it overseas, not like we read about it in the Bible but there is persecution right here in the United States of America but praise God, I can tell you I have not yet suffered under blood as the writer to the Hebrew says I have not yet suffered under blood, I have not been truly persecuted as some of the people in the Bible such as Stephen was persecuted I haven't been persecuted in that matter but praise God if it does come down to that matter if it does come to a disbursement of the Christians we should do just like these Christians did here that were at Jerusalem and when we're scattered abroad, when we're scattered, when we're dispersed across the counties and across the states and maybe across the countries, wherever we go we need to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ we need to tell about the salvation that He has brought in our lives we need to tell the world and be witnesses of the life that has entered into our lives hallelujah, therefore they that were scattered abroad, when everywhere, when everywhere, not hiding, not cowering in fear not wondering if they were going to be killed the very next step they took or the next day that they woke up not wondering if someone was going to bust in the doors of whatever dwelling they were staying in and arrest them it says they went everywhere preaching the gospel, preaching the Word of God hallelujah, then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them Philip goes down to Samaria and preaches Christ to these Samaritans, these people who were half-breeds according to the Jews these people who were half-even according to the Jews, they were part Gentile and they were part Jews but Philip goes down into this land of Samaria, he doesn't hold back, could you imagine for just one moment could you imagine if the high priests and the Pharisees and the Sadducees had accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ could you imagine how hard it would have been to get these Christians out of Jerusalem to get them out into the other countries and down into the other cities, could you imagine how long they would have stayed there in Jerusalem and then the law truly would have been mixed up with the gospel and you would have had to have included circumcision like some of the Jews tried to do, you would have had to have included the law, you would have had to have included this and that because the Jews would have mixed this stuff in with it but God, he dispersed these people he dispersed the believers we read in the scripture, they were dispersed because of persecution but it was all in the plan of Almighty God to have them dispersed, to go to the different areas to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and preach the Word of God than anybody whether they were Jew, whether they were Gentile, or whether they were Samaritan anybody could hear the gospel and Hallelujah, they could be saved [13 : 40] Hallelujah, we need to keep that in our minds, I always had a room full of preachers right now and preachers need to keep in their minds, God can save anybody, it don't matter skin color it doesn't matter their background, it doesn't matter how rich they are, it doesn't matter how poor they are it don't matter if they can put a quarter in the coffer at the church or if they can put a hundred dollar bill in every service in the coffer at the church, it doesn't matter God can save anybody and then it's God's will to save everybody and the Father said it is not His will that any should perish but they all should come to repentance this man Philip went down into the city of Samaria, the Samaritans and the Jews we know they hated one another the Jews, hated Samaritans and the Samaritans, hated the Jews but nevertheless the gospel with and God preached the Word of God made it to Samaria a way of this man Philip the gospel was preached and the Bible tells us in verse 6 that there was great joy in that city praise God, amen and the joy wasn't because of the man Philip, the joy wasn't because of the miracles that he wrote yes he wrote miracles while he was there, it says in verse 6 and the people with one accord gave heed under those things which Philip's spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did for unclean spirits crying with loud voice came out of many that were possessed with them and many taken with pauses and that were lain were healed and there was great joy in that city, what was the cause of the joy though?

you have to go back up to verse 5, he preached Christ under them then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ under them yes folks, yes they witnessed the miracles, whatever miracles that Philip wrote I don't know if this is an exhaustive list that we have here in these verses or not but whatever miracles that God empowered Philip to work there yes they fell witness to these miracles but it all began with Philip preaching Christ to them this is the reason for the great joy hey folks, there are people that followed Jesus around for three years they followed him around, they

saw him work the miracles they saw him open the blind eyes, they saw him unstop the deaf ears, they saw him hittle the lame they saw him cure the leprosy, they saw all of these miracles that Jesus trusted and some of them followed because they wanted to see the next miracle some of them followed because they were simply fed among the four of the five thousand some of them followed for their own specific reasons but some of them, hey some of them followed him because they truly believe that this was the promised Messiah that this was the Son of God, that this was the one that was promised that would deliver the Jews out of their bondage this was the promised one, this was the Son of David, this was the root out of dry ground this was the branch that was promised in the Old Testament some people actually believe this and I am one of them praise the Lord not everybody is going to believe that, what's a miracle that we can work in front of people they might believe, can I call down fire in the windstorm out of heaven could I call a man that's dead back to life could I heal a blind man, could I heal someone of some disease what was the greatest miracle?

we can show people, after we've told them about Christ it's the proof cross to them in your life it's the proof cross, if it's somebody you've known for years if it's somebody, I'll tell you right now, folks that I'm doing in high school they can't believe the change that cross made in me folks I knew on up through my twenties they can't believe the change that cross made in me it wasn't me that made that change though it was Jesus Christ that did that that is the testimony that I had that Jesus Christ saved my soul but me just telling them that hey, some people won't prove that and that proof is in the life that I live that proof is in the way that I live that proof is in the way that I walk it's in the way that I talk it's in the way that I act it is everything that this Bible says that I should be this Bible teaches us how we should walk how we should talk, how we should act how we should act as true Christians how we should live a life that glorifies all mighty God that magnifies the name of Jesus Christ if I tell somebody that I got saved but I don't have the life to prove it chances are I've never received anything we've got to be careful with these things be careful, search yourself, search your soul, search your own heart see if you're really out of the faith these people here though they believed what Philip came preaching they believed the cross they came preaching and there was great joy in that city folks, what began all of this persecution began all of this persecution began at all we can go back to Acts chapter 3 once again you go back to Acts chapter 3 you see where Peter and John go up to the temple the lame men is killed all this crowd gathers around and Peter doesn't use that for an opportunity to have people pat him on the back and people to congratulate him and people to woo over him and talk about how wonderful he is

Peter saw that as an opportunity to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and because Peter used that opportunity when it was presented to him there were thousands of people as per the scripture that got saved that day there were thousands of Jews that were there at the temple and the Bible teaches that they heard Peter and they believed hey when somebody comes our way and somebody says boy you've really changed you've been a change in your life you need to tell them it wasn't me that made this change if it was up to me I would still be on the broad path I would still be going to that wide gate that leads to destruction but Almighty God he saved my soul he lifted me up out of the Maori clay set my feet upon the solid ground and he established my goings it's never us it is not us that does this do we have to put some effort into it?

of course we do I go stand here and tell you that we don't but it is God ultimately it is God that makes the change in our life there was joy there was great joy in this city because of a message that one man came and preached the message of Jesus Christ but it all started with persecution and folks that brings me great comfort it brings me great comfort knowing that no matter what comes my way and it may not be persecution it may not be your family hating you it may not be your co-workers hating you it may not be friends turning their backs on you it could be any number of things that could discourage a Christian in the way yes we're talking about persecution here the folks it doesn't matter what it is it could be disease it could be financial problems it could be health problems it could be all kinds of different things it could be relationship problems any of these things can be a discouragement in the heart and in the life of a believer but it brings me great joy and great peace to know that Almighty God no matter what storm comes in my direction no matter what waves crash into the boat no matter what comes my way

[21 : 58] Almighty God is more than capable and he is more than able to take what I see as a bad thing and to turn it into a good thing for his righteousness and for his glory it can take the negativity in your life and use it for his good I ain't saying that we need to praise God for every bad thing that comes our way praise God for what he can do with it though praise God for what he can do with

these bad things that come our way with these negative things that come our way praise God before it even happens praise God say God I know you're going to deliver me because you've delivered me in the past you delivered me once from this very same situation and I know because you did it then you can do it now praise God for these things if persecution comes your way hey God Almighty can do great and wonderful things with persecution in your life He can do great and wonderful and mighty things with anything negative that comes in your life no matter what it is

God Almighty can do these things and you don't have to be anybody with any clout you don't have to be anybody that has any name we read in the book of Hebrews chapter 11 we read of the faith of Abraham and the faith of Sarah and the faith of Moses we read of the faith of David and the faith of Jephthah and the faith of Samson and we read of the faith of all these big names that are in the scriptures but if you go down just a little bit further you read about some others that suffered trials of mocking they suffered trials of scourging they suffered they were slain with the sword they were sons of thunder and God said that the world was not worthy of them and none of their names are listed none of them I'm part of the others they heard me but nobody knows who I am and I'm fine with that I'm fine with that but God can still use me God can still use you don't think that you have to be like King David don't think that you got to be like Queen Esther don't think that you got to be a Ruth or a Boaz you don't have to be any of these people don't think that you got to be a Moses

God can use you he used Saul did he not he used Saul in a way that Saul would have never dreamed that he was going to be used just a chapter after this we read about the conversion of Saul we read about Saul he was on that road to Damascus he was carrying the letters to the Christians arrested and Jesus Christ came down Jesus Christ came down on the scene and he had Saul as his Saul-Saul while persecutors found me and this was the beginning of the conversion of this man that was consenting to the death of the first murder of the Christian church God can use anyone and God can save anyone how do you say Saul, he can save anybody think he can save me, I promise you he can save anybody but don't think just because you feel like nobody that God can't use you and don't think just because you felt like nobody that God won't use you so Saul is not the only one we find like that we read about that chapter 13 just a little while ago and I was talking about how God can use health for his glory and for his honor he can also use the work salvation in the life of another person you read that chapter 13 sometime you'll read about a man

Khalilul, he was a sorcerer his other name was Bar-Jesus being son of Jesus he was a deceiver Paul calls him out in this in this deceptiveness there was another man who was a console of the town his name was Sergio Sergio, I'm sorry Sergio God was going to work on Sergio God had all intentions of saving Sergio but this other man, this sorcerer he was going to get in the way and Paul called him out on it so what happens, Paul calls blindness down on this sorcerer and says that he went about seeking someone to hold his, someone to guide him by the hand he went about seeking someone that tells me that he was coming to people but nobody would help him nobody would help him as he was asking people hey help me, guide me along guide me along this road guide me where I need to go guide me to the local shop guide me home, guide me somewhere he says he was seeking for someone to help him

God used that to get to Sergio's Sergio's witnessed this he witnessed this sorcerer be blinded and he believed the gospel that Paul preached so folks, I tell you this story now I understand that the sorcerer he wasn't a believer, I get that but God can use your illness God can use your, the negativity in your life God can use your injuries He can use your cancer He can use your headaches He can use all these things to get to someone else He uses these things for his Lord and you might say my goodness, that don't make very good sense to me, hey folks it don't make good sense to me that a perfect man came here and lived a perfect life and died a death on a tree for me that don't make any sense at all that's just I'm comprehensible to me that someone who had never committed sin hung on a tree in my place so if that don't make sense to me hey folks, it seems like it would make even less sense that God would use something of mine, some disease that I might have some negative attribute of mine to get to someone else he might use you though to get to someone else if you're suffering or if you're being persecuted if you're suffering with disease or with sickness or with any kind of trouble in your life you glorify God in those times you glorify God in your times of trouble and people around you will witness these things and God can use that to work salvation in someone's heart if you've been testified of Jesus Christ to someone someone in your family a boyfriend, girlfriend, wife husband, children, grandchildren they see you with little faith what are they going to think of you?

[28 : 51] folks, I'll tell you right now I don't have nearly as much faith as I feel like I should have I feel like I'm beliefs among as it's said so many times by so many people I feel like I have very little faith but I got enough faith to where God saved me I got enough faith in Almighty God and in Christ Jesus my Lord that God saved my unworthy soul but if we're testifying in the goodness of God and we're testifying in the mercy of God to lost people if we're testifying in the grace of God to lost people and yet we're acting like we're not getting any grace from God what kind of picture does that paint for them?

what kind of picture does that give them? folks, I'll tell you a wonderful picture of the grace of God is there at the end of Acts chapter 7 what I was talking about just a little while ago where Stephen praising the God says, laying off this sin to their charges these men that were getting ready to murder him he says, laying off this sin to their charge if that wasn't a picture of the grace of God I don't know what is in scripture most the grace of God is a picture of a man hanging on a cross that had never committed sin a man that was cursed hanging there on a tree a man who knew no sin became sin for you that is a picture of the grace of God him bleeding and suffering and being beaten and having his beard plucked out of his cheeks and taking the beating and the suffering and the tree and the crucifixion and the mocking and the scourging for you that is nothing but the pure undefiled grace of God that's the greatest picture of the grace of God is the suffering that Christ put up with for you in your state and in my state that is the grace of God so when you feel like you're not getting any grace if you're born again, you've got plenty of it you've got plenty of the grace of God I've got a good news, there's even more it's limitless the grace of God is limitless and I can say that with the authority in scripture because God is limitless everything about God y'all have heard me say that time and time again everything about God is eternal and that includes his grace that includes his mercy that includes his forgiveness that includes his long-suffering praise God everything about God is eternal if it comes from God, it is eternal that includes grace and mercy it also includes wrath and fury all of these things are attributes of God and all of them are eternal folks, no matter where you go and no matter the cause for you going there whether you're going on vacation whether you're going for a little rest and relaxation somewhere or whether you're like these people here in Acts chapter 8 and you've been dispersed because the persecution was so heavy no matter where you are like we kind of added to this picture if you've got health problems, you wind up at the hospital you wind up at a clinic, you wind up wherever no matter where you are tell people about Christ tell people about Christ

God can use any situation in your life on his glory whether it be negative or whether it be positive and Christians, folks, we are the worst we'll brag on God all day long when things are going right we'll brag on God and say, I gotta raise this week I'm buying a new car next week this happened, that happened and I'm just tickled to death I'll brag on God all day long over these things I ain't saying you wake up in the morning with the worst headache that you've had in your life and suddenly you praise God but praise Him for waking you up that morning He didn't have to do so praise Him for the other things you may not have to praise Him you may not feel the need to praise Him for the problems and your life will praise Him that sooner or later that headache is going to be healed sooner or later that sickness will be healed sooner or later everything that's negative everything that's sickly everything that's un-comely in your life is promised by the words of the Scripture to disappear some day after a while

Hallelujah! Praise God for that day even though it ain't coming yet praise God for it preach Christ where you go and there'll be joy in those cities there'll be joy in those countries there'll be joy in those hospitals and those clinics maybe even in your own house and the house of extended family preach Christ and then crucify Him that's where the joy is at the cross can cross the loan God bless you all, that's the message Thank you