

PROGRESS IN PERSECUTION

ACTS 8:1-8

Woodland Park Church of Christ

17 February 2019

BACKDROP

- ✘ Church (with its start in Jerusalem) is experiencing phenomenal growth
 - + **3,000** added on day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41);
 - + **5,000 men** (Acts 4:4);
 - + Believers were increasingly added to the Lord, **multitudes of both men and women** ... (Acts 5:14).

But not everyone was thrilled about the impact and success of the Lord's church.

NOTICE THE VISCERAL REACTION (HATE)

- ✘ Chief priests and elders: *But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.* Acts 4:17 (Response: Acts 4:29-30 – prayer for boldness)
- ✘ Apostles imprisoned by high priest and Sadducees. Acts 5:17-18
- ✘ Apostles beaten and commanded again not to speak in Jesus' name. Acts 5:40
- ✘ Stephen's stoning. Acts 7:54-60

After Stephen delivers a resounding message that succinctly covers the history of Israel and ends with an “indictment” of the Jews for their complicity in the betrayal and murder of the “Just One” (Christ), he is killed. **Acts 7**

. . . At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were scattered throughout the regions of Samaria and Judea . . . Those that were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.
Acts 8:1, 4

1. GOD'S PLAN WILL BE FULFILLED

Recall what the Lord told the apostles in their brief encounter with Him in Acts 1

*. . . and you shall be witnesses to Me **in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.** Acts 1:8*



Tyre

SYRIA

PHOENICIA

Caesarea

Philippi

GAULANITIS

Ptolemais

Capernaum

Bethsaida

Cana

GALILEE

Sea of Galilee

Nazareth

BATANEA

Caesarea

DECAPOLIS

SAMARIA

Jordan River

Joppa

PEREA

Bethel

JUDEA

Jericho

Jerusalem

Bethany

Bethlehem

SHKELON

Salt Sea

IDUMEA

NABATEA

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- ✘ God knows how to flip the script.
 - ✘ Other may intend things for evil against us and seek to bury us.
 - ✘ It all could play a role in God's ultimate plan!
 - + See Genesis 50:19-20; John 19:33-34
 - ✘ He makes all things work to good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. **Romans 8:28**

2. OFT TIMES WE HAVE TO BE GOADED

- ✘ From all appearances, the disciples were comfortable and content in Jerusalem.

*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, **but they had all things in common.** And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. **Nor was there anyone among them who lacked;** for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and **they distributed to each as anyone had need.** Acts 4:32-35*

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- ✘ But the plan was never for the Word to be confined exclusively to Jerusalem
 - ✘ Persecution proved an effective impetus.
 - ✘ Many times, we become satisfied, comfortable and complacent.
 - ✘ We lose drive and motivation.
 - ✘ Growth becomes stagnant.
 - ✘ We need a little something to get us going –to be where we should.

God understands a little something about human nature, and our response to stimuli.

After all . . . He made us!

Often, we have to be pushed to move beyond our COMFORT ZONE. Even with that many of us move kicking, screaming, hollering & complaining!

Nothing great happens in comfort zones.

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- ✘ Joseph in Egypt.
 - ✘ Moses choosing to suffer affliction than to enjoy pleasures of sin for a season.
 - ✘ Three Hebrew young men in fiery furnace.
 - ✘ Daniel in lions' den.
 - ✘ David defeating Goliath.
 - ✘ On the run, Elijah confronted and destroyed the prophets of Baal.
 - ✘ The SAVIOR on the cross!

THE 2% MINDSET

2% OF THE POPULATION

GOING FOR
YOUR DREAMS

EMBRACING THE UNKNOWN

CONFIDENCE

98% OF THE
POPULATION

EXCITEMENT

EXPLORING
NEW THINGS

BEING LIKE EVERYONE ELSE

LIKING CHANGE

CHOOSING
HAPPINESS

INSECURE

SURVIVING

LIVING WITHOUT
LIMITS

YOUR COMFORT ZONE

FEAR

JUST GETTING BY

ABUNDANCE

A DULL LIFE

PLAY IT SAFE

ACT IN SPITE
OF FEAR

PROCRASTINATION

REGRET

SETTLING FOR LESS

FULFILLMENT

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF LIFE

IS GOD TALKING TO ME?

- ✘ Is there something you know you need to be doing? But because it's nudging you beyond the bounds of comfort and convenience, you're hesitant and delay acting?
 - + Offer greater service and commitment to the Lord;
 - + Do more to make my marriage better;
 - + Be more active in my children's lives;
 - + Pour into the lives of others;
 - + Exercise more discipline in ordering my life.

INVICTUS (2nd & 4th frames)

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

William E. Henley

RECEIVE IT TODAY!

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized . . . and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:41-42

LORD'S INVITATION EXTENDED TO ALL

✘ Be added to the Lord's body

Hear the gospel (**Acts 15:7**)

Believe (**Acts 15:7; Hebrews 11:6**)

Repent (**Acts 2:38**)

Confess (**Acts 8:36**)

Be baptized for the remission of sin
(**Acts 2:38**) or

LORD'S INVITATION (CONT'D)

- ✘ Be reconciled unto the Lord (I John 1:8-9);
or
- ✘ Desire prayer (James 5:16).

May GOD'S richest blessings be yours!