

The Church in Many Places

Acts 8:1-4

This is an excellent New Year's text because it tells how a catastrophe became an opportunity. We rarely see in the beginning of a tragedy what God intends to do in the end.

Trouble in Jerusalem

Acts 7 records Stephen's brave speech to the Jewish ruling council. By showing them their guilt in the death of Christ, he enraged them to the point that they stoned him to death. On the very day he died, terrible persecution broke out against the church.

The Crucial "Therefore"

The word "scattered" translates a Greek word made up of two smaller words, one meaning "with" or "through," and the other meaning "to sow seeds." Recall the parable of the Seed and the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23). The sower sows the seeds and they fall in many places and on different kinds of soil. Acts 8 is that parable in action.

A Negative Into a Positive

God used persecution from the world to scatter the church into the world so that the church could bless the world with the Good News of Jesus. We see from this how God turned a negative into a positive.

Great Joy in the City

Philip traveled to a city in Samaria and began to preach Jesus. And as a result, verse 8 says there was "great joy in the city." What starts with persecution and death ends in great joy. The same gospel that brings persecution also brings joy—and the joy lasts far longer than the persecution.

God Was Behind All of It

It's time for all of us to move beyond the ordinary, the safe, the comfortable, and the convenient. We must remember that when the early church was scattered because of persecution they preached the Word wherever they went. God was behind all of it, working for their good and for His glory. As a result, multitudes heard the gospel and were saved.

A New Year is a year of new opportunities.