

Acts 8:1-8 (Advance Part 1)
Shaking Us Out of Our Comfort Zones

Easter - Wonderful time

A) Commitments - Blessed day - Acts 8

B) New to CV - been studying the book of Acts since September - Bring you up to speed real quick

C) After the Resurrection - Jesus meets with his disciples and gives them what is known as the great commission

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*” Amen. Matthew 28:21-22

But before they were to go out - Jesus told them to go into Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon

A) The Purpose: To empower them for this work He was calling them to

B) In other words - they were not going to be able to fulfill the MISSION that Jesus was **calling them to in their own strength**

C) They were going to need a supernatural empowering from God - Acts 1:8

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.”

We saw how this outpouring occurred on the day of Pentecost Acts 2

A) The church was born - 120 in an upper room - 3,000 saved

B) By the time that we get to Acts chapter 8 - we are about 3-4 yrs into this journey and the church is over 10K strong

C) But the church is primarily only in Jerusalem - the rest of the mission - Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth has not yet been fulfilled

Today we are beginning a 3 weeks Series within our Series in Acts - Called -- Advance -

A) How God moves and leads his people

B) Today Part 1 we are going to see the first way that God leads us -

1) **He will shake us out of our comfort zones**

C) God knows that we all CRAVE COMFORT

D) Choice: Spend the day at a Spa or Digging a ditch - Spa

1) Choice between a day in the dentist chair or a day at the beach in a beach chair - picking the beach

E) God knows our tendency to crave comfort -

So sometimes to get us where he wants us to be he will allow us to become very uncomfortable

A) Like when the mother bird pushes her chicks out of the nest - **because she knows it is the only way - learn to fly.**

B) God will do the same thing in our lives - He will allow our lives to be shaken- stirred up -

C) He uses the stirring to get us where he wants us to go

D) That is what we see happening here in Acts 8 – A New Wave of Persecution

At that time {Context: The time of Stephen's death}

A) We saw in Ch.6 God raised up a young man named Stephen - **full of faith and the Holy Spirit -**

B) God was using him - The religious leaders came against him - they ended up stoning him to death -

C) v.58 they laid their coats and the feet - Saul
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.

Circle that word persecution:

A)It means - *to systematically organize a program to oppress and harass people.*

B)But notice the Holy Spirit who is inspiring Dr. Luke to write the book of Acts

1)He doesn't just call it a persecution - He calls it a **great persecution** - MEGA

C)THE IDEA - THE HEAT IS BEING TURNED UP A NOTCH.

Here is what is interesting about this Mega persecution:

A)Prior to this we have seen that the persecution - that has come in the book of Acts has come primarily from the Sadducees

B)The Sadducees were the Liberal religious group in Israel - Liberal religiously and politically

C)But Saul of Tarsus is a Pharisee -

1)the Pharisees were the more conservative group of religious leaders

D)But the thing that we are noting here in Acts 8 is the Sadducees are fully behind the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus.

Here we see at this time they join forces in their opposition of the church.

A)Hell has a way of uniting even enemies

B)on the common ground of hatred for Jesus and hatred for the Gospel. Don't forget that.

So Saul of Tarsus is leading the Charge 3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

A)The word Havoc V. 3 was used to describe a wild boar tearing a victim's body apart.

B)It describes sadistic cruelty! *Saul was mauling and mangling the church like a wild beast*".

C)See in Chapter 9 Saul of Tarsus gets radically saved - Becomes Paul the Apostle

D)Paul later in Acts 22 sharing his testimony described himself as having been a graceless, vindictive man:

"I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison" (Acts 22:4).

E)If Paul was alive today - He would be called a Terrorist

To the Galatians he explained: 1:13 "For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it." Galatians 1:13

A)Don't miss this - Saul was not content to stop at the death of Stephen.

B)He would not be content until he had killed Christianity in its infancy.

C)As far as Saul was concerned Christianity was like a horrible cancer that had been detected and needed to be wiped out before it could spread

Imagine tomorrow morning you logon to whatever your source of news on the internet is; and you read these headlines -

A)"Congress passes a bill... and they commission a modern day Saul.... and the president signing it."

B)Imagine that Permission from the highest authorities in the land to ravage/ maul Christians.

C)Imagine being forcibly dragged from your home or your church and thrown into prison! - INTENSE

Now at first glance in reading this we might be prone to think - how sad. How could God ALLOW this happen?

A)Fair statement -SEEN SATAN WAS radically opposed to the church - he wanted to destroy the church

B)He still is trying to do that today.

C)Our World is becoming more and more hostile toward the things of God.

1)More and more resistant of the GOSPEL and of Christians

C) And God is allowing it to happen > - Why?
1) Why did God allow this MEGA persecution to come upon the church?

Joseph: The Devil meant it for evil – but God would use it for good to save many!

A) The same thing is happening here in Acts 8 - and I believe in our world today.

B) Think back into the Great commission:
Matthew 28

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

C) But up to this point the church has not gone into the world -

1) they haven't even gone to Judea or Samaria

D) The work of the Gospel has not moved beyond the city of Jerusalem -

1) But that is about to change and God is going to use this persecution to do it

But now God was going to use – this Shaking to accomplish His will with His Church and in the world.

V.4 "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word."

A) The word scattered comes from a particular Greek word which means to disperse. Diaspora –

B) The word literally means to sow – as in sowing seed or scattering seed.

1) Long ago farms used to farm by scattering seed by hand.

The word also means to Broadcast – We get our idea of radio and TV broadcast from that same idea of the farmer scattering seed. – Throwing it abroad!

A) Basics of Life – radio broadcast – Throwing seed

How many of you listen KWAVE OR KRTM

B) So that is the word being used here – Sowing Broadcast

C) **Because of the Persecution** – the Christians were being sown or broadcast into the world.

1) God was planting them in new places!

D) They went everywhere preaching the gospel.

So God sends them out with a Message! – Why?

A) God has a heart for the lost!

"The Lord is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

B) God's way of reaching lost people is to use People!

1) Could have sent an Angel

C) **Reminder: God doesn't exist for us - we exist for him**

1) He has chosen us to be his instruments in bringing the message of Jesus to a lost world.

D) So there was a purpose in this!

E) Now here is the Take away from us

When God allows our lives to be Shaken –

A) The question we need to ask is not Why is this happening-

B) But rather – Lord what are you wanting to do in my life and through my life at this time.

C) Lord you are allowing my world to be Shaken - and I know there is a reason.

1) What are you wanting to do IN ME - THROUGH ME - WITH ME!

Understand this: The church was much more effective scattered than gathered

A) The church could not bless the world as long as it stayed together in one place.

B) God had moved radically in Jerusalem - many had come to faith in Christ -

1) but - But they could not reach the world if they stayed in Jerusalem.

C) What about Antioch? What about Athens? What about Alexandria? What about Rome?

1) What about the great cities of the East?

D) What about the unknown cities of Africa?

1) What about Paris and London and New Delhi and Singapore and NYC Los Angeles

E)What about San Diego - Vista, OCSD, Fallbrook

So in order to get his people to take the gospel all over the world God allowed them to be shaken out of their comfort zones.

A)I love this story: During the reign of Oliver Cromwell, the British government began to run low on silver to make coins.

B)SO Cromwell sent his men on an investigation of the local cathedral to see if they could find any precious metal there.

C)After investigating, they reported, “The only silver we could find is in the statues of the saints standing in the corners.”

D)To which the Cromwell replied, “*Good! We’ll melt down the saints and put them into circulation!*”

What a great picture!

A)God wanted to get His Word into Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world so badly

B)That by way of persecution He melted the saints and put them into circulation.

C)See God, so loved the world, and the LOST PEOPLE IN IT -

1)HE decided to seed the world with His people.

And God is still doing that today- And if need be, He’ll melt us;

A)He’ll put the heat on us; He’ll shake us up; - So he scatter us.

B)Has God allowed your life to be SHAKEN recently? -

1)Job loss - School moved - parents divorced - Diagnosis - a broken relationship – ECONOMY

C)Can I encourage you today: Stop asking why? And start asking what?

D)Can I encourage you to invite God to shake you up today? -

E)Do you want to be used in a greater way by God?

1)3 things to consider today in closing

#1 Be willing to go anywhere! 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.

A)Samaria – place that the Jews avoided like the plague. **Half breeds – prejudice!**

B)By going to Samaria it showed that Philip was willing to lay aside his natural prejudices and preconceived ideas about the Samaritans

C)He was open to being God’s instrument in going to a group of people that would normally avoid.

D)Samaria was on God’s Radar - We need to understand that

Question: Where is your Samaria? -

A)Who are the Samaritans in your life - the group of people you tend to avoid

B)God loves them - God has a heart for them –

C)God wants to save them and he might just want to use you to do it.

D)The best place that you could ever be in your life is being in the center of God’s will.

E)You want to be used by God - #1 Are you willing to go anywhere?

#2 You need to Pray for a Burden Greg Laurie declares – **Evangelism begins with a Burden**

“We can talk endlessly about the need for evangelism. And we can create programs designed to mobilize our church with resources and tools. But it is of no consequence if the body of Christ doesn’t care. We’ve got to start on the inside and work it out.”

A)Charles Spurgeon declared – “Winners of Souls must first be weepers of Souls.”

"The Holy Spirit will move them [the lost] by first moving you. If you can rest without their being saved, they will rest too."

B) Be willing to go anywhere - #2 Pray for a burden

#3 Realize People are struggling with these 4 things - Billy Graham

1st People are Spiritually empty!

People are living with a VOID - God shaped hole that can only be filled by Jesus

A) People try to fill that void with all sorts of things - Relationships - Success -

B) Some things bring a temporary Satisfaction but it never last -

C) Like Mick Jagger Sings - Can't get no Satisfaction- I try and I try.....

That is the universal struggle in the heart of every man

A) Tom Yorke- the lead singer of the band Radio head - talking about his fame and fortune. Said by now I thought I would be somewhere else ‘

B) Still have a hole in my life - When the interviewer asked, *"Why, in the end, have you done what you've done?"*

Yorke replied, "It's filling the hole, that's all anyone does." "What happens to the hole?" the interviewer said. After a long pause, Yorke said, "It's still there."

C) NBA super star Kevin Durant was asked after winning two NBA championships with the Warriors - If he was happy - He said no!

After winning that championship, I learned that much hadn't changed. I thought it would fill a certain [void]. It didn't."

Reading a recent survey of over 2,000 Millennials (ages 22-38)

A) An astounding 80% believe they are not "good enough" in virtually all areas of their lives.

B) Furthermore, 75% of the survey's respondents admit that they constantly feel "overwhelmed" by pressure to succeed in their careers, find a

meaningful romantic relationship, meet others' expectations, and maintain a presence on social media.

C) Old and young - radically successful - still battling a sense of emptiness -

1) the void hasn't been filled in their life

2nd thing Billy Graham said to realize is that People are Lonely.

A) People long to Belong

Albert Einstein: "It is strange to be known so universally and yet be so lonely." –

B) Sentiment of many famous people.

"I feel so alone sometimes. The night is quiet for me. I'd love to be able to sleep. I am glad that everyone is gone now. I'll probably not rest. I have no need for all this." Elvis

C) Recent survey: -20% of Americans say they rarely or never feel close to people.

1) 78% of Americans when lonely distract themselves with TV, computer, or video games.

In a 2017 interview with Rolling Stone Magazine, tech entrepreneur Elon Musk has it all—except love.

A) Failed Marriage - Musk was quoted as saying the thing that he hates the most is being in his Big House alone.

"Being in a big empty house, and no footsteps echoing through the hallways, no one over there ... How do you make yourself happy in a situation like that?"

He added, "When I was a child, there was one thing I said: 'I never want to be alone.'" And then he whispered again, "I never want to be alone."

B) He had everything except someone to share his life with.

3rd thing that BG said people universally are struggling with is this: People are guilty-

A) We feel guilty because we are guilty - we have broken God's standard.

B) Feelings of Guilt and shame trace all the back to the original fall

C) Adam and Eve - Ate of the forbidden fruit - Realized they were naked - innocence was lost -
1) they felt ashamed - Covered and Hid themselves

People have been doing that ever since: Cover their nakedness and flaws - cover their guilt and shame

A) Careers - Attain success - be respected

B) Some do it by putting up a façade - pretending to be something they are not

1) Possessions - status - all a way of covering up themselves/ masking the guilt and shame they feel inside

C) Some try to hide from it - Drug and Alcohol - others in sexual relationships

D) Nothing works - Alone with their thoughts - the Guilt and Shame are front and center

E) People are empty, Lonely, Struggling with Guilt and Shame

4th People are afraid to die:

Actor Dennis Hopper was asked about his greatest fear – He gave a one word answer. “DEATH!”

A) Not alone: What happens after we die

B) Only two choices - Eternal Life - Eternal death

C) Jesus came to make a way: We could know for sure - Heaven when we die

1) Cross - Resurrection - I am the Resurrection and life

Jesus came to deal with our Guilt and Shame - Offer forgiveness - cleansing of sin - Freedom from Guilt

A) He took all our sin - so that we could have all of his righteousness

B) Amazing trade. -

Jesus came fill the Void in our hearts

A) He wants us to realize - we have been made to live in relationship with God

B) We enter into that relationship when we put our faith in Jesus -

1) He comes to live in our hearts by His spirit

C) He offers us true satisfaction - meaning in life

Jesus says: You never have to feel alone again

A) I will never leave you nor forsake you -

B) Open your heart to him - relationship with him

C) BELONG TO THE FAMILY OF GOD.

D) YOU TODAY!

As we close today: I want to note two things that were the result of this shaking out of their comfort zones

A) Two things that were a result of Philip being willing to go anywhere

B) 1st Revival breaks out in Samaria - Great things are happening there!

6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.

C) There was God moves when his people go with the right attitude

2nd things there was great Joy in that City V.8

A) Much Joy in that city! - Our City

B) Lord you can shake us up - Lord we are willing to go anywhere -you want us to go

C) Scatter us with your Gospel.