

Acts 8:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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 Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Analysis

Saul's consenting to Stephen's death reveals his complicity in the first Christian martyrdom, setting the stage for his dramatic conversion. The 'great persecution' scattered believers 'except the apostles' - showing God's providence in spreading the gospel beyond Jerusalem. What Satan meant for evil (persecution), God used for good (gospel advancement). Reformed theology sees God's sovereignty over human evil: persecution accomplishes God's purposes despite persecutors' intentions. The church's scattering fulfilled Jesus' commission to be witnesses 'in Judaea, and in Samaria' (Acts 1:8).

Historical Context

This persecution began circa AD 33-35, shortly after Pentecost. The scattering into Judea and Samaria was the first major geographical expansion of the church beyond Jerusalem's 3,000-5,000 believers.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God use persecution and suffering to accomplish His purposes?
2. Why did the apostles remain in Jerusalem while others scattered?
3. What does this teach about God's sovereignty over human opposition to His gospel?

Interlinear Text

Σαῦλος δὲ ἦν συνευδοκῶν τῶν ἀναιρέσει αὐτοῦ
Saul And was consenting which death unto his
G4569 G1161 G2258 G4909 G3588 G336 G846

Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῶν ἡμέρᾳ διωγμὸς μέγας
there was And at that which time persecution a great
G1096 G1161 G1722 G1565 G3588 G2250 G1375 G3173

ἐπὶ τῶν ἐκκλησίαν τῶν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις πάντες τε
against which the church which at Jerusalem all and
G1909 G3588 G1577 G3588 G1722 G2414 G3956 G5037

διεσπάρησαν κατὰ τῶν χώρας τῶν Ἰουδαίας καὶ
scattered abroad throughout which the regions which of Judaea and
G1289 G2596 G3588 G5561 G3588 G2449 G2532

Σαμαρείας πλὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων
Samaria except which the apostles
G4540 G4133 G3588 G652

Additional Cross-References

Acts 7:58 (Parallel theme): And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Acts 22:20 (Parallel theme): And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

Acts 1:8 (References Jerusalem): But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 5:40 (Parallel theme): And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

Acts 5:33 (Parallel theme): When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

Acts 8:14 (References Jerusalem): Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

Acts 8:4 (Parallel theme): Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

Acts 9:31 (Parallel theme): Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

John 15:20 (Parallel theme): Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also.