

“Purposeful Persecution”

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Looking Back

In his dying, Stephen—full of the Spirit—magnified Jesus Christ!

* Acts 7:59 *“And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’”* (cf. Luke 23:46)

* Acts 7:60 *“And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’”* (cf. Luke 23:33-34a)

1. Stephen and Saul contrasted (vs. 1-3)

- Stephen: In dying he honored Christ. In death he was honored by devout men. (v. 2)
- Saul: Murderous and a ravager of the church (7:58; 8:1,3)
- A beautiful set-up for astonishment at God’s grace and gospel! (see Acts 9:1-5, 20) [please have this passage ready to project]

2. God uses persecution to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. (8:1b)

- Remember Acts 1:8
- Jesus said persecution would come (Luke 21:12-19)

1. Where Christ’s people go, the Word goes. (8:4)

How did Stephen’s death and Saul’s violence affect the church?

2. Philip to Samaria (8:5-8)

- Preaching the word (v. 4) is proclaiming Christ (v. 5).
- Christ empowered the proclamation (v. 6).
- Christ has power over unclean spirits (v. 7).
- Christ has power to heal (v. 7) and save (see Mark 2:1-12).

3. “So there was much joy in that city.” (v. 8)

Persecution – Scattering – Proclamation – Gospel Power – Joy!

Response