

I. THE PROBLEM OF THE CHURCH

A. The problem facing the church at Jerusalem

1. Their problem was not persecution
 - a. Although there was GREAT persecution as we will see today
 - b. Persecution is nothing new to churches
 - i. It should never come as any great surprise to us
 - ii. “I wonder why the world hates Christians so much?”
 - iii. JOHN 15:18 – “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”
 - iv. JOHN 7:7 – “The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”
 - c. They would deal with far more than this
 - i. Try reading Foxes’ Book of Martyrs
 - ii. Find out about the Anabaptists drowned by the Jesuits
 - iii. Even Today Christians are killed throughout the world
 - d. But their problem was not persecution
2. The problem that faced them was not poverty
 - a. Throughout the epistles we hear of Paul and the churches
 - b. They collected for the “poor saints at Jerusalem”
 - i. ROMANS 15:26 – “For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.”
 - ii. They were destitute and downtrodden
 - iii. Anyone who could afford to flee already had, starting here
 - c. But their problem was not poverty
3. Their problem was not in prayer
 - a. In chapter 5, we see the deacons selected after prayer and search
 - b. People were saved, it redounded to the benefit of the Gospel
 - i. ACTS 6:6 – “Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.”
 - ii. The number of disciples MULTIPLIED in Jerusalem greatly
 - iii. We think that simple actions don’t matter
 - iv. They placed a few deacons. What’s the big deal?
 - v. God blessed! That’s the big deal!
 - vi. What’s the big deal about baptism, Lord’s Supper, witnessing, praying, Bible reading, church attendance?
 - vii. Faithfulness matters to God!
 - c. But their problem was not in prayer

B. The problem facing the church at Jerusalem was PROCRASTINATION

1. Up until this time, the church was “gathered together”
 2. Let’s look at a few: ACTS 1:13-15; 2:1 & 44-47; 4:31
 - a. It’s GOOD to assemble together – it’s the most basic requirement
 - i. A church is not an idea. It’s not a building. It’s PEOPLE.
 - ii. Not by yourself... (this is deep) you are just a PERSON
 - iii. It takes PEOPLE to make a church, baptized believers
 - b. People don’t like to join churches today because of accountability
 - i. Watch out! Don’t go too often! Someone might think you like church. They might start “expecting” you to be there!
 - ii. They might even ask you where you were
 - iii. (We all know there are legitimate reasons)
 - c. It is not God’s intention for Christians to slip in and out of church
 - d. Just like it isn’t God’s intention in marriage (another institution)
 3. They were assembling, but they weren’t GOING
- C. Jesus had GIVEN them a mission to complete and they weren’t starting
1. ACTS 1:8 – “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.”
 - a. They were doing fine with the Jerusalem and Judea part
 - b. But they sort of forgot about the Samaria and Uttermost part
 - c. So, God took them out of their comfort zone
 2. It began with the stoning of Stephen
 3. But it wouldn’t end there

II. THE PERSECUTION OF SAUL

- A. Saul would eventually become known as the Apostle Paul
 1. But that is not the focus of today – he was a lost religious man
 - a. Satan has few tools so sharp as a devoutly religion lost man
 - b. If you argue with an atheist for long, the Crusades will come up
 - i. The Crusades are important historical events
 - ii. But as meaningful to me as the Fall of Carthage
 - iii. The destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588 if far more important to me as an American
 - iv. But the Crusades were perpetrated by the Catholic church
 - v. They were land grabs, not evangelistic
 - vi. Since the Catholic church does NOT believe the Gospel
 - c. Even today, there’s a new religion – Woke-ism
 - d. Many have persecuted their fellow Americans with Woke-ism
 2. Saul would eventually meet the Lord Jesus Christ
 3. But today he is a petty religious tyrant animated by hatred
 4. And he CONSENTED to the death of Stephen
 - a. That word brings along the context of “delighted”
 - b. Delighted – shining “light” in and out, so perhaps – “inspired”

- c. It waved a red flag to a bull
- B. Let us hear his own later account of it in ACTS 26:9-11 – “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10) Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. (11) And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.”
- C. And because of the Persecution of Saul, the church members were scattered

III. THE PREACHING OF PHILIP

- A. One of the Deacons was scattered. Where? To SAMARIA!
 - 1. Remember how the Jerusalem church was doing the Great Commission?
 - a. Just the Jerusalem and Judea part?
 - b. Now see the first preaching elsewhere, and GUESS where it was!
 - c. Just as Jesus told them!
 - 2. ACTS 1:8 – “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.”
 - 3. And soon the one who scattered them (Saul) would take up the charge
 - 4. Saul, who would become Paul, would go to the Uttermost Part
 - 5. Not only that, remember the Jesus Himself prepared the way
 - a. JOHN 4:4 – “And he must needs go through Samaria.”
 - b. Jesus, as always, went before them
- B. ROMANS 8:28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”
 - 1. Be careful quoting that verse – it might involve persecution
 - 2. This is real persecution, not just a tax dispute
 - 3. God made it happen to the furtherance of the Gospel
 - 4. But that doesn’t mean it was easy!
- C. This is not the Apostle Philip, by the way, but the deacon mentioned in Ch. 6
 - 1. Matter of fact, he is mentioned second only to Stephen!
 - 2. ACTS 6:5 – “And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:”
 - 3. That’s pretty good company!
 - a. Coming to soon to another great story
 - b. Philip, and the Ethiopian Eunuch
 - c. Then Philip preaching down the coast ending in Caesarea
 - d. Seeing people saved in preparation for Paul to organize churches throughout that region

4. He gets a new Title. No longer “deacon” – ACTS 21:8 – “And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.”
5. Remember – Philip probably knew him from the time of Stephen...

IV. THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL

- A. Every member became a witness – Every one of them PREACHED
 1. What is preaching? Showing forth, proclaiming TRUTH
 2. WE are all in the ministry
- B. 2 COR. 5:18 – “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;”
 1. Philip preached the right message – Jesus Christ (vs. 5)
 2. He performed miracles by the power of God (vs. 6)
 3. Unclean spirits cast out, people healed, lame walked
- C. And the results? (vs. 8)
 1. There is ALWAYS great joy where the Gospel is preached and received
 2. Don’t you remember when you first got saved?
 3. There is nothing like the Joy and Peace that comes from God alone

V. THE PRAISE OF GOD

- A. PROV. 11:24 – “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.”
 1. Don’t withhold the Gospel, but scatter it so it can increase
 2. The church at Jerusalem waited when Jesus said go forth
 3. They had all they needed. What were they waiting for?
 4. Christian: You have all you need. What are you waiting for?
- B. My friend here today without the knowledge of God’s Saving Grace
 1. You too can know GREAT joy like the people in that city
 2. But it can only come from the right message – Jesus Christ
- C. He alone can Save, come to Him today!