

INTRO

- What is something that is energizing you right now?

In this season 2 of our Acts series Unstoppable, we look at how the gospel spreads outward geographically and ethnically (ch8-12). Acts is the *continuation* of the life and mission of Jesus, now through His Spirit and His Church.

READ

- Acts 1:8 & Acts 8:1-4

REFLECT & RESPOND

Jesus told his disciples they would bear witness to him in the power of the Spirit starting locally in Jerusalem, but eventually going globally.

After a great start, Acts 8 records the devastation a certain Pharisee called Saul wreaks on the church in the wake of Stephen's execution.

Will this persecution and scattering stop the message and mission of the church? How does the church react?

In these 4 verses, we see both a timely and timeless response to the persecution; both are godly responses to the situation that serve for a model for us in whatever disruptive or difficult situations we face.

TIMELY RESPONSE: Bear witness to the Moment

Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. v2

In the midst of a chaotic situation, they took time to honour Stephen by burying him and mourning for him. This is a godly response and shows an emotional awareness and acknowledgement of the tragic reality.

Qu: what does "bearing witness" to the moment you're in look like for you right now?

It is critical we are attuned to our reality. But if we are only attuned to our reality, we will become despondent and discouraged. We must learn to respond to the timely moment with the timeless message of the gospel.

TIMELESS RESPONSE: Bear witness to the Message

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. v4

Despite the disruption, these ordinary men and women continued to follow Jesus and proclaim his good news.

Furthermore, God didn't cause the persecution but he did use it to further his good purposes: the scattering led to the sowing of the gospel beyond Jerusalem and amongst the Samaritans and Gentiles.

Acts 1:8 was coming to fruition *because of* the persecution and resulted in the expansion and growth of the church.

How about you? Sometimes in the moments of life that are hard we can't see how God may be working or using it for his purpose and our good. In times like these, we need to remember Rom 8:28: "God works all things together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

Qu: How might God be using disruption and circumstances to:

- 1) *work in and through you in new ways?*
- 2) *Work in and through our church in new ways?*

RESPOND & PRAY

- Pray we would be attuned to both our current reality and the timeless hope and message of the gospel
- Pray for one another to practice a life of up-in-out in the week ahead.