

Audio Transcript of Sermon

August 26, 2023

Persecution

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. In what we say and do, we are to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God. We should never put ourselves in a position where others would conclude we are opposed to the Kingdom of God. Yet, we live in a world where those who are not called by and far live in opposition to the Kingdom of God. What that means is we are living out-of-step with most of the other people living in this world.

Even though we live in a time where tolerance of others with differences is taught, that concept is a belied as a fraud by what we see every day. We live in a world where people favoring different political parties see others as dangerous and bad for their country, how these others cannot be trusted, to the point these others are almost treated as persona non grata. Years ago, social media was a novel idea with many initially seeing it as a way to bring the world together through a digital medium, and today that same social media divides us, again along mostly political lines. We live in a world where many push for tolerance of those who may be seen as different, and that tolerance seems to be extended to just about anyone except for those whom the world chooses to exclude from being treated with tolerance.

Persecution can have a very real impact on people who are called by God, and Jesus explained this to a crowd that had followed him to a beach. The crowd was so huge, Jesus got in a boat, so his voice could more easily carry over the water. What He gave as an example was a farmer who was planting seed at the beginning of the growing season, and how some of the seed fell to the side and was eaten by birds, how other seed was planted in rocky ground that prevented roots from establishing the crop and was quickly withered by the sun. Some of the seed was planted among thorns and the thorns kept the seed from developing. Another group of seed was planted in ideal farming conditions, and those seeds thrived. Mark four verse one.

Mark 4:1-20

- 1. And he began again to teach by the seaside: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.**
- 2. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,**
- 3. Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:**
- 4. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.**
- 5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:**
- 6. But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.**
- 7. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.**
- 8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.**
- 9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.**

The disciples were also with Jesus when He taught this and like the others while they heard the parable, they didn't fully comprehend what Jesus was teaching and asked Him to explain for them. Jesus made it clear that when he spoke in parables it was to shield the understanding of those who weren't being called at this time, because it wasn't yet time for these people to be converted and have their sins forgiven them. Verse ten.

- 10. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.**
- 11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:**
- 12. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.**

Jesus then launched into His explanation of the parable, explaining the farmer was planting the seed of the word of God. The seed that fell to the side is like a person who hears the word of God before Satan comes to snatch away from them what they had heard. The seed planted in rocky ground is like a person who can only endure for a short time, because they have no root, and for these people when they are offended or persecution comes, they spiritually die. The seed planted among thorns is like a person who gets caught up in the affairs of this world to the point the affairs of this world become more important than the Kingdom of God. The seed planted on good ground is like a Christian who grows in the fruit of the Holy Spirit where at the end of their life the spiritual measure of who they are is far beyond where they were when they were first called. Verse thirteen.

13. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

14. The sower soweth the word.

15. And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17. And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

18. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

19. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

20. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Persecution is one way how people can be separated from their faith, especially when they have no spiritual root. Today, when a person has no root, we might say they are shallow. We have to be more than just Christians with a passing fancy in the Bible, or we too can suffer the very same fate that Jesus was speaking of.

Some Christians who endure persecution, will be persecuted to their death. These people are spoken of in Revelation six verse nine.

Revelation 6:9-11

9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Jesus taught that those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for the name of Jesus, will be part of the Kingdom of God, having a great reward awaiting them. Now being persecuted for any other reason may not have the same result. Matthew five verse ten.

Matthew 5:10-12

10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Jesus also taught that we are to pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us. We are to love these people and bless them, to do good to them so that we can be children of God, becoming perfect as God our Father is perfect. Matthew five verse forty-three.

Matthew 5:43-48

43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you;

45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Persecution will be a very real part of our lives but it does not mean we have to remain in a persecuting environment. When persecuted, we are free to remove ourselves from that persecuting environment, understanding that wherever we may go, we will continue to share the gospel of the Kingdom of God and may continue to be persecuted there. Jesus taught that we will likely be persecuted and brought before powerful people who can make our life horrible. When faced with these circumstances, Jesus also taught that we shouldn't worry or plan in advance what we will say, because when we are in these circumstances, the Holy Spirit will lead us in what to say. Persecution will get so bad that for some they will even be persecuted by their family members. Matthew ten verse seventeen.

Matthew 10:17-23

17. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

18. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

23. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

In writing to the Romans, Paul wrote that our love needs to be real and not at all phony as we hate that which is evil and cling to that which is good, being kind with honor to others who are also called. Everything we do in life should be as if it is for Jesus Christ knowing that the hope that we have is something that should bring happiness to us, allow us to live through bad times with patience, remaining in a prayerful attitude, helping others as we are able, being hospitable, and even blessing those who persecute us. And when Paul wrote to bless those who persecute us, he did not mean to curse them and bless them, but only to bless them, so that in the end we are not overcome by evil, but that we overcome evil with good. Romans twelve verse nine.

Romans 12:9-21

- 9. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.**
- 10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;**
- 11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;**
- 12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;**
- 13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.**
- 14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.**
- 15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.**
- 16. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.**
- 17. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.**
- 18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.**
- 19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.**
- 20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.**
- 21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Paul told the Philippians to let anything they say be worthy to proclaim the gospel, and that Christians everywhere should be striving together for the faith of the gospel, never to be terrified by our adversaries, knowing that for us salvation is on the table and that we are called to not only believe in Jesus, but when necessary, to suffer for Him as well. At times, we will suffer for Jesus, but we are

not to be terrified of those who may bring us suffering. Philippians one verse twenty-seven.

Philippians 1:27-30

27. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

28. And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

29. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30. Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Peter writes that if we are followers of that which is good and suffer for the sake of righteousness, we are not to be terrified or troubled by their terror. Instead we should be ready to give an answer for the hope that is within us, and to give that answer not from a position of religious arrogance, but from a position of meekness and respect, knowing that if another person speaks evil of us when we have done no evil, that in the end is their problem even if we may in the short while have troubles before us. First Peter three verse thirteen.

1 Peter 3:13-17

13. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

14. But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

15. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16. Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

Peter later adds some polish to his letter reminding us that when we suffer we shouldn't think it to be strange because Jesus suffered for us. If we suffer because

of the name of Christ we are to be happy because the spirit of glory and of God rests on us. However, Peter also wrote that we are not to suffer as a common criminal or because we put our nose into other people's business. You might recall last week, how I shared how from time to time when I worked for a school district I would work with parents to resolve their concerns with the school district and how sometimes those parents were so frustrated they would voice criticisms of the district with me or directly criticize me. If the parents brought up those concerns with the school district, those concerns were reviewed by my supervisors and sometimes shared with me, but because I did what I was supposed to do, the district never concluded I had done something wrong. Had I violated the district's trust in me and demeaned a parent or their family or child, the district would have probably come to a different conclusion. If I spent time with the parent and instead of listening to their concerns just offered a bunch of ideas of what they could change in their life to meet the needs of their child, that would have also been problematic for me. As Christians we have to live in the realm of righteousness, reaching for that tree of life. There is no profit to us or another person when the life we live confuses the casual observer to whether we are followers of Jesus Christ, or whether we are not. First Peter four verse twelve.

1 Peter 4:12-19

12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

16. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

17. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

18. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

19. Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

As Christians, we cannot live a life where others are confused by our actions and based on our actions would see Christianity or ourselves as hypocritical. As Christians we are very aware of what is in the Bible, what is sin and what is not sin. But it is not our place to get into the business of other people and tell them what their sins are, because when we do that we judge them and bring condemnation to ourselves, first from the person and more importantly from God. For instance, we know of the Sabbath and Holy Days, but there is no benefit for us to rub this in anyone else's face. It's one thing to tell a person you can't work on Friday night or Saturday because it is Holy to God as the Lord's Sabbath and that all who work on it sin. It's another thing entirely to tell a supervisor you can't work on Friday night or Saturday because it is your religious day of the week, a day where you cannot work. We need to be able to explain what is important for us to do, and not why others are sinners for not doing what we need to do. One tends to smear judgment at them and the other does not. Using Peter's words, if we suffer because we are smearing judgment at others, that is something we shouldn't be doing, but if we still suffer without smearing judgment at others, there is nothing about which we need to be ashamed, and can understand that this suffering can glorify God. If we suffer according to the will of God, let us suffer for doing what is right and not because we are busy judging others.

We know that trouble can seem to encircle us, and when this happens it might stump us, but should never bring us down, knowing that even when we are persecuted, we are not forsaken. When persecution is really bad, we can focus on the body of Jesus Christ when He was being crucified knowing the suffering He endured makes our hope of eternal life possible. Second Corinthians four verse seven.

2 Corinthians 4:7-15

7. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

- 11. For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.**
- 12. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.**
- 13. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;**
- 14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.**
- 15. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.**

In his first letter, John reminds us that we should not be surprised if people do not like us because of the faith we have. That faith we have is marked by our love for others of the faith. When we love others of the faith, it affirms the faith we have. If a person claims to be of the faith and does not love others of the faith, it means that person lives in the realm of death and not with the hope of eternal life. The love that we have is not stated through the words we say, but by what we do. As we are able, we help others in need. First John three verse thirteen.

1 John 3:13-18

- 13. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.**
- 14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.**
- 15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.**
- 16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**
- 17. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?**
- 18. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but indeed and in truth.**

This world will not like us because of the faith we have. The faith we have contradicts the evil that permeates so much of this world. We concede we will from time to time not be liked by this world, maybe even from time to time, despised or hated by this world because of our faith. While we cannot change that animosity, we can control what we do and say so that other than the faith we

have, we have not given them any other cause to hate or persecute us. John fifteen verse eighteen.

John 15:18-25

- 18. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.**
- 19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.**
- 20. 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 yours also.**
- 21. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.**
- 22. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.**
- 23. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.**
- 24. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.**
- 25. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.**

The persecution we will face may remind us of psalms. When David wrote that God led him in the paths of righteousness even when David was walking in the valley of the shadow of death, David was writing that from time to time, the paths of righteousness will take us through persecution. If we are walking in the valley of the shadow of death, we are being persecuted, and like David even when facing persecution, we can fear no evil because God is with us. Like David, even when our enemies encircle us, God blesses us. Psalm twenty-three verse one.

Psalm 23:1-6

- 1. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**
- 2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.**
- 3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

- 4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.**
- 5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.**
- 6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

The psalms also tell us that God delivers the righteous from all their troubles, that God's eyes are on the righteous, and that His ears hear the cries of the righteous. It's important that God counts us among the righteous. We are to keep our tongue from evil, and our lips from speaking guile. We are to depart from evil and do good, to seek peace and pursue it. Psalm thirty-four verse eleven.

Psalm 34:11-22

- 11. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.**
- 12. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?**
- 13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.**
- 14. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.**
- 15. The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.**
- 16. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.**
- 17. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.**
- 18. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.**
- 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.**
- 20. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.**
- 21. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.**
- 22. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.**

When we feel persecuted, we need to remember the words of Paul who wrote that if God be for us, who can be against us? The persecution we endure will not be pleasant in this present life, but because God is for us, in the scope of eternal

life, that persecution will not succeed. When others accuse us to justify their persecution, know that we are justified by God. When others condemn us to justify their persecution, know Jesus died and was resurrected so we can have eternal life. When others try to bring us harm, through Jesus Christ we become the victors. Romans eight verse thirty-one.

Romans 8:31-37

31. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

In a prophecy, Jesus warned of a deteriorating society with wars, natural disasters, pandemics, and things we see but can't explain at the very end of time. Leading up and through this time is persecution. Knowing we will be persecuted does not mean we should plan how to defend ourselves, because through the Holy Spirit, we will be led in what to say to respond to any accusation or condemnation. How bad will persecution be? We will be betrayed by even our own families and relatives to the point that all people will hate us for the faith we have. Luke twenty-one verse ten.

Luke 21:10-19

10. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

11. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

12. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

13. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

14. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

16. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

18. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

19. In your patience possess ye your souls.

Knowing that we will face persecution, we should be comforted by the words of Jesus who knowingly left us in this world, asking God to keep us from the evil. Jesus is already advocating that we should be kept from evil, which includes persecution. God will not be throwing gratuitous persecution our way. Any persecution we endure will be for either our benefit in salvation, or the benefit of others for their salvation. John seventeen verse thirteen.

John 17:13-19

13. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Stephen, an early deacon of the church, was stoned to death because of the faith. Dying because of the faith is as bad as persecution can get. Stephen had

beautifully and perfectly explained everything that needed to be said, and still died. Let's read Acts chapter seven beginning in verse fifty-four.

Acts 7:54-60

54. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58. 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.

59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Stephen was persecuted for doing what was expected of him as a deacon, and his persecution which resulted in his death, led to the opportunity for salvation for so many others who lived in different regions and cities. It caused the church to scatter, maybe out of fear, a normal human reaction, but these people did not just flee out of fear, when they fled, they continued to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God where they went. Maybe leaving Jerusalem was something they wouldn't naturally do. If they never had left, the early church would not have developed as it did. Acts eight verse one.

Acts 8:1-4

1. 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.

2. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

4. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

A great number fled Jerusalem and the message they brought with them travelled where they went, to the islands of Crete and Cyprus, and to the city of Antioch. Those who initially fled Jerusalem shared the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to Jews, and some of those Jews share the gospel with the Greeks, and many believed because of the persecution of Stephen. Acts eleven verse nineteen.

Acts 11:19-21

19. Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

20. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

Persecution will come to us at some point, whether it is mild, such as name-calling, an opportunity we can't take because of a conflict with our faith, or severe, like what happened to Stephen, and anywhere in between. Persecution will come to us. All who live Godly in Jesus Christ will suffer persecution of some type, even if all others see in us is a strange religion. For that observation we should be grateful, knowing that the world does not know us as it did not know Jesus. We know as time progresses times will get worse and persecutions will get worse, and we must continue in the faith we have reflecting on what is written in the Bible, so that we may be perfect thoroughly furnished for all good works. Second Timothy three verse ten.

2 Timothy 3:10-17

10. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

11. Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

13. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

- 14. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;**
- 15. And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**
- 16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:**
- 17. That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.**

We are called and live a life that is out-of-step with the world around us. Because we are different, we should expect persecution knowing that all who live Godly in Jesus Christ will suffer persecution. We can take comfort knowing that God will not allow persecution to involuntarily separate us from His love. We must be prepared so that we never voluntarily separate ourselves from God when faced with persecution recognizing that this sometimes happens to those who are new in the faith. We can also take comfort knowing that any persecution we face will either be for our benefit in salvation, or the benefit of others in their salvation.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.