

**Bible Study**  
*Persecution and the Purposes of God*  
Acts 8:1-8b

In Acts 8, it is seen that persecution of the church does not thwart the purposes of God; rather, it serves in establishing it through the obedience and witness of the believing community.

When carefully observed, In Acts 8:1-8b, there is a progression of thought in the narrative concerning persecution and the purposes of God. While the passage begins with the destruction of the church in Jerusalem, it concludes with the extension of the community of believers to Samaria. Similarly, there is also a notable progression with regard to the experiences of believers through persecution. For instance, the narrative, which begins with the great lamentation made over Stephen's death, culminates with reference to the great joy experienced by the believers in a city in Samaria.

The passage, therefore, displays a contrast of experience in the lives of believers, from suffering in Jerusalem to joy in Samaria. At the same time, there also appears to be a contrast of experience in terms of the well being of the church. While destruction is the fate of the church in Jerusalem, a new experience in the gospel, befalls Samaria.

**Discussion questions:**

1. As seen in this passage, how does God use persecution and pain of some believers to bring salvation and joy to others?
2. What role does persecution play in the mission of God?
3. How does persecution impact the purposes of God?
4. What applications can you draw out from this passage?