

Acts of Jesus, Lesson 18: Master Strategy

- Sometimes bad things are good things...they always are if you're a believer following God.

1. **We are going to be looking at a pivotal incident that took place in the early church.**

- **Acts 8:1** – In order to understand this verse, you must understand this verse:
- **Acts 1:8** Notice: He's not giving a command as much as He is making a prediction/prophecy)
- Do you think it worked out the way they expected it would? (probably not!)
- This verse essentially gives us an outline for the entire book.

2. **There is a master plan developing here that we need to see.**

- On a surface level, this looks bad: **Acts 8:1-3** – "made havoc" is used elsewhere in Greek writings to describe someone being mangled by a wild beast.
- So, 15,000 people go out sharing the gospel wherever they go **That can't be bad can it???**
- There were two ways a person in the church back then could have reacted to this persecution:
 1. "That Stephen just really messed stuff up for us here.
 2. "God is sovereign and what the Sanhedrin and Saul meant for evil God means for good to reach many for the truth.
- Sometimes we forget that God, despite what the televangelists tell us, is not all that concerned about our comfort. He is much more concerned our doing His will and being conformed into the image of His Son.
- Persecution can have a harmful effect on the church, but historically persecution hasn't been near as harmful as prosperity.
- Prosperity has done way more damage to the church than persecution every thought about doing.

3. **We forget that the church does not exist for the sake of the membership, but for the sake of the world.**

- The Church lives in a tension, always has: On the one hand, it has the responsibility to nurture the Body of Christ.
- On the other hand, the church does not exist for itself --- She is the army of God on mission in this world.

4. **Lessons we can learn from this incident in the life of the early church.**

1. We do not live by chance and coincidence, God is sovereign.
2. God works and repositions His people for the effective work of His mission.
 - It's shocking how many Christians think they are where they are for some reason other than the purposes of God.
3. We need to develop a missionary posture about our lives.
 - Every Christian should view all of life as a mission opportunity.
 - Need to view our jobs and places in life as missionary assignments.
 - Need to view any repositioning as a new assignment: Job transfers, hospital stays, new school, new neighbors, etc.