

# Acts 8:1-25

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm so thankful to be back, and I hope you've come this morning to hear the Word of God and to submit yourself to it.

We've been worshiping through song and through music, but just a reminder that we really believe here that you also worship God by listening to His Word and by heeding to what it says and being encouraged by it and obedient to it.

And I'm worshiping along with you. We are here for this and not for any other reason to make ourselves known or to make anything else known but Jesus known. And so just join me again just in a word of prayer.

Father, we love you. We thank you for the chance to gather this morning. We thank you for the redemption that we have in Jesus, and I pray that you would fight off all distractions and things like what we might eat later or who we might hang out with later, what we might do after this is over, but you would allow us to be all here, Lord, and to hear your Word and that you would be lifted up. In Christ's name, amen. So we're returning to the book of Acts this morning. We find ourselves in chapter 8, so go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 8.

[ 1 : 26 ] And in case you're new on the scene, and just sort of a reminder, I'm not going to give you a big overview of Acts, but just to remember that this is like the second book that Luke wrote.

We have the Gospel of Luke, and then he wrote this as an account of the early history of the church and the Acts of the Apostles. And so Christ has resurrected.

He has commissioned His disciples to go out and to make disciples. And then they literally watch Him ascend into heaven, and He empowers them to go out and to plant the church.

The Holy Spirit comes. And so the apostles have been preaching the Gospel, making disciples in Jerusalem for the most part, in just the area of Jerusalem. So the Gospel hasn't quite gone out of the city yet in some ways, other than some others that have might have taken it out there.

And two weeks ago, we looked at the martyrdom of Stephen, the first martyr of the church. Nathan preached on that. And just as a quick recap, he was arrested by the Jewish council for preaching the Gospel and for doing miracles in the name of Jesus.

[ 2 : 41 ] And so they bring him in front of this very intimidating council, and they ask him to basically give an account for what he's doing, whereon Stephen goes on to give this incredible explanation and exposition of the Old Testament.

Like he walks literally through the Old Testament and says that the message that he wants them to see was all these Old Testament prophets and messengers from God, they were pointing to the Messiah, the Messiah that you just killed.

And you're no different than the people who killed the prophets. You've ignored them, you've put them aside, and you're just as guilty. You've killed the Messiah. And then he offers them no repentance.

It's just almost like an act of judgment. And then they're outraged. Obviously, they're very, very angry. And without even obeying the law of the day, they drag Stephen out and they stone him to death.

And so, just interesting, the stoning that takes place, where we read it just in the previous chapter, that he was put to death.

[ 3 : 48 ] It's a very vivid word. It's a medical word that means like destruction. It reveals that like Stephen just wasn't killed quietly, it means that he was literally destroyed by these men.

It wasn't an easy death, in other words. And very vivid word. It was horrific. It was utterly terrible as the stones fell on him and pretty much just mangled him to the ground.

And he was the first martyr. And if you remember the very beginning of the book of Acts, when Jesus is commissioning his disciples, he says, You will be my witnesses. You will be my witnesses. And just as a reminder, the word witness that he uses is the word martyr, which means martyr. Like, you will be my martyrs, is what Jesus tells them. You will go out. You will die. You will be persecuted and executed and imprisoned for my namesake. So how would you like to get that commission? Many of us in our flesh would probably run from that.

[ 4 : 52 ] But they saw it as an honor to carry the name of Jesus. So Stephen became the first witness, really, in the church. And this execution, this martyrdom kind of sparks a large-scale persecution from the Jews in Jerusalem, from the leading Jews in Jerusalem.

And it lasts for the next four chapters in the book of Acts. It's not necessarily from Rome. It's from the Jews. And so it just carries on.

Stephen was the first. And so it goes on. And if we read, starting in our text today, in chapter 8, we're just going to go verses 1 through 25.

So just follow along. This is just a story. So this is easy just to follow. And starting in verse 1 of chapter 8, it says, So just so you know, this word, devout men, it probably doesn't refer to other believers.

It refers to probably, this is a term used for pious Jews, that probably spells that a lot of the Jews, some Jews there probably thought that the death and the execution of Stephen was wrong and unjust.

[ 6 : 23 ] And so they took Stephen's body away to bury it. In verse 3, But Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house.

He dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

And the crowds with one accord pay attention to what was being said by Philip. And when they heard him, they saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits crying out with a loud voice came out of many who had them.

And many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city. But there was a man named Simon who was previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was somebody great.

They all paid attention to him for the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the power of God that is called great. And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.

[ 7 : 36 ] But when they believed Philip, as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, they were baptized, both men and women.

Even Simon himself believed. And after being baptized, he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed. Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

For he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Now when Simon saw the Spirit had been given throughout the laying on of hands of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, Give me this power also, so that anyone whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.

But Peter said to him, May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money. You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not in the right before God.

[ 8 : 51 ] Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray that the Lord, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

And Simon answered, Pray for me to the Lord, that none of what you have said may come upon me. Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

And that's our text today. And so, hopefully, we will be able to pull some good things out of this, and to apply to our lives today.

But this persecution that started, it eventually ended up spreading the gospel. And that's what we have to see here. So we're going to kind of take a bird's eye view, and see the big picture is that persecution started, and because of that, the gospel moved out beyond Jerusalem.

And then, it zooms in closer to the life of Philip, who wasn't an apostle, but a deacon, one of the deacons chosen in the previous chapters and acts, like Stephen was.

[10:03] And he was the first one, actually, in the scripture to be called an evangelist. In chapter 21, he's called Philip an evangelist. So as the persecution arose in Jerusalem, the gospel was taken out.

So, to the Samaritans, and then later on in this chapter, that Nathan will get to eventually, an Ethiopian. So one of the first African converts. So praise God. And so that's what we're working with.

So there's four things that we're going to look at today in the text. But the first one, number one, is that God uses persecution to spread the gospel.

And you see that in the first four verses of this chapter. So what do you think at this point? If persecution started and you were being arrested, beaten, thrown in prison for the sake of Christ, what would you do?

Would you panic and say, oh man, our religious freedom has been taken away, so we better be quiet and not talk about Jesus anymore. We better lay low and hopefully not be recognized by the authorities.

[11:05] What would be your reaction? Well, that didn't silence him. This didn't stop it. It actually fueled it. And so we see that in the verses they were scattered and they went about preaching the word.

So, really cool. I've always said this to a lot of the college students, but I think that so many of us feel we use the term of the generation that I don't really like, but the word awkward.

It's like a most overkill word in our language today. So, just try to use that in a good way. But, a lot of us think that it's awkward to share the gospel because it's become a method or a gimmick and you've divorced it from your real life.

It's not just something that flows out of your life. It's something that you pull apart and say, I've got to do this method or this gimmick. It's not a natural outflow of your language and your life.

But this implies, the Greek here, is the idea that they went gossiping the good news. Just happening in the natural way that conversations unfold.

[12:13] So, a small little narrative. There's this man and he shows up in Galilee, for example. And, like, everyone knows everybody and he comes up and says, hey, why are you here?

We don't recognize you. And he says, I've come from Jerusalem with my family. Did you hear about what happened in Jerusalem? I know there's a lot of stuff going on about Jesus of Nazareth and that he might be alive and all that.

And then the man says, well, he actually is alive. He's been seen. And Stephen was killed, one of our brothers. And this has started a persecution.

So, if it was up to me, I would have just stayed and died with Stephen. But I had to think about my wife and my children. And so we fled and now we're here. So, you're willing to die for this?

You actually believe this? And yes, I am. And here's why I believe that. And so, this is just the natural way the conversation unfolds. They went about gossiping the good news of Christ in just natural ways.

[13:22] So, question for us. Why didn't Operation Search and Destroy Christians succeed? Plenty of other movements throughout history have gotten a lot of hype and a lot of startup, but then they died.

Many, many, actually. And so, why not this? Why did this little group of followers from a dead carpenter from Galilee, why did it not die out?

Because God, it's God's mission to take Christ to the ends of the earth. It's God's mission to take the gospel to all the nations.

This isn't a mission of man. It's a mission of God. As it said, as the rabbi pointed out in Acts 5, as they were talking about what to do with all these Christians, he says, in the present age, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone.

For if this is a plan or undertaking of man, it will fail. But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God.

[ 14 : 30 ] This idea that if man started this, it will fail. But if God started it, you won't be able to stop it. And you might even be found opposing God. Robert Coleman wrote the classic book, *Master Plan of Evangelism*.

Listen to what he wrote. He said, World evangelism is the divinely ordered goal for us all. Not only is it attainable, it is inevitable. Whether or not we believe it, one day the gospel of the kingdom will be heard to the ends of the earth.

The God of the universe will not be defeated in his purpose. Any activity not in step with God's design for humanity is destined to futility.

The sooner we realize this and align our way with his, the sooner we will be relevant to eternity. He's saying it is inevitable. God's mission will accomplish what it set out to do and it won't be stopped.

So our suffering is inevitable to reach the world but our mission is unstoppable. I want to just, there's several examples today. In 1985, there was a Bulgarian pastor, Horacio Kosevic.

[ 15 : 43 ] He was arrested for preaching the gospel in his church. I understand Romania is under the control of communist Russia at the time and communism is seeking to put out the gospel flame. So he was in prison for just about a year and while he was there, he shared Christ with the other prisoners, he shared Christ with his interrogators and his torturers and many came to believe in Christ while he was in prison.

And this is something that he said, both prisoners and jailers asked many questions and it turned out that we had more fruitful ministry there in prison than we ever could have had inside a church. God was better served by our presence in the prison than if we had been free. And that's just how God works. He works through persecution to accomplish his will and it's something that can't be stopped.

So, the message here, okay, is not just that God often turns our setbacks into victories. The message for us also is that sometimes our freedom, our safety, our comfort, our prosperity can often cause tremendous sluggishness and apathy to the gospel mission.

Obviously, I'm not ungrateful for the liberty and the freedom we have. Most of you know me, know I have a family that have shed blood for this country and many friends that are today, so I'm grateful to live where we live and to have the religious liberty we do.

[ 17 : 19 ] But at the same time, often, a lot of the stuff that we think, like prosperity, wealth, we think those things will kind of speed the gospel mission.

And sometimes it does, but more than often it doesn't. It actually, the very thing we think will help it ends up creating lethargy and weakness and apathy and a preoccupation with our comfort and our ease rather than going and taking the gospel forward.

So millions of our brothers and sisters around the world still suffer like this. Just open your eyes. Like, it's everywhere. North Korea, China, North Africa, Middle East, India, Pakistan.

Just open your eyes. Like, these are places where even today they're being killed in prison, persecuted by their family, by their neighbors. And this isn't impersonal to me either.

A lot of my, I have a few friends that are in some very hard places right now. My friend, also, who some of you have met, he's from Kyrgyzstan. He's, I won't tell you where he is right now, but I'll just tell you he's in Central Asia, so figure out where he is.

[ 18 : 30 ] But, he came here many years ago and he spoke to a large group of college students right here and he said, you know, here in America when you become a Christian, you walk an aisle, you pray a prayer, you take a seat and you just attend things.

He said, it's very easy. He said, but in Asia, if you're going to become a Christian first, you're going to be kicked out of your family, you'll be ostracized by your family, your community will also turn you out and not take you in, and the government will either imprison you or kill you or not allow you to work.

And he's like, when someone says that they believe in Jesus and they want to follow Jesus, if they go through all of that and they're still trusting in Jesus, we know that they're a real Christian. That's like what he said.

And that was just convicting to me. Never sell the gospel cheaply to anyone because it's costing many people their lives as it did in this time like Stephen and others.

So, for example, this is a quote by Charles Spurgeon and one that's like been in my head for years and years. But he said, for the Christian, prosperity is much harder to bear than adversity.

[ 19 : 51 ] Many a man will pass through trouble and trial and praise God under it, who, when he who is tried with no trouble, will forget his God, decline in grace, and grow almost a worldling.

Believe me, there is no such trial, no greater trial than no trial. And so, prosperity, you know, we want to be thankful for it, but if we're not using it for the advancement of the gospel and not being graciously thankful for it and using it for God's cause and we make it an idol, we put it on the throne, God will deal with us.

So, we possess so much in this country that has dulled our senses to the things of God. In this Disneyland, literally, of a country sometimes, Satan has Christians focused on what they can't take out of this world instead of Christ being enough and storing up treasures for eternity.

So, though persecution can have harmful physical effects, it's just a well-known fact that prosperity tends to, throughout the history, slow down the mission of Christ instead of speeding it up.

So, let's not be that way. So, the point is not that we should just seek out physical persecution, but the point is that we should just be very careful and wary of how we use the wealth that God has given us to not allow it to control us, but for us to control it for the glory of God.

[ 21 : 22 ] So, that's the first one. It's persecution spreads, right, and the gospel goes out. So, God uses persecution to spread the gospel, number one.

Number two, the gospel can save persecutors. This is verse one and three. We see that Saul was there, and most all of us know who this is, and he was approving.

He was like, yes, do this, kill this guy, silence him. And then later on, he was ravaging the church, entering house, dragging people off, committing them to prison. This is Saul of Tarsus.

So, in the midst of this persecution, we get a brief glimpse of the man who would become the apostle Paul. Saul of Tarsus, one of the most religious elite of the day.

He was educated under the best, and he knew it all, and he was a Pharisee, the most religious zeal, but he was wrong.

[ 22 : 23 ] Just because you're religiously zeal, it doesn't mean you're right. And it says here that he was ravaging the church. And this is an idea of havoc. It literally means to exercise brutal, sadistic cruelty, is what this means.

It wasn't like he was like, come on, you Christians. He was literally brutalizing these people. It's also used in ancient Greek literature of a wild boar being on a rampage and ravaging a vineyard, and the idea of an animal savagely tearing somebody apart.

That's what this language is used for. This is what Saul is doing. And the church. The same word is here. So he was a scary man. He could say that he literally tore the church apart.

Not a man you'd want to encounter. Yet, we know that as Saul set out to annihilate the church, to annihilate the Savior that he hates, he ends up meeting Jesus on the Damascus road, and he's graciously saved by the very man he set out to destroy, right?

And after these great acts of evil, as we've always seen, free and willful acts of evil, God uses to serve his purpose every time. And this is a great example.

[ 23 : 38 ] So Christ saved this man and made him to be the Apostle Paul. Made him a lover of men. A lover of Christ. One of the most radical conversions ever.

So, just briefly, hold your hand here, but look at 1 Timothy real quick. This story is coming up soon, so I don't want to spend too much time on it, but in Acts 1 Timothy, chapter 1.

Before I read this, 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 12. Before I read this, I just want to ask you a question. Do you feel like, I know there's people here who do, because in a room this size, there is no way at all that Christ could save me and forgive me for the things I have done in my life.

I have felt that way before. I would be ashamed even if people knew what I have done. And the fact that this person can just take away my sin, that's just an overwhelming thought.

I just don't think it's possible. Well, this man we're reading about literally was going out and ripping Christians apart and hated Jesus. And yet, he found mercy in Christ.

[ 24 : 55 ] 1 Timothy 1, 12. Read this. This is Paul, the very man we read about writing this years later after he was converted. He says, I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus, our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service.

Though formerly, listen to this, I was a blasphemer and persecutor and an insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord overflowed for me

with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Here it is. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

But I received mercy for this reason that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who believe in him to eternal life.

You hear that? He's like, Jesus saved me so that in the future people like here today can look at Paul and be like, if God has the grace and power to save a man like that, I can also be saved.

[ 26 : 05 ] That's what this is saying. To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. So listen, there's no matter what you've done, you're not beyond the tidal wave of God's grace to overtake you today.

In Isaiah, it says, Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that he cannot save or his ear so dull that he cannot hear. God can do it. Alright? So throw yourself at Christ.

Come to him. Alright? Number three, moving through number two, number three, the gospel can save outcasts.

The gospel can save outcasts. And we see this when Philip takes the gospel to the Samaritans, even just down in verses five through eight. So, most of you Bible people out here, you know the Samaritans are, so I won't give you a long, boring history lesson on how they became Samaritans, but just so you know, they were like half-breed Jews because hundreds of years before when the Assyrians conquered this area, they put Gentiles there who began to intermarry and mix with the remaining Jewish population that was there.

And so, Jews looked at them as half-breeds, unclean, we don't want to associate with them, we don't like them, and so, they had their own little form, I guess, of like Judaism, they had their own temple, that they worshipped that, but it wasn't really the truth, it was sort of a mix of a lot of different things, it really wasn't the worship of the real God.

[ 27 : 45 ] And so, Jews who hated them, right, Philip goes and he brings the gospel to them, the Samaritans, the outcasts of their society, really, and he followed the footsteps of Jesus, really, because Jesus was also the one who brought the gospel to these people in himself.

and what happens, you see there, there was much joy in that city because of what happened. So, that shows us that no matter who you are, if you feel ostracized, if you feel outcast, Christ is also there for you, to bring you into the people of God.

And so, a brief note inside of this, because it's in our text, but it's not the main focus, what's going on here when it says, you know, they believe and they are baptized, but they didn't receive the Holy Spirit yet, because that seems to be inconsistent with what we believe about baptism.

We believe here that like when the Holy Spirit comes and regenerates you, causes you to be born again, when you hear the gospel that he takes up residence in you, so, which Nathan will be speaking about pretty soon in the next part of our chapter.

So, why did this happen? Well, this seems to be a very unique case in the early church where God, in his wisdom, chose to withhold the giving of the Spirit until the apostles arrived, so that there could be unity between the Jewish church in Jerusalem and the Samaritans.

[ 29 : 14 ] And, why though? Like, why is that important? If this hadn't happened, the Samaritans might have continued to think that they were operating spiritually apart from the Jews in Jerusalem.

Or, the believers in Jerusalem might have not really accepted them as brothers and sisters either. So, the Spirit had fallen immediately when they received Christ. There had been no connection between the two.

And so, by the coming of Peter and John and the giving of the Spirit, the Jewish believers are linked with the Samaritan believers. So, now there's not two separate churches but one church, one covenant member family all together, Jew and Gentile.

So, that division and that hatred was healed because of the gospel. But, it also established the apostolic authority of Peter and John as the apostles. They came and they did this.

Jesus gave them that authority to do that. So, this healed that division that was there so there wasn't two separate things going on. So, come talk to me later more about that if you want to know more but we'll stop there just to keep moving forward.

[ 30 : 23 ] So, last thing, number four, the gospel can be misunderstood as it goes forward. So, this is verse 9 through 11, 18 through 24.

We get a picture of this man called Simon, the magician and he was called the great one and he was amazed by the people of Samaria. He's just the word sorcery here which means just magic and it's just sort of a religion that came from the Medo-Persian empire, sort of a combination of astrology, horoscope, science mixed with, you know, just superstition, spells, charms, incantations. Like, if he had had a 1-800 number back then, he would have been the guy to call. So, it seems like he believed. It says he believed. Right?

Then later on, Peter gives this huge indictment against him. Peter responds to him by saying, like, may your silver perish with you. It's almost as if he's saying to hell with you and your silver because you thought you could obtain the grace, the gift of God with money.

So, Simon mistook Jesus as a bill of goods, a cheap commodity that he could add the tricks to his repertoire that he had already. You can't buy the grace of God.

[ 31 : 47 ] You have to come and lay down all your pride and all the stuff that you think you can do to impress God. You have to lay it down and come to God in God's way, which is only through Christ, by grace, through faith.

So, he was only obsessed with the supernatural. He thought this would be a cool way for him to add some tricks to the show he put on. Peter says, you have no, you neither part nor lot in this matter for your heart is not right before God.

You have no share in this. Your heart is crooked. So, then he calls him, repent, right? Repent of this wickedness. Maybe, perhaps, God may forgive you.

And so, repent, we are familiar with this term, to turn away from your sin, to change the thinking about why you do what you do. It's not just changing your actions, so follow me on this.

It's not just changing your thinking, it's just changing your feelings towards that action as well. So, example, it's not just saying, stop acting prideful, it's saying, hate your pride, because not only does it destroy you and hurt others, but it dishonors God.

[ 33 : 04 ] So, it's not just, okay, I need to come across like I'm not prideful, you need to hate and despise your pride, because it dishonors the Lord and it hurts other people. That's what he's saying, repent, turn away from your sin, you're rotten, you're twisted, you're enslaved, that's what Peter tells him.

And so, then he says, well, may none of this happen to me, we don't really know what happened to him, but, just an example, that there is in the scripture, a believing that is not real believing, a faith that is not real faith.

we see in Luke 18, or Luke 8, that is sort of a picture of the parable of the soils where the gospel goes out, and Jesus says, the ones on the rock are those who when they heard the word, receive it with joy, but then they have no root, they believe for a little while, and in time of temptation, they fall away.

So it seems like something good is going on, but then when trials come, temptation come, they fall away, it's not real. So is your faith in Christ real? Are you sure of it?

Are you trusting Christ, loving Christ? So in conclusion, here's just a few things, like there is a very strong warning, scattered throughout the Old Testament and New Testament, that there are a lot of people who think that they are right with God, and they're not.

[ 34 : 28 ] There are people who genuinely think they have Christ, and they don't. Jesus said that on the judgment day, many people are going to come to him and say, Lord, Lord, we did this in your name, we did this for you, and he will say, I will declare to them, depart from me, you worker of lawlessness, I never knew you.

Very scary words. So how can you be sure, you can be sure, that your faith is real in Christ. Luke's warning here is that there is a faith that is not saved.

Make sure you don't have that faith, that you have the real faith. Come to Jesus on his terms, not your terms, for your heart is not right before God. Right?

Make sure your faith is real, and stop playing games with God. Repent of your sin, change the way you think about these things, and submit to God. You can't buy this with money, you can't buy this by good works.

It's the free grace of God. This is a free offer of salvation in Christ, and the last thing we're going to look at, just turn to Isaiah 55 real quick. If Simon had read this, it might have helped him, but Isaiah 55, the very opposite of buying the grace of God, there's a picture here.

[ 35 : 47 ] A call to repent of our sins, renounce it, and turn to God, and to lay down your sin, and lay hold of Christ. Isaiah 55, verse 1, this is an invitation from God.

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money, come, buy, eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good.

Delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, come to me. Hear, that your soul may live. Jump down to verse 6. Seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord. Listen to this. So that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly part.

[ 36 : 54 ] God is ready. Come, eat, buy for free from God. Come to Christ. You're not coming to me. I have no supernatural power. You're coming to Christ.

I'm only a messenger to tell you that God loves you, Christ died for you, and that he will forgive you and receive you now. And so, the last comfort that we can look at from this for those of us who are in Christ is that our mission to the world is literally unstoppable because it is God's purpose to take the gospel to all the nations.

And just a story that I can't, I really think I'm just supposed to put it in here. I was kind of holding it in my hand lightly earlier. But also, during the communist regime, there was a man named Joseph Son, another Romanian pastor.

I recommend this book. It's called Suffering, Martyrdom, and the rewards in heaven. But, he was being interrogated. He was in prison for a long time.

And he was doing the same thing, loving, speaking Christ to the interrogators. And this is something he wrote in the book. He said, during an early interrogation, I had told an officer who was threatening to kill me, Sir, let me explain how I see this issue.

[ 38 : 12 ] Your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying. Here's how it works. You know that my sermons are on tape and they have spread all over the country. And if you kill me, those sermons will be sprinkled with my blood.

Everyone will know I died for my preaching. And everyone who has a copy of that tape will pick it up and say, I better listen to this again because this man sealed it with his very life.

So, Sir, my sermons will speak ten times louder than before. I will actually rejoice in this supreme victory if you kill me. After I said this, the interrogator sent me home.

Another officer who was interrogating a pastor friend of mine told him, We know that Mr. Song would love to be a martyr, but we are not that foolish as to fulfill his wish.

I stopped to consider the meaning of that statement. I remembered how for many years I was afraid of dying. I had kept a low profile because I wanted so badly to live and I had wasted my life and inactivity.

[ 39 : 21 ] But now that I have placed my life on the altar and decided I was ready to die for the gospel, they were telling me that I, they would not kill me. I could go wherever I wanted in the country and preach wherever I wanted knowing I was safe.

As long as I tried to save my life, I was losing it. And now I see dying as gain. You can't stop a people who believe that.

You let me live, I'm going to preach Christ everywhere. Kill me? That's what he says. And the guy obviously walked away and set him free. So, this is God's mission and that it's unstoppable and we need to throw ourselves into it.

We need to have more confidence in this. this is what gives me courage to go on the campus to hard places and talk to people who are either hostile or crazy because it's God's mission.

What are they going to do? Nothing. They have nothing. They speak wind, right? This is the word of God. Throw yourself into the cause of God. Let's pray together.

[ 40 : 28 ] Let's pray together.