

Series: How Jesus Acts through Us Today; *Sermon:* **The Scandal of the Evangelical Mouth**; *delivered by* **Josh Moody**, senior pastor, *on* May 24, 2020

Bible text explored: Acts 8:1–8

¹And Saul approved of his execution.

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ²Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. ³But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

⁴Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸So there was much joy in that city. [ESV]

Review and application:

1. Pastor Moody called his title a “take off” on *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. In that 1995 book, Mark Noll—a former Wheaton College professor then at Notre Dame—critiqued a gap in the contribution of true believers to scholarship. What gap does this sermon critique?

In retelling today’s Bible narrative, Pastor Josh frames it as a tale of two cities, illustrating how God sovereignly employs the very opposition the church faces to spread the good news.

2. What (*Acts 1:8*) was Jesus’ mandate to the church to be planted in Jerusalem? What (*Acts 2:41; 5:14; 6:7*) had been the rapid result in Jerusalem? What part of their mandate had thus far been overlooked?
3. What event (*Acts 7:54-60 and 8:1, above*) signaled an apparent reversal? To what places (*verses 2-3*) were the thousands of converts scattered? Who played a key role in the outbreak of persecution?
4. How was God sovereignly using persecution to put the church back on mission? How are God’s sovereignty and human responsibility related? Why, to quote J. I. Packer, should God’s intervention be not an occasion for controversy, but for worship and for energizing motivation?
5. How could God be using COVID19 pandemic to put us back on mission? Research shows the DuPage population as being not more than 13% evangelical in affiliation, A national poll gauges 79% of those polled as open to hearing about the faith of others, and only 39% of believers indicating they had shared the gospel with anyone in the previous six months. So, what gap may God be moving to bridge?
6. Oswald Chambers once said, “The art of sharing the good news belongs not only to preachers but to every grown-up Christian.” With only the apostles remaining in Jerusalem, how (*verses 4-8*) did the scattered believers “gossip the gospel”?

7. What had been the prevailing Jewish attitude toward Samaritans as shown by Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well (*John 4:4-23*) and by the lawyer's question (*Luke 10:25-37*) to Jesus?

Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper's asserted, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry 'mine.'" What does this suggest God may be up to?

8. Pastor Josh challenged each one to resolve to share his or her faith with one person, perhaps basing it on this simple framework:

God: Made us to be in a relationship of loving obedience

Us: We all rebelled against God, for which God's just judgment is eternal death

Jesus: As a God of love as well as justice, God sent Jesus to take the punishment we deserved

Response: If we repent and believe, we will be restored to a right relationship with God

Am I willing to make a timely, sincere effort to do so?

Indian-born Canadian-American apologist Ravi Zacharias died last week. One of the more than 30 books he authored is entitled: Beyond Opinion; living the faith we defend. May God help us, too, to rise to the calling he so faithfully fulfilled.