

“Saul wholeheartedly approved of Stephen’s death. And on that day a great and relentless persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem; and the believers were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles.” (Acts 8:1 AMP)

While reading my devotional scriptures this morning, the first sentence of this verse stood out to me. “Saul wholeheartedly approved of Stephen’s death...” He was not just responsible for it, but he wholeheartedly approved of it.

Before being transformed by the power of the gospel and becoming Paul, the apostle, Saul the persecutor wreaked havoc in the church, imprisoning men and women and was personally responsible for their deaths.

After his conversion experience, in the history of the church, Paul became the most influential preacher and writer for the propagation and preservation of the gospel. His conversion, however, was a minor miracle when making the following consideration.

Imagine being a saint in the book of Acts church and hearing the announcement that Paul would be preaching. Paul, formerly Saul—the man responsible for the death and imprisonment of many of your fellow worshippers or family members. That, my friends, would be hard to swallow. Only by the grace of God were the early church saints able to get beyond their personal animosity and hear the Word of the Lord. No wonder they were called Christians at Antioch!

Though times have changed, human nature has not. To hear the Word of God and receive from Him, each person must press through whatever deterrent that may present itself. Remember, nothing has enough power to keep you from the presence of God unless you allow it to!

Are there imperfect saints and preachers in the church today? Absolutely! Will you ever have to face those who have brought pain to you? Most likely.

Press on. Forgive. Allow the blood of Jesus to do its work!

Remember the early church and how they received Paul into their midst.

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