

Main Idea: In Acts 8:1-8, the Lord closed one door and opened another as He worked through His people to fulfill His mission of rescuing sinners for His glory. There’s much for us to learn from this passage, for He often does the same in our lives.

- I. We see God closing one door (1-3).
  - A. The church lost a great preacher (1a).
  - B. The church seemed to lose ground (1b-3).
    1. Many Christians were forced to leave Jerusalem.
    2. Some Christians were put in prison.
- II. We see God opening another door (4-8).
  - A. The church gained new preachers (4-5).
    1. Ordinary people preached the Word (4).
    2. A new evangelist preached the Word (5).
  - B. The church gained new ground (6-8).
    1. The Samaritans heard about Christ (6).
    2. The Samaritans saw the power of Christ (7).
    3. The Samaritans experienced the joy of Christ (8).

Make It Personal: Three lessons to consider...

1. We learn what God is *like*.
  - He is sovereign.
  - He is wise.
  - He is good.
2. We learn how God *works*.
  - Ask yourself, “What is God’s agenda for my life?”
  - Then ask, “How can God use this adversity to accomplish His agenda?”
3. We learn what God *wants*.
  - He takes His mission seriously.
  - He wants us to do the same.

### *Communion after offering*

#### *Scripture Reading: Luke 12:1-12*

As we begin, I want us to think about a reality we seldom consider.<sup>2</sup>

Augustus Toplady, 1740-1778, who wrote Rock of Ages, died at age 38.

David Brainerd, 1718-1747, American missionary to the Indians, died at age 29.

Robert Murray M’Cheyne, 1813-1843, Scottish minister who said, “It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likenesses to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.” died at age 29.

Oswald Chambers, 1874-1917, another Scottish born preacher who wrote, *My Utmost for His Highest*, died at age 43.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1906–1945, German pastor and theologian, was killed by Nazis age 39.

Eric Liddell, 1902-1945, Olympic champion and missionary to China, died in a Japanese prison camp at age 43.

Keith Green, 1953-1982, musician, song writer, evangelist, died in plane crash at age 28.

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For an earlier development of this text, see the Acts series preached at WBC in 2001.

<sup>2</sup> I read an interesting article this week, “12 Great Christians Who Died Quite Young.”  
<https://billmuehlenberg.com/2017/05/16/12-great-christians-died-quite-young/>

William Borden, 1887-1913, died at age of 25. Let me tell you a little more about him. Borden was born into a wealthy Chicago family. He was converted as a young man at Moody Memorial Church under the preaching of R. A. Torrey. He graduated from high school at 16 and travelled to Europe, Africa and Asia. He developed a deep burden for missions and wished to minister to unreached Muslims in China.

He went to Yale, and then studied at Princeton seminary. While there he was involved in a number of Christian ministries and works. He then joined the China Inland Mission and went to Cairo to study Arabic before heading to China. But soon thereafter he contracted cerebral meningitis. After a few weeks of great suffering, he passed away on April 9, 1913, never having made it to China as a missionary.

He left his large fortune to various home and foreign mission agencies. After he had died it is said that his friends found a note under his pillow with these words: “No Reserve! No Retreat! No Regrets!”

God works in mysterious (to us) ways. The One who is perfect in knowledge has a perfect plan and has promised to fulfill that plan. Yet at times He uses unusual, unexpected means to accomplish His good plan. Sometimes His ways don’t make sense to us, not at the time, and maybe not for a long time. But they make perfect sense to Him because He sees the big picture.

Do you ever struggle to make sense of life? We all do at times. What kind of perspective should we have as we move through life?

I’ve entitled today’s message, “Closed Door, Open Door.” I chose that title because in Acts 8:1-8, the Lord closed one door and opened another as He worked through His people to fulfill His mission of rescuing sinners for His glory. There’s much for us to learn from this passage, for He often does the same in our lives.

It was around the year AD 35 that the Lord closed a door and began to open another. Jesus Christ had died, risen from the dead, and returned to heaven about five year earlier.

As the first chapters in Acts indicate, those five years were quite eventful for the First Church. Just before Jesus left His followers He gave them a promise and a charge (1:8): “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

You will be My witnesses. And they were. They filled Jerusalem with the good news of Jesus Christ. And the church exploded with growth. What started as a small band of 120 disciples in Acts 1 mushroomed to over 3,000 in Acts 2, passed the 5,000 mark in Acts 4, and then they stopped counting—the number was so high.

To this point, the door for ministry in Jerusalem had been wide open. True, there’d been opposition, but the church members kept preaching and the church kept growing.

And then one day, the door in Jerusalem shut. It slammed shut. But it didn’t just happen. God was at work.

### I. We see God closing one door (1-3).

It was a sad day for the church in Jerusalem, sad because of two losses mentioned by Luke in the text.

**A. The church lost a great preacher (1a).** “And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.”

*His* death, of course, refers to Stephen. We first met Stephen back in Acts 6 where we learned that he was a choice servant with great potential, “a man full of faith and of

the Holy Spirit (6:5).” He was also a bold preacher, one who knew the Scriptures well—so well that he befuddled the critics of Christianity in debate.

The church needs more men like Stephen, not less, wouldn’t you agree? But for reasons that didn’t make sense on the day it happened, God took Stephen home to heaven in his prime. He allowed the Jewish Sanhedrin to authorize his conviction and execution.

Back in Acts 5, God had intervened for Peter, John, and the apostles, by sending an angel to release them from prison (5:19). But for Stephen there was no angelic deliverance. Stephen became the church’s first martyr.

It was a tough day. When the church lost Stephen, it lost a great preacher. But that’s not all the Jerusalem church lost...

**B. The church seemed to lose ground (1b-3).** Luke explains, “On that day.” Don’t miss those words. The turn of events started on *that* day, on the day Stephen died. “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.”

Prior to this day, it had been “full steam ahead” for the Jerusalem church. For five years they’d watched the Holy Spirit open new ground for the church. But now the engine seemed to sputter, and they began to lose ground—or so it seemed.

Two things happened as a result of the infamous day when Stephen was stoned.

*1. Many Christians were forced to leave Jerusalem.* Luke says “all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.” The persecution was severe. It must have been for Jewish Christians to relocate in Samaria (for reasons we’re explore in a moment).

It was a mass exodus out of the Jerusalem. Christians fled for their lives, leaving behind their homes, their businesses, even their church.

It’s doubtful that the word “all” in verse 1 means that every single Christian (except for the apostles) left Jerusalem. It’s clear from Acts 9:26, 11:2, and other references that the Jerusalem church continued to exist. Perhaps they all left, and some came back. What’s clear is that the persecution broke up the church.

Acts 11:19-21 offers an interesting footnote on what happened: “Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.”

That reference seems to indicate that the Hellenist Christians were hit hardest by the persecution in Acts 8—that is, Jewish Christians from Greek rather than Hebrew backgrounds. Remember, Stephen was a Grecian Jew, and it would make sense that Saul would have targeted other Grecian, Jewish Christians as well.

And so the Christians fled. But the apostles stayed.

I came across a story about a young sailor. He was learning to steer a sailing-ship when a gale blew up. The older man who was teaching him gave him but one piece of advice. “Keep her facing it,” he said. “Always keep her facing it.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> William Barclay, *Acts*, p. 63.

When the winds howled, that's exactly what the apostles did. They kept facing it. Something else happened on that day. Not only did many Christians leave, but...

2. *Some Christians were put in prison.* The prime instigator in this assault against the church was Saul of Tarsus. Authorized by the authority of the Jewish Sanhedrin, Saul began to hunt down the followers of Christ.

Luke says that Saul "began to destroy" the church, as the NIV renders the phrase. The KJV says he "made havoc" of the church. The Greek term denotes brutal cruelty. It means "to destroy," "to ruin," or "to damage." In extra-biblical sources, the word was used to depict the act of destroying a city, or in another place, mangling by a wild beast.

That's what Saul did. In Gestapo-like-fashion, he conducted house searches to locate Christians, and then hauled them away to prison. It was all-out warfare. Filled with zeal, Saul began to tear the church apart limb by limb, a crime that would later trouble his soul to the grave.

You ask, "Where was the Lord in all of this? Didn't He know what was happening to His Church?" Yes, He knew. In fact, He predicted this very scenario the night before His crucifixion (John 16:2-4):

"They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. <sup>3</sup> They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. <sup>4</sup> I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you."

No, Saul didn't catch the Lord off guard. To the contrary, the Lord was in total control of this situation, and would use it for good—as we'll see in a moment.

When the emperor Valens threatened Eusebius with confiscation of all his goods, torture, banishment, or even death, the courageous Christian replied, "He needs not fear confiscation, who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his country; nor torments, when his body can be destroyed at one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow."<sup>4</sup>

What's staggering to me is to ponder the difference between the Saul we see in Acts 8, and the Saul that appears in the rest of Acts and the New Testament. The Saul of Acts 8 tried to destroy the church with a passion. The Saul of Acts 9 and following devoted his energies to build the church. In Acts 8 he did everything he could to prevent people from becoming Christians. After Acts 9 he did everything he could to persuade people to become Christians. The contrast, humanly speaking, is inexplicable. There's only one way to explain the transformation. *Grace.*

Paul himself later gave this testimony in 1 Timothy 1:12-14, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. <sup>13</sup> Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. <sup>14</sup> The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

O the power of the grace of God! Dear friend, the grace of God can transform the vilest sinner. His grace reaches to the deepest depths, plucks the guilty from the mire of sin and despair, and elevates the person to a heavenly position in Christ.

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<sup>4</sup> Source Unknown.

Marvelous are the ways of the God of grace. Sometimes He closes doors, like He did in Acts 8. And when He does, it may not make sense to us, but we have a choice to make. How will we respond?

Notice what the persecuted Christians did in verse 4, “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” That’s amazing. They could second-guess God and gone into a holding pattern. But they didn’t. They did what the Lord told us to do back in Acts 1:8. They *preached the word*. And in so doing they discovered that God was orchestrating a second event that day.

## II. We see God opening another door (4-8).

Yes, it was a terrible day. People mourned that day, as verse 2 indicates. And yet, from the perspective of hindsight, it was a strategic day. It was a day of *opposition*, for sure, but it also turned out to be a day of great *opportunity*. For on this day not only did God close a door, but He also opened one.

And the scattered Christians walked right through it. Warren Wiersbe said, “Persecution does to the church what wind does to see: it scatters it and only produces a greater harvest.”<sup>5</sup>

Earlier we observed that on this day the church lost a great preacher, and seemed to be losing ground. But as it is so often with us, they lost in order to gain. In verses 4-8 we see two “gains.” Here’s the first...

**A. The church gained new preachers (4-5).** In fact, though they lost one preacher—Stephen—on the same day the church gained a whole army of preachers.

*1. Ordinary people preached the Word (4).* “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” Did you catch that? Who preached? Those “scattered” did.

James Boice comments that there are different words for “scattered” in the Greek. “One means dispersed so that the item is gone from that point on, like scattering a person’s ashes on the ocean’s waves. That is not the word used here in verses 1 and 4. The word used here means scattered in order to be planted.”<sup>6</sup>

Again, I’m impressed at how these persecuted Christians handled the situation. They might have responded, “Whew! That was a close call. We barely got out of town alive. This is no time to let people know you’re a Christian.”

Wrong. It’s the perfect time.

Talk about a natural open door for gospel conversations. Just imagine the scenario. You were forced to leave town overnight, and traveled north to Samaria. The next day you find a house, and your new neighbor comes to see you.

“Welcome! Where are you from?” he says.

“From Jerusalem,” you reply.

“Jerusalem?” he responds. “Why did you leave Jerusalem to move here?”

“Well,” you return, “it was either move or go to prison. Now, don’t call the police. My wife and I aren’t criminals, nor are our kids. Our ‘crime,’ if you want to call it that, is that we believe the Messiah named Jesus has come, and He offers eternal life to all who will receive Him.”

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<sup>5</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary, Vol. 1*, p. 434.

<sup>6</sup> James Boice, *Acts*, p. 133.

And that conversation—or one like it—was repeated over and over again. The text says that God used the persecution to mobilize the entire church to do evangelism. Those scattered preached the Word wherever they went. It wasn't just the clergy. They all preached. Ordinary people preached the Word. Furthermore...

2. *A new evangelist preached the Word (5)*. “Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there.”

This isn't Philip the apostle. This is Philip “the deacon.” He's one of the seven men the church selected in Acts 6 to head up its benevolent ministries<sup>7</sup>. He also, like Stephen, was a Hellenist Jew rather than a Hebraic Jew. And like Stephen, he had a passion to make known the good news about Jesus.

In fact, Philip is the first person in the Bible called an “evangelist” (in Acts 21:8). He's also the only person, yet ironically he was what we call today a “layman.” He wasn't an apostle. He was a servant. And with Stephen gone, Philip said, “I'll take his place.”

Closed door. Open door. This is one of the ways God often works.

On Sunday, January 8, 1956, on the river banks of the Amazon River in Ecuador, five missionaries were murdered by Auca Indians. Some said it was a needless waste of life. Nate Saint, one of the martyrs, had written these words about his motivation for becoming a missionary:

“As we weigh the future and seek the will of God, does it seem right that we should hazard our lives for just a few savages? As we ask ourselves this question, we realize that it is not the call of the needy thousands, rather it is the simple intimation of the prophetic Word that there shall be some from every tribe in His presence in the last day and in our hearts we feel that it is pleasing to Him that we should interest ourselves in making an opening into the Auca prison for Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

Elisabeth Elliot, the widow of another of the martyrs, Jim Elliot, shares her perspective: “To the world at large this was a sad waste of five young lives. But God has His plan and purpose in all things. There were those whose lives were changed by what happened on Palm Beach. In Brazil, a group of Indians at a mission station deep in the Mato Grosso, upon hearing the news, dropped to their knees and cried out to God for forgiveness for their own lack of concern for fellow Indians who did not know of Jesus Christ. From Rome, an American official wrote to one of the widows, ‘I knew your husband. He was to me the ideal of what a Christian should be.’ An Air Force Major stationed in England, with many hours of jet flying, immediately began making plans to join the Missionary Aviation Fellowship. A missionary in Africa wrote: ‘Our work will never be the same. We knew two of the men. Their lives have left their mark on ours.’

“Off the coast of Italy, an American naval officer was involved in an accident at sea. As he floated alone of a raft, he recalled Jim Elliot's words (which he had heard in a news report): ‘When it comes time to die, make sure that all you have to do is die.’ He prayed that he might be saved, knowing that he had more to do than die. He was not ready. God answered his prayer, and he was rescued. In Des Moines, Iowa, an eighteen-year-old boy prayed for a week in his room, then announced to his parents: ‘I'm turning my life over completely to the Lord. I want to take the place of one of those five.’”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> He's listed number two in Acts 6:5, right after Stephen.

<sup>8</sup> Elisabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor*, p. 176.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

So, too, when Stephen died, Philip—and a whole host of ordinary people like him—said, “I’ll take his place. Here I am, Lord. Would You use me, please?” And so, what began as a tragic loss turned out to be a remarkable gain, for the church lost one preacher, yet gained an untold number of others.

How often when one soldier dies an army of replacements step forward. I remember when missionary Roni Bowers was shot down over the Amazon River. As a result, many, including about a hundred students from Piedmont Bible College, said, “We’ll take her place.”

The church gained new preachers in Acts 8. But that’s not all it gained.

**B. The church gained new ground (6-8).** “When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. <sup>7</sup>With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. <sup>8</sup>So there was great joy in that city.”

Answer this. Where did Philip preach? Look again at verse 5. Luke says he went to a city in *Samaria*. And where did scattered Christians preach? Verse 4 says they preached wherever they went. And verse 1 indicates that the “wherever” included Samaria. Yes, *Samaria*.

May I remind you again of our Commander-in-Chief’s final marching orders? *You will be My witnesses*, He said. Where? Only in Jerusalem? No. He said to start in Jerusalem, and then to go to *Judea and Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth*.

In Acts 8 the Sovereign Lord said, “It’s time to go to Samaria.” Don’t miss the significance. Until now, the church had been reaching people *like themselves*. But in Acts 8 God said, “The time has come to start reaching people *not like you*.”

And so the church crossed the tracks. It was a whole new ball game.

It was only forty miles from Jerusalem to Samaria, but the social gap was as wide as the sea. There was deep-seated prejudice, to the point of outright hatred, between the Jews and the Samaritans. Remember what the woman at the well said to Jesus in John 4:9, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” And the next records, “For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.”

The animosity went back centuries. In the eighth century BC, the northern tribes of Israel were taken from their land. The Assyrian king Sargon II claims to have deported 27,290 people from the city of Samaria itself. After the Assyrians removed the Jews from the land, they repopulated the area with non-Jews from other countries they’d conquered. These “Gentiles” settled down in Israel, and eventually inter-married with the Jews that didn’t go into captivity. The offspring of these marriages were the *Samaritans*.

To the Jews the Samaritans were considered “half-breeds.” The Jewish rabbis said, “Let no man eat the bread of the Cuthites (the Samaritans) for he who eats their bread is as he who eats swine’s flesh.” There was a popular Jewish prayer in those days that said, “And, Lord, do not remember the Samaritans in the resurrection.”<sup>10</sup>

It’s one thing to tell your neighbor about Christ, and that’s good. It’s another thing to leave your comfort zone and reach out to people who are *different* from you, and that’s Christianity. On this particular day in Acts 8, the church may have lost some ground in Jerusalem, but it gained brand new ground for Christ in Samaria. As a result of the closed door, and the new open door, three things happened to the Samaritans.

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<sup>10</sup> Taken from Kent Hughes, p. 111.

1. *The Samaritans heard about Christ (6)*. Luke says the crowds “heard” Philip and “paid attention” to what he said. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Philip no doubt told them the bad news and the good news. The bad news—they were sinners under the wrath of God. The good news—Jesus the Messiah came to save sinners from God’s wrath by dying as a substitute on the cross and then rising from the dead. There is no greater news to tell. Whoever will call upon the Lord will be saved.

2. *The Samaritans saw the power of Christ (7)*. “With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.” Philip did what Jesus did. The signs he performed authenticated him as a true messenger of God (Acts 2:43).

3. *The Samaritans experienced the joy of Christ (8)*. Luke reports that there was “great joy” in the city. This is the effect of true gospel ministry. Great joy.

Dear friends, the Christ we love is for all the world. He came to save people like us. But He also came to save people *unlike* us. And He intends to use us to reach them.

He used Philip to build a bridge between two hostile people groups. Just think. He turned people who couldn’t stand each other into brothers. Such is the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Today we need more people like Philip. We need “bridge builders,” people “who will carry the gospel into pioneer territory and dare to challenge ancient prejudices,” as Warren Wiersbe put it.

What doors are in your life? In Acts 8, God closed a door. He also opened another. He’s doing the same thing today in our lives, so let’s consider some lessons.

#### Make It Personal: Three lessons to consider...

1. *We learn what God is like*. In Acts 8 God puts three of His attributes on display for us. He want us to know there are three things true of Him.

- He is sovereign. Nothing ever takes Him by surprise. He is in absolute control.
- He is wise. He never “wings” it. He operates by a plan which He devised in eternity past.

•He is good. He always has our best interest in mind. Always. Whether we feel like it or not. Always. Whether we understand what He’s up to or not. Always. This is what God is like. He is always sovereign, wise, and good.

2. *We learn how God works*. Know this about God. God uses trials to help His children grow up. And God knows that part of growing up involves *transitions*. In the growth process, Christians go through transitions. The same is true for churches.

That’s what we see happening to the church in Acts 8. God is taking the church through a transition. If Acts 1-7 presents the First Church in its infancy, and if Acts 13-28 presents the Church as a mature, functioning adult reaching the world for Christ, then Acts 8-12 presents the Church in its adolescence. It’s a phase of *transition*.

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<sup>11</sup> *Our Daily Bread*, March 6, 1994 - In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi wrote that during his student days he read the Gospels seriously and considered converting to Christianity. He believed that in the teachings of Jesus he could find the solution to the caste system that was dividing the people of India. So one Sunday he decided to attend services at a nearby church and talk to the minister about becoming a Christian. When he entered the sanctuary, however, the usher refused to give him a seat and suggested that he go worship with his own people. Gandhi left the church and never returned. "If Christians have caste differences also," he said, "I might as well remain a Hindu." That usher's prejudice not only betrayed Jesus but also turned a person away from trusting Him as Savior.

William LaSor explains, “Transition is a necessary part of growth or development... An individual Christian usually begins with a faith that is pretty much turned inward. He thinks of his own ‘salvation.’ Then he comes to think of those who are close to him. Usually it takes an educational process, through speakers, Bible study, reading, and other experiences, to give him a ‘world-view’ of the gospel. Many Christians never come fully to this stage. What is true of individuals is also true of churches.”<sup>12</sup>

Brothers and sisters, this is how our God works. His intent is to “grow up” His children. And He knows how to do it. He takes us through transitions so we’ll become like His Son, people who love God and others rather than being consumed with ourselves. And in the maturing process, He uses trials.

You say, “Well, what must I do if I’m going to mature like God wants me to?” We need to ask ourselves two questions.

- Ask yourself, “What is God’s agenda for my life?” It’s bigger than my happiness. It is *holiness*, not just *my* holiness either. He’s forming a people for Himself, a holy people. And He wants to use me to reach others. That’s His agenda.

And here’s where the trials fit in. The trials are part of the agenda. So we need to view trials from God’s perspective, first by asking, what’s God’s agenda for my life?

- Then ask, “How can God use this adversity to accomplish His agenda?” In other words, what’s He up to in the trial I’m facing? Maybe I’m off course, and He’s trying to get my attention. Maybe He’s closing one door, and getting ready to open another.

I can’t help but think of Nancy Rae Litteral at this point. At the age of eighteen her world crashed when she was paralyzed in a car accident. Little could she know at that time that God would use that “accident” to open up world-wide ministry opportunities.

God has an agenda for your life, too. A good agenda. He simply asks you to trust Him, and part of trusting Him involves the willingness to endure while waiting.

*2 Timothy 2:3* “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”

*2 Timothy 2:10-13* “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. <sup>11</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; <sup>12</sup> if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; <sup>13</sup> if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

*1 Peter 2:20-21* “But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. <sup>21</sup> To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”

One final lesson from Acts 8...

3. *We learn what God wants.* Simply put...

- He takes His mission seriously. And...

- He wants us to do the same.

When what we want lines up with what God wants, we’ll never look at a closed door, nor an open door, the same way again.

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<sup>12</sup> William LaSor, *Church Alive*, pp. 111-112.