

SHINE Devotional

Week 21 – Lesson 1



Satan Hates You

Scripture reading Acts 8:1 & 3

“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem...As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”

Did you know that you have an enemy who hates you? He hates you because you were created in the image of almighty God (Genesis 1:27). He hates you because when you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you were recreated in His image. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Satan hates you because he is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4) and you are invading his territory. Satan will do anything he needs to do to stop the work of God. Since you are a child of God, he will do everything he can to stop you. He can't cause you to lose your salvation, but he wants you to be ineffective. He wants God's church to be ineffective. He will use unwitting men to hinder the work that God wants to do in this world, their community, and their individual lives. It is important that you know that Satan hates you. His actions can sometimes be harsh and sometimes subtle. In the garden, when he tempted our mother, Eve, he used subtlety and suggestions. He lied about our God and Eve was deceived into disobedience and death. In Acts 8, he used persecution and death to frighten the members of the first New Testament church, hinder the spread of the Gospel, and cause the work of God to be ineffective. Satan hates you because Satan hates God. You must understand that he is your enemy and that anyone he uses to discourage or hinder you are just his unwitting slaves.

Knowing this will help you to stand firm against your enemy and love his unwitting slaves. Living in this reality will help you to SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 21 – Lesson 2



Mankind Will Misunderstand You

Scripture reading Acts 8:1

“And Saul was consenting unto his death...”

Did you know that a man can be sincerely wrong? Satan has the power to deceive a man or a woman. Satan will tell believers that we are their enemies. Satan will teach people what is right is wrong and what is wrong is right. The biblical word for this is *reprobate*. There are sincere people in this world who believe that abortion (the murder of an unborn child) is a human right. They sincerely believe that an unborn child is not a human being. They are sincere, but they are sincerely wrong. There are people who sincerely believe that God is a loving God and would never allow anyone to suffer the consequences of sin by going to hell forever. People who believe this are sincerely wrong. There are people who think that you can earn your way to heaven by being good, going to church, or being baptized. These people may be sincere people, but they are sincerely wrong. It is important that you understand that people all around you who oppose what you believe can be sincerely wrong. Why? Because, *“the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Saul of Tarsus was such a man. He was a man who was sincerely wrong. Saul was a Roman citizen, but he was Jewish by birth. He grew up in a mixed culture. He most likely had to prove his sincerity in the Jewish religion. He became adamant about what he believed. As a teenager and a young man, he would have heard about the teachings of Jesus Christ. Surrounded by those who despised the Lord Jesus and wanting to impress these men, he would naturally have grown to hate the one who continually rebuked his mentors and friends. He had sincerely despised Him and rejoiced at His demise. When Stephen declared they had killed Jesus the Son of God, Saul gladly consented unto his death. However, Stephen did not consider Saul an enemy. Stephen prayed for Saul’s forgiveness and Jesus called him into the ministry later on. We must remember when dealing with those who are unwittingly being manipulated by Satan that they may be sincerely wrong. When you understand this, you will learn to love your enemies and you will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 21 – Lesson 3



God Is Guiding You

Scripture reading Acts 8:1

“...And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Whenever there is a problem, God has a plan. Our heavenly Father looked down from heaven and allowed the persecution of this first local church. Why? The answer to that one-word question is simple. God wanted His church to be scattered. This was His intent from the very beginning. Stephen’s glorious ascension into heaven to be with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the subsequent persecution of the early church was God’s way of motivating these new believers to accomplish His great commission. You may recall in Acts 1:8 Jesus said, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”* That was God’s plan. However, this new church had been meeting together and nobody wanted to leave Jerusalem. Even those who had homes in other places wanted to stay in Jerusalem. It was where their brothers and sisters were, where their new local church was meeting. Jerusalem where the apostles were; where they met daily, heard the Word of God, partook of the Lord’s Supper, and prayed together. However, God’s plan was for them only to be there for a while, be fed, and then go back to their homes where they could preach the Word of God. Jesus in His earthly ministry came to the city of Gennesaret where He healed a demon possessed man. Once freed from demonic control, he asked Jesus if he could travel with him. Jesus said, *“No. I want you to go back to your hometown and be a witness to your friends and neighbors.”* Through persecution, God scattered His people from Jerusalem. They return to Judea and Samaria, and according to Acts 11:19, they traveled *“as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.”*

God used persecution to guide the first church and God is using your present circumstance to guide and direct you. As you surrender to His guidance, you will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 21 – Lesson 4

Heaven Rejoices with You



Scripture reading Luke 15:10

"[T]here is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

God has a good purpose for everything that happens. The death of Stephen by stoning was not a good thing. The persecution of the church led by the terrorist, Saul of Tarshish, was not a good thing. What good did it accomplish? Acts 8:1 tells us that because of the persecution that was brought on by the testimony and death of Stephen, the first believers were, *"scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."* As they went, they shared the Gospel. Many people trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. At the death of Stephen, the Lord Jesus stood at the right hand of God attentive to what had taken place in Stephen's life and death (Acts 7:55). Jesus personally welcomed Stephen home. The Psalmist says, *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints"* (Psalm 116:15). I believe the death of Stephen made an impact on Saul of Tarshish. It haunted him until the day that Jesus met him on the road to Damascus and God convicted him of his need of salvation. God's plan was for His message to go into all the world. God's plan is to be glorified through the life and, yes, even the death of His saints.

When you walk life's road with the determination to fulfill God's purpose, to be the witness He wants you to be, and to share the Gospel every place you go, then the light of the Gospel will touch many people. Though circumstances may not always be pleasant, and persecution may arise, sinners will be converted. Heaven will rejoice over you, and you as a believer will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 21 – Lesson 5

The Saints Applaud You



Scripture reading Acts 8:2

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.”

God is looking for devout men. The word *devout* means to take hold well. Someone who is devout has taken hold of a particular teaching and has refused to let it go no matter the circumstances. The men in Acts 2 were there when Stephen was stoned to death. They knew identification with him would put their own lives in peril, yet they were willing to identify with this one who had given his life for the cause of Jesus Christ, even if it meant that they too would be stoned. These men had taken hold of the message of the Gospel that Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead for them and that through Him, they could have eternal life. They had taken hold of the Messiah Himself and received Him as their Lord, Saviour, and God. They had taken hold of the brother and sister relationship that becomes ours when we become children of God. They could not let their brother lay in the street. Through their brother/sister relationship they were able to encourage one another to do that which was right and have the courage to stand for the truth. They took hold on the truth of God’s Word and they took hold on the application of that truth.

Throughout the centuries of Christianity, God has used devout men and women to stand in perilous times and reflect the love of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. In 2020, God is still looking for devout men who will stand for truth, love the Messiah, and proclaim the message. When you determine to give your devotion to Christ, you, as a believer, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 21 – Lesson 6



The World Needs You

Scripture reading Acts 8:2

“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”

The world needs you. The reason God allowed the church to be scattered abroad was because the world needs to see believers.

Yesterday, my wife and I decided to get away from it all. At one o’clock in the afternoon, we drove up to a mountain range outside of Las Vegas to take a four hour hike up to a spring we had heard about on the top of Mount Charleston. It was beautiful. Nobody was there. The air was a cool 59°. We were surrounded by pine trees, and fresh lime green leaves were on the aspen. We walked along a narrow path till we came to a split in the road where it was evident that water flowed down the mountain when the snow would melt. We hiked up and found a beautiful hidden stream. After enjoying the beauty and serenity of the moment, we began to make our way back down. About halfway down, a family began to walk our way. There was a woman with a backpack and shovel, a man with a backpack, and a girl with her own small backpack. I had stopped to tie my shoe and the couple walked by and we began to talk. We spoke for a brief five minutes and then I said, “Can I give you something really good?” I reached into my pocket (yes, I had tracts in my pocket even in the mountains) and handed them a gospel tract. We invited them to church, spoke for a few more moments, and then left. My wife and I then prayed together that God would save them and bring them to Liberty Baptist Church or some other Gospel preaching church. God did not scatter us so that you could enjoy isolation. God scatters you from other believers so that you have an opportunity to talk to unbelievers about Jesus Christ. The world needs you. They may not understand that but you need to understand that. That couple decided to take a hike with their young daughter because God wanted them to meet us coming down the mountain, so I could give them a gospel tract, and we could pray for them together. Will they get saved? I don’t know. But they will never stand in front of God and say, “I never had a chance.” They have a chance for heaven. God wants to use you to give others in this world the opportunity to know Him. The world needs you, and when you understand that, you will SHINE.