

SHINE Devotional

Week 38 – Lesson 1



God Is Sovereign

Scripture reading Acts 11:19

“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.”

There is one thing that is obvious when we study the Book of Acts: God is in control of everything. God is sovereign. He is omnipotent or all-powerful. When it looks as if everything is out of control, that is only because we are looking from human eyes and our understanding is finite. The evidence of God’s sovereignty is no more evident in Scripture than in today’s passage.

Since Acts 8, Luke has been showing us what has taken place because of Stephen’s death and the rise of persecution. God used these disastrous events to advance His kingdom. From a human perspective, these were not ideal times. Saul left Jerusalem, went to Damascus to destroy the church, and take captive the believers in Christ. On his way to Damascus, God stops him in his tracks. He is converted and sent to Damascus for three years. He then returns to Jerusalem before being sent to Caesarea and Tarsus. As he traveled, Saul, now know as Paul, preached the Gospel (he had formerly despised) everywhere. Philip went to Samaria and preached the Gospel to the Samaritans went to Gaza, and eventually ended up in Caesarea. Because of the persecution, Peter traveled to Samaria, Lydda, Joppa, and then Caesarea to preach the Gospel to Gentiles. None of that would have happened if God had not allowed Stephen to be stoned and the persecution to begin. In Acts 11:19, we are told that all believers were scattered abroad because of the persecution that arose after Stephen’s death. God used the death of Stephen and the persecution of the Jews to motivate His disciples to scatter. They wound up doing exactly what He had commissioned them to do.

When you remember that God is sovereign, you will allow your life to SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 38 – Lesson 2



God Wants the World to Know About Jesus

Scripture reading Acts 11:19-20

“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.”

It is important to remember as we are reading through the Book of Acts, exactly what took place at Pentecost. At Pentecost, there were Jews and people who had been converted to Judaism from nations all over the Roman empire. Here is a list of nations that had been converted: Rome, Crete, Cyrene (Northern Africa), Egypt (again Northern Africa), Judea, Arabia, Elam, Parthia, Media (modern day Iraq), Mesopotamia (modern day Syria), Pamphylia (Greece), Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia (modern day Turkey), and Asia. They were all brought to Jerusalem to hear the Gospel at Pentecost and get saved. God allowed the death of Stephen to get them to scatter so that others would hear the Gospel. What does it take for God to get you to move? You do not have to go to the end of the earth, we are already there. Jesus said, *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”* (Matthew 28:19-20). There are people everywhere and God wants them to know about Jesus. That is why we encourage everyone to pass out Gospel tracts.

The other day, I was at a gas station in the middle of the Mojave Desert. I had prayed that morning that God would allow me to give the Gospel to somebody. When I went into the convenience store to get some water, I waited for a man to serve me. When he came up, I saw on his nametag that his name was “Sammi.” I began to talk to him and called him by name. I asked him if I could give him something good to read. He asked what it was. I handed him a gospel tract. Right there, in my presence, he began to read it. He said, “This should be interesting. I believe that it is what you believe, not what you do that will get you to heaven.” I said, “You are going to like that pamphlet.” We must be witnesses and we must send missionaries where we cannot go. Mission work is important to God. God wants the world to know about Jesus. When you understand that and get involved in missions, you, as a believer, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 38 – Lesson 3



God Wants Everyone to Have an Opportunity to Be Saved

Scripture reading 2 Peter 3:9

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

I have some very dear friends who believe that Jesus came to suffer and die to pay the penalty of sins of an elect few. Though I love and respect them, I cannot agree with them. The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus died to pay for the sins of the entire world. *“And he is the propitiation for our sins: **and not for ours only**, but also for the sins of the whole world.”* (1 John 2:2). *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:9). The most popular Bible verse in the entire world is John 3:16, which starts out *“For God so loved the world.”* The verse continues and says, *“that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Paul writing to Timothy, encouraging him to pray for all men and for leaders that they would be saved. This is his reasoning, *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”* (1 Timothy 2:3-4). This is why missions work is so important to God. God wants everyone to have an opportunity to be saved. That is why He sent the Lord Jesus. God wants to work through you and me to reach lost people with the Gospel.

Yesterday, I walked into Costco and had the opportunity of giving a gospel tract to two people. When I was finished giving them that gospel tract, I prayed for their salvation. Are you telling other people about Jesus Christ? Are you supporting mission work around the world? The more you get involved in missions, the more you, as a believer, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 38 – Lesson 4



God's Plan for Reaching Man Is to Scatter His Children

Scripture reading Acts 11:19

"Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only."

God is a sovereign God, but He delegates to man responsibility. When we are faithful to fulfill the responsibilities He has given to us, we get to be part of His plan. God's plan for reaching man is to scatter His children, so that we can reach other people. When we do this, we follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said about Himself, *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). Paul said about believers *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ"* (2 Corinthians 5:20). Someone has rightfully said that "God's plan A for reaching the world is believers sharing the Gospel message. There is no plan B." This past week, in our Liberty Essentials Class I had the opportunity of sharing the Gospel with several people as they were considering membership with Liberty Baptist Church. At the end of the class I interviewed each family. I asked one gentleman if he had ever prayed to receive Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour? He said, "Oh, yes! Every time I listen to you on the internet. I want to make sure I have done what God told us to do." Well you only need to do that once. You only need to call on Jesus once, because He gave us eternal life. However, it is our responsibility to proclaim that truth not just here but around the world. Paul said, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Romans 10:13-15).

My dear friend Kirt Melberg, who was a missionary to Mexico for many years, told me the story of a man who had grown up in Mexico and had never heard the Gospel. When Kirt gave him the Gospel, he questioned, "If this is true, how come it took so long from someone to get here and tell us about Jesus." The only way people get to hear the Gospel is if somebody goes and tells them the Gospel. That job is yours and mine. Mission work is important to God, and when you understand that you will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 38 – Lesson 5



God's Hand Is with Those Who Get Involved

Scripture reading Acts 11:21

“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”

The other day, Pastor Neal and I were talking about the expression, “Hand of the Lord” and its significance. Jesus revealed to us *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:4). We know therefore that God does not have a literal hand. This is what theologians call an anthropomorphic expression of God. That is God is explaining Himself in human terms so that we might understand. What does it mean when God says His hand was with His children?

1. **God's provision.** Nehemiah had been given the responsibility of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, but he had no resources to rebuild. A letter was given to him for the keeper of the king's forest to get all the timber he needed. When he requested materials, the provision was there. *“And the king granted me, according to the **good hand of my God upon me**”* (Nehemiah 2:8). The hand of the Lord means God's provision for those who are obedient to God's great commission.
2. **God's protection.** In Isaiah's time God's people had walked away from God and because of that they had been turned over to terrorists and were seeing their nation destroyed. They were filled with iniquity and God would not hear their prayers. God tells us that He is able to protect when we obey. *“Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save”* (Isaiah 59:1). God will even use the king or the leaders of the nation to protect His people when they are right with Him. *“The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will”* (Proverbs 21:1).
3. **God's power.** Ezra was sent back to Jerusalem during Nehemiah's day to work on rebuilding the city. He said, *“And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me”* (Ezra 7:28). Paul said, *“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost”* (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

God's hand is with those who get involved. That means He provides, protects, and empowers. When the hand of the Lord is on you because you are obedient and are involved in missions, you, as a believer, will SHINE.

SHINE Devotional

Week 38 – Lesson 6



God's Hand Is with Those Who Get Involved- Part 2

Scripture reading Acts 11:21

“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”

Everywhere the New Testament saints went, they saw people trust Jesus as their Lord, Savior, and God. Philip went to Samaria. Peter went to Lydda and Joppa. Philip met an Ethiopian out in the middle of the desert. Paul got converted and great numbers believed in Damascus. Peter went to the home of a Roman Centurion. The Roman Centurion, his family, and his friends get saved in Caesarea. That was not true only of the Apostles but for all believers that got in on God's plan.

Yesterday, we saw that God's hand is with those that get involved and they receive His provision, protection, and power, but that is not all. There are at least two more great benefits that come with the hand of God.

1. *“There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God”* (Ecclesiastes 2:24). The hand of the Lord gives us peace with God and contentment in our life. A contentment that the world cannot understand. Having His peace allows us to SHINE.
2. The last consequence of the hand of God is His punishment. While God's hand protects those who serve Him, it punishes those who come against His people. The hand of God coming in punishment is referred to over and over in Scripture. Moses reminded the children of Israel that God destroyed their enemies. *“For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed.”* (Deuteronomy 2:15).

We need not fear doing the will of God, telling other people about Jesus Christ, and getting involved in missions. Because as we do, we are being obedient to God and have His provision, protection, power, peace, and promise of punishment to those who hurt us while we are in His service. Mission work is important to God. When you remember this, you, as a believer, will SHINE.