

Acts # 45 “Saul Began to Destroy the Church” *Acts 8:1-8; Phil 3:4-9; Luke 7:36-50*

The worst people in the world right now are religious people.

Next to that the worst people are self-righteous people.

Self-righteousness plus religion is the great enemy of God and this is Satan's greatest triumph.

Until the day Saul of Tarsus was born again and became Paul, the apostle, he was delighted that Stephen had been killed.

And certainly a reason for Saul's delight is apparently Stephen was the one man who was able to out debate Saul, publicly.

Stephen was actually a great theologian in the early Church; we know this from his message in Acts 7.

Now Stephen is dead and Saul approved of his death, yet it's Saul who will take the place of Stephen as the primary theologian of the Church.

How can anyone take the worst sinner who ever live and make him the greatest of the apostles?

It is done by grace; it's accomplished by biblical truth in the souls of men.

The Word of God is the great converter; it is biblical truth that changes people and their approach to circumstances.

Saul vehemently devastated the church; he found out those who were members of the body of Christ and entered their homes.

The persecution was terrible and many of them died in the process.

Saul is an extremely self-righteous religious man and he's working feverishly in the name of religion, so he kept on putting believers in prison.

Up until this chapter, it appeared that the church would be a Jewish monopoly but this is one of several chapters which indicate that Jews and Gentiles are all members of the same body.

Remember Philip is in a Greek city and in order for him to get any kind of a crowd together, it's necessary for him to present an official calling card.

Philip performed miracles for one purpose: To focus attention on the Gospel, so that people could believe in Jesus Christ and have eternal life.

Miracles are always mentioned in this connection.

Joy is a mental attitude happiness, a happiness which cannot be destroyed by the things of this life.

And joy is not emotion, it's mental stimulation, mental happiness which quite often leads to incredible physical health but not always.

Whether a person has joy or not depends on many conditions.

The infancy of joy is mental happiness related to the persistent function of two power options (the filling of the Holy Spirit and processed biblical truth in the stream of consciousness), the development and use of the basic problem solving devices and inner soul thinking producing an motivation to continue learning the Word of God.

When you first begin to learn the Word, there's enthusiasm and when you first begin to understand basic biblical truth, there's excitement; a new life in your soul which has produced a spiritual animation which is the beginning of loving God.

The joy of the Lord is a strength to carry us through everything in life and the point of staying in this life after salvation is to come to love God, not minister for Him!

When you come right down to it, we do not even start living until we love God.

So, joy is a system of understanding biblical truth; an integral part of the spiritual life.

We must distinguish between joy as a system of thinking and happiness and how it relates to love for God and pleasure as a system of emotion.

Joy can only be understood in relationship to divine love and while joy is a part of God's agenda for entering the door of hope, it reaches its peak and completion in sharing the happiness of God.