

**Title: From Catastrophe to Opportunity January 19, 2020**

**Text: Acts 7:54- 8:4**

**Walk-In:** We are all taken back when disaster strikes. The instantcy of communication seems to bring these events into our homes daily. Last week we left Stephen giving his defense of the faith before the Sanhedrin and we left before their response to his reasoned apologetic. Their response was anything but reasoned! It resulted in a quite unexpected turn of events that would alter the trajectory of this fledgling Church forever. So let's look at the progression of events that transpired and lead from catastrophe to opportunity.

**First, there was a D \_\_\_\_\_ response that was C \_\_\_\_\_. - Acts 7:54-60**

**Remember a few things when the tragedies of life strike.**

**Note two responses:**

**The 71:** furious (cut to the heart), teeth gnashing, ear covering, loudly yelling, bull rushing, accused dragging, stone throwing religious leaders.

**The 1:** Spirit filled, heavenward looking, glory seeing, testifying, forgivingly praying, table waiting man.

For Stephen, death was: a window to see Jesus,  
a doorway to join Jesus and,  
an occasion to reflect Jesus.

**Then, there was an U \_\_\_\_\_ response that was R \_\_\_\_\_ A \_\_\_\_\_. - Acts 8:1-3**

**It altered a man named S \_\_\_\_\_.**

Acts 7:58 garment tending  
Acts 8:1 death approving  
Acts 8:3 church destroying  
Christian imprisoning

**It altered E \_\_\_\_\_ follower of Christ.**  
From growth (Acts 6:7) to persecuted.

*Sometimes a change in the routine can be a catalyst to growth.*

*What might happen if we began to pray: Lord, do things I am not used to?*

**Finally, there was an U \_\_\_\_\_ church that took an opportunity. - Acts 8:4**

**The missing word... T \_\_\_\_\_**

**They were S \_\_\_\_\_.**

They didn't scatter themselves.

Literally means 'to sow seeds'

Think Parable of the Sower from Matthew 13

**They were S \_\_\_\_\_ out.**

**They were E \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Wrap-up:** The classic statement about Stephen is that 'the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church.' Howard Hendricks, former professor at Dallas Seminary, would say that 'the greater the heat, the greater the expansion.' Few intentionally go looking for tragedy in life, but tough things do have a way of finding their way to us. But even the hard things can result in our growth and the chance for the glory of God to be displayed. Ships are safe in the harbor, but that's not what ships are for. Ask God to help you find the opportunities in your hard spots today... and be unleashed for Him!