



[Acts 8:1](#)

(1) And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

New International Version

The church is under attack. A powerful [persecution](#) is under way, and many sheep have been scattered. But what is often heard among "[independent Christians](#)" are cries such as, "I'll never follow another man!" or "No man is going to tell me what to do!" or "Beware of any group that has a hierarchical governmental structure."

While a limited amount of [wisdom](#) may be in such thinking, these independents may be failing to see a very real problem because they are looking in only one direction. While they critically examine others, problems of equal or greater magnitude in the areas of ignorance of God's Word, of respect for government, or gross intolerance for another's weaknesses may be in them.

They have reacted by divorcing themselves from any group and "floating" among many groups. Their attitude is such that, even when they do attend, they are in reality just passing through. It is very much like the modern practice of a man and woman living together without commitment. Each "takes" what they can get from the relationship, but one is always free to leave if things do not go quite as planned.

Daniel writes:

Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered [*scattered*, KJV], all these things shall be finished. ([Daniel 12:7](#))

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Surely the enemy has attacked, and the sheep are scattered! [Jesus](#) says,

And when he [the true shepherd] brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. ([John 10:4-5](#))

We had good reason to flee our former association: The voice of a stranger was heard within it, and we could not follow him. But is it possible that the "independents" still do not hear the True Shepherd's voice? Could they have fled for different reasons? This is why these people may be in very real danger. They cannot come to any shepherd because their confusion and governmental problems are preventing it.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[In the Grip of Distrust](#)

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