



Week 5

Acts 7: Persecution

Text: Acts 7

OPEN

This is our fifth week of our series in Acts called “**Unstoppable**” based on Acts 5:42 which says, “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, **they never stopped** teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.” Like a powerful waterfall, the book of Acts is the story of the unstoppable movement of Jesus. It is the story of the birth, life, and ministry of his Church that we are part of today as a **people of God, filled with the Spirit of God, to fulfill the mission of God, by sharing Jesus with others**. Proclaiming and living out the “good news” of Jesus will inevitably encounter opposition. Today, millions of Christ followers globally are enduring persecution, some even unto death (~5600 killed last year that we know of). God exhorts us to remember (especially in prayer) those persecuted/imprisoned as if we ourselves were in prison. This week we will examine the first Christian martyr Stephen in Acts 7.

READ

- Break into 5 groups and divide up these sections of Stephen’s story. **Group 1:** Acts 6:8-15, **Group 2:** Acts 7:1-10, **Group 3:** 7:11-22, **Group 4:** 7:23-36, **Group 5:** 7:37-52. Starting with Group 1 have each group summarize their section.
 - How does the history of the Old Testament reflect the New Testament fulfillment in Jesus?
 - Stephen describes God’s people in regard to land, law, and temple. What is the significance of these three identity markers for Israel?
 - Think about the birth of the Church in Acts 2. How did the ministry of Jesus through the Church extend beyond the Israel’s land, law, and temple? How was the gospel spreading? (see Matthew 5:17).

REFLECT

The Persecuted Church (and us) today.

- The sermon listed the following five insights from the Stephen story to guide our prayers for the persecuted church.
 - He was **full of faith, power, grace and wisdom**, all because of the influence of the Holy Spirit.
 - He knew exactly what to say to his accusers, because of his mastery of the whole story of God and his people. **The Spirit was giving him the necessary words** as Jesus promised His disciples.
 - He had a robust conviction of the sovereignty of God.
 - He had a **vision of Jesus’ glory that sustained him** when his physical pain must’ve been at his worst.
 - He prayed for God to **forgive the very people** who were stoning him.
- Look at each of the five focuses in turn.
 - How have you experienced that characteristic in your life?
 - In what way do you need to develop that characteristic more in your life?
- Take some time to pray for the persecuted church right now. [Check out the Open Doors prayer calendar resource](#) (also available in the “Groups” portion of the App beside this study). Choose some of the prayer needs and pray together as a group. Encourage your group members to follow the prayer calendar together this month.

APPLY/PRAY

- (Taken from Open Doors Prayer Calendar) **Sunday 11** | North Korea – The Kim family has ruled over North Korea for more than 70 years. In that time, they have overseen the most brutal treatment of Christians in the world. Pray that God would change the hearts of Kim Jong Un and others in power. Pray for changes in attitudes and policies in North Korea, to be more accepting of Jesus.
- Pray for courage and boldness to share Jesus with someone in your life.
- Pray for Wellspring’s staff, leaders, and elders in this time of transition. Pray for courage to follow the Spirit’s leading.

