

## THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: STANDING IN THE WIND.

*“They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name of Jesus. And 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.” Acts 5:40-42*

### A. Problems Within;

- **The Problem:**
  - *“In those days when the number of disciples was rapidly increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.” Acts 6:1*
- **The Resolve:**
  - *“So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, ‘We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program.’” Acts 6:2*
- **The Solution:**
  - *“And so, brothers and sisters, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.” Acts 6:3-4*
  - **Stephan’s Four Servant Leadership Qualities**
    - **Believer**
    - **Of good repute**
    - **Filled with the Holy Spirit**
    - **Wise**
  - *“This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.” Acts 6:5-6*
- **The Result: The Spread**
  - *“So the word of God continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.” Acts 6:7*

### B. Persecution Without:

- Stephen => ‘crown’ *“Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.” Acts 6:8*
- **The Problem:**
  - *“Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, ‘We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.’ So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, ‘This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us. All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” Acts 6:9-15*
  - *“Then the high priest asked, ‘Stephen, are these charges true?’” Acts 7:1*
  - **Introspection:** How he responds to that question – the words that he chooses will determine whether he lives or dies. How would you respond in that situation? If you had been arrested for the crime of telling others about Jesus? If you were arrested for being a follower of Christ? If you found yourself on trial for your life for being a member or attender of Southland Church?
- **The Resolve:**
  - *“The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham... ‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you’... God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child” Acts 7:2,3,5*

- *“Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles... Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our ancestors could not find food. When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our forefathers on their first visit.” Acts 7:9-12*
- *“Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not... “This is the Moses who told the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people... But our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him ...They told Aaron, ‘Make us gods who will go before us’” Acts 7:17-38*
- *“It was Solomon who built a house for Him. However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands.” Acts 7:47-48*
- *“You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That’s what your ancestors did, and so do you!... They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered.” Acts 7:51-52*
- **Stephen’s Courageous Decisions:**
  - **To become a follower of Christ.**
  - **To learn the Word of God.**
  - **To allow God to use him.**
  - **To be a bold witness for Christ.**
- *“Then Jesus said to them all: ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.’” Luke 9:23*
- *“He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.” 2 Corinthians 5:15*
- *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” Galatians 2:20*
- *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Philippians 1:21*
- Courage comes from living life in the hands of God and fighting those battles on the inside. Heroic faith is not made in a dramatic moment. It’s developed over time, and it’s the culmination of many private, courageous, intentional decisions.
- Example of Joshua: *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged. For the Lord, your God, will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9*
  - Two great paralyzers: Being terrified and discouraged.
  - Did you see the thing that cancels those two out? “I will be with you.”
- *“And now you have betrayed and murdered him (Jesus)— you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.” Acts 7:52-53*
- *“When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’” Acts 7:54-56*
- **The Solution(?)**
  - *“At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ “Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And with that, he died.” Acts 7:57-60*
- **The Result: The Spread:**
  - *“And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.” Acts 8:1*
- **The Practicum:**
  - What’s inside of you that keeps you from doing what needs to be done?
  - What kinds of battles are going on inside of you that keep you stuck in neutral? In reverse?
  - What is it within you that won’t let you relate properly to the people around you?
  - What’s the truth about what’s going on inside of you?