

ACTS 7:51 – 8:4

"*You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, ⁵³ who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it*."

⁵⁴ When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with *their* teeth. ⁵⁵ But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ⁵⁶ and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

⁵⁷ Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; ⁵⁸ and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

8 ¹ Now Saul was consenting to his death.

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ² And devout men carried Stephen to *his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.

³ As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison.

⁴ Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word....

HOW TO RESPOND TO PERSECUTION

1. Persecution should be anticipated.

JOHN 16:33b "In the world *you shall have tribulation*; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

LUKE 17:1 "It is impossible for offenses not to come."

2. Praying to be bold is a great response.

ACTS 4:29-30 "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and *grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word*, ³⁰ by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

3. Receiving the Holy Spirit is God's remedy.

ACTS 4:31 "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit*, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

ACTS 13:50-52 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. ⁵² And *the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit*.

4. Rejoicing in suffering is also good reaction.

ACTS 5:40b-41 "...when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name*.

5. Praying for persecutors is Jesus' command.

ACTS 7:59-60 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and *cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin."* And when he had said this, he fell asleep. (MATTHEW 5:44)

6. Praying for the persecuted should be daily.

ACTS 12:1-5 Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church. ² Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³ And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴ So when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. ⁵ Peter was therefore kept in prison, but *constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church*.

7. Conquer complaining with songs & prayers.

ACTS 16:23-25 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴ Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵ But *at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God*, and the prisoners were listening to them.

8. Escaping whenever possible is a good thing.

ACTS 9:23-25 Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. ²⁴ But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. ²⁵ Then *the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket*. (14:5-7; 17:10)

9. Appeal to authority for justice to be served.

ACTS 22:25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man *who is a Roman, and uncondemned?*" (25:10-12)

10. Know that our real battles are spiritual.

EPHESIANS 6:12

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7. _____ with songs & prayers.

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So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.

11 For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"