

DAY 12 • AUGUST 16

**Power to Preach to the End****READ: ACTS 7; LUKE 11:13; EPHESIANS 6:18,19**

*<sup>54</sup>Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup>But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup>And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." <sup>57</sup>But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. <sup>58</sup>Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

**ACTS 7:54-58****REFLECT**

Have you ever experienced opposition when preaching the gospel? Opposition can come through rejection and persecution, and this can result in fear of preaching the gospel to others.

Stephen, the first Christian martyred for his faith, was no stranger to persecution. He was one of the seven chosen by the disciples to take care of the needs of widows. However, he went beyond addressing their physical needs, and served them spiritual food by preaching that Jesus was the promised Messiah to the Jews. His boldness to proclaim the truth eventually caused the Jews to angrily reject him and falsely accuse him of blaspheming God.

At the end of his story, we see Stephen facing not only rejection but death. Despite this, he continued to preach the gospel. He denounced the people's disobedience, but at the same time showed them love by asking God for forgiveness on their behalf.

How can we, like Stephen, preach with power and without shame until the end? The Bible describes Stephen as a man *full of the Holy Spirit*. Despite opposition, the Holy Spirit can fill us with the joy and peace of the Lord, helping us to stand strong in the midst of persecution. To experience being filled with the Holy Spirit, we need to tune out the angry crowd and

fix our eyes on Jesus as Stephen did (Acts 7:55). We also need to pray and ask God for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). As we feed our faith with the hope that can only be found in Jesus, we will experience the joy, peace, boldness, and power that can only come from God.

## **RESPOND**

1. Have you ever experienced opposition when preaching the gospel? Considering the story of Stephen, how should this affect the way we respond to opposition?
2. Are you relying on the Holy Spirit when faced with an open door and opportunity to preach the gospel? How can you begin to depend on Him rather than on yourself this week?

## **PRAY**

1. Thank God for the cross. As you meditate on His goodness in your life, ask Him for the boldness to preach the gospel to others.
2. Pray for a family member or classmate you need to preach the gospel to. Ask God for a deeper revelation of the gospel as He opens doors for you to preach the gospel.
3. Pray for Christians who are experiencing rejection and suffering as they live out and preach the gospel in their campuses and communities.