CHRIST CHURCH
CHORLEYWOOD

HOME GROUP STUDY
8th November 2026

Series: Developing our Vision – Sharing Christ … despite violence and injustice

Acts c7 v51-60 and -c8 v1-8

51 "You stiff-necked people, 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 announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."
54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. 55 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. 56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together[b] at him. 58 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. 59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1 And Saul approved of his execution.
And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. 2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. 3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.
Philip Proclaims Christ in Samaria
4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. 6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed. 8 So there was much joy in that city.

Icebreaker: do you or your family have any links either with the military or recent wars?

1. SAUL – A DESCENT INTO EVIL
1.1 A small start
(cv58) "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."

1.2 He's a vocal supporter
(c7v60) "And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.
c8v1 And Saul approved of his execution."

1.3 He leads the violence
(c8v3) "But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison."

Q1: How can things start so small, and then get so serious?

Q2: Saul makes an unlikely later convert. Did you have a dramatic conversion experience?

2. STEPHEN – FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
2.1 He speaks the truth!
51 "You stiff-necked people, 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 announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it." 54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.
Q3: Do we ever not speak spiritual truth because we are scared of other people?

2.2 He looks to God
55 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. 56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Q4: This is an amazing view of heaven near death. Do we know of any loved ones who perhaps experienced something a bit like this near death?

2.3 He surrenders to God and he forgives
59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Q5: What is the unfinished business which Stephen must complete before entering God's presence?

Q6: Does it surprise you that the Christian's last thought should be the forgiveness of others rather than just their own forgiveness by God?

3. PHILIP – A WITNESS FOR CHRIST
3.1 The environment is hostile
(c8v1) And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

3.2 But that doesn't stop him!
(c8v4) Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

Q7: Why does Philip preach the gospel amidst such persecution?

3.3 People need the Lord!
6 And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralysed or lame were healed. 8 So there was much joy in that city.

Q8 Why should we share the gospel everywhere we go? What does that look like in practise?

CHRIST CHURCH
CHORLEYWOOD

A PRAYER

Loving heavenly Father, on this most solemn day, as I contemplate the violent events in Jerusalem which birthed the church as a global movement, help me to learn from the lives of those caught up these events.

If, like Saul, I am on a spiritually dangerous path, help me stop before it destroys me. If, like Stephen I am facing danger or discouragement, fill me with your spirit, help me speak your truth and keep me looking at all times to Christ, the author and perfector of my faith. If, like Philip, I feel in a hostile environment, help me be a witness for Christ and a bringer of joy, and when the time comes for me to enter your presence, help me do so peacefully, having forgiven all who have wronged me. Until that day, in this world of violence and injustice, help me share Christ, for the sake of your Son, my Saviour Jesus Christ, and in the power of your Holy Spirit, Amen.