

## **“Fearless: Calm, Cool, and Collected in the Face of Opposition and Death” - Acts 7:1-53**

### **Devotional**

Note: The first fifty-three verses of Acts chapter 7 are a little different from the rest of Acts because here we find an Old Testament history lesson specifically targeted at illuminating the rejection of God’s message and messengers by the Israelite people. The rest of Acts typically outlines the growth and development of the early church as well as specific events, challenges, and missionary journeys that served to further the spread of the Gospel.

There are a few themes present, however, that can be carefully applied to us.

#### **Theme #1: Everlasting to everlasting**

**Read through Acts 7:1-53** and count how many different times “God” and “Lord” shows up in the text.

1. How many different people interacted with God in this account? Do a little research! About how many years were there between Abraham and Solomon?
2. While the human factor changes, who is the one constant character in this account? While the circumstances of the people continually change, whose purposes remain consistent?
3. In the last 2000 years there have been many different governments, nations, people groups, and individuals, but how many “God?” In the last 2000 years there have been many times of trial, war, famine, plague, and changing circumstances, but how have God’s purposes shifted?

Sometimes we have to be reminded of what God has done in order to notice what He is doing and how consistently reliable He has been. What we do with that awareness leads us to our next theme.

#### **Theme #2: Repeated rejection**

**Read verses 1-9:** Did Abraham go straight to the land God told him to go to?

**Read verses 30-34** then **read Exodus 4:10-13:** Did Moses initially submit to God?

**Read verses 37-41:** How well did the Israelites follow Moses in the wilderness?

**\*Consider the book of Judges\***

**Read verses 51-53:** Historically how closely is Stephen saying Israel has followed God?

1. Do I ever find myself slow to respond to God’s calling? Have I ever placed my walk with Christ at the end of my list of priorities?
2. How easy is it for me to get distracted and pulled away from pursuing a relationship with Christ? Do I tend to practice a drive-by Christianity? Infrequent moments of mountain top experiences among frequent long, slow slogs through valleys of unfulfillment?
3. Historically, is my life characterized by obedience or distraction? Surrender or Self-interest?

Tough stuff! But it brings us to our last theme! And not a moment too soon.

### **Theme #3: Mercy**

The whole of the Old Testament is a beautiful road map to the arrival of THE Savior and the execution of the plan for man's Salvation. In a sense we can see our bumpy course through life mirrored in the history of Israel's relationship with God. Times of obedience and victory followed by times of attack and falling away. Though nobody's race is identical, we all struggle resisting the echoes of a flesh that has been put to death but is still kicking. However, we cannot lose God's love or His interest in shaping us into His image! ***Read Hebrews 12:6-9***

1. In the case of Abraham and Moses, their initial hesitation and lack of surrender did not eliminate their ability to serve the Lord. Have I been resisting/ignoring what God wants me to be doing? Is it too late to turn and surrender to Him? If you are still breathing, then it is never too late!
2. When the Israelites turned on Moses it became part of a pattern of repeated rejection that God had to correct through a series of judgments. We know that in the time that Stephen is speaking in this passage, another judgment is not far down the road for Israel. What was the result when God brought judgment upon His people? Were they utterly destroyed? Ultimately restored? Does God sometime have to bring discipline into our lives? Is it to get vengeance on us? To restore us? ***Read Hebrews 12:10-11***