

CHURCH WITHOUT WALLS: Being a Witness in Heartbreaking Times!

Scripture used: [Acts 1:8 \(NIV\)](#); [Acts 12:1–5 \(NLT\)](#); [Acts 7:54–60 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

At the heart of our Christian faith is God's call to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. The original meaning of *martyr* was someone who testified about what they had seen, heard, or experienced. We are called to share our personal experiences of God's presence, not only in seasons of success, but also in times of suffering. In fact, our most powerful witness may come during life's most heartbreaking moments. The early church experienced extraordinary miracles as the Holy Spirit empowered believers to spread the Gospel, yet these same Christians faced persecution, imprisonment, and death. God's miraculous power did not eliminate their suffering, but His presence sustained them through it. We all experience our own "Stephen moments," when suffering challenges our faith and prayers seem to go unanswered. Even when we don't understand God's purposes, we can trust His goodness and bear witness to Jesus.

KEY POINTS

1. **God calls us to be witnesses in every circumstance.** The early Christians prayed for boldness, and the Holy Spirit empowered them to proclaim Jesus despite fierce opposition ([Acts 4:29–31 \(NLT\)](#)). Their faith was not dependent on favorable circumstances. Stephen remained a powerful witness even as he was being killed. We must ask ourselves whether we can remain faithful witnesses during our own "Stephen moments."
2. **God honors our prayers, but He does not surrender His sovereignty.** Pastor Hurmon recalled leading a prayer group that witnessed extraordinary healings, including two young people who recovered from life-threatening illnesses. Yet when another child became gravely ill, Pastor Hurmon struggled to accept that God might not heal him. God listens to our requests, but He never allows us to control Him. His plans extend beyond what we can understand.
3. **God's "no" does not mean He has abandoned us.** Sometimes an unanswered prayer prepares the way for a future "yes." Other times, our disappointment prevents us from recognizing a different miracle unfolding around us. God can even use our suffering to bring redemption to others. When Paul and Silas were imprisoned, they continued praying and worshipping God ([Acts 16:23–25 \(NLT\)](#)). Their circumstances did not silence their witness.
4. **Suffering can deepen our faith, even when we cannot explain it.** God's miracles show us His presence and power in a broken world. They do not promise that believers will escape every hardship. The same Holy Spirit who empowered the early Christians also comforted them through persecution and loss. Sometimes suffering produces spiritual growth, especially when it comes without any explanation. These are the moments when we most need to trust God.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - God never promised that following Jesus would spare us from suffering. The early church experienced both extraordinary miracles and devastating losses. Yet the Holy Spirit remained present through it all. Our calling is not to understand or control every outcome, but to trust God's goodness and remain faithful witnesses, especially when life is heartbreaking.
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - How do you respond when God does not answer your prayers as you hoped? Have you ever allowed disappointment or suffering to weaken your trust in Him? What would it look like to be a faithful witness to Jesus in your own "Stephen moments"?
- 3) **DO** - This week, identify one area of suffering or disappointment where you have struggled to trust God. Surrender the outcome to Him and ask for the courage to remain faithful. Make this your daily prayer: **"Lord Jesus, give me the courage to be Your witness!"**