

# Silver Creek Fellowship NOTES

May 5

## GO TOGETHER PERSECUTION AND EXPANSION

*"Never in so short a time has any other religious faith—or for that matter any other set of ideas, religious, political or economic— ever achieved so commanding a position in such an important culture without the aid of physical force, or social or cultural prestige." - Kenneth Scott Latourette*

*Acts 6:1 (ESV) "Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution."*

### LIFE RULES

1. Give people the benefit of the doubt without trying to judge their motives.
2. When you do have a problem, always go straight to the source!

*Acts 6:2-8 (ESV) "2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering,*

*...and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

*8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.*

*Acts 6:10 (ESV) "But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking."*

*Acts 7:51-60 (ESV) 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.'*

<sup>54</sup> Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they gnashed 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.

<sup>59</sup> And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

<sup>60</sup> 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."

**Acts 8:1–8 (NLT)** The Gospel and Samaria <sup>1</sup> "Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen. A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> (Some devout men came and buried Stephen with great mourning.) <sup>3</sup> But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.

<sup>4</sup> But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went. <sup>5</sup> Philip, for example, went to the city of Samaria and told the people there about the Messiah. <sup>6</sup> Crowds listened intently to Philip because they were eager to hear his message and see the miraculous signs he did. <sup>7</sup> Many evil spirits were cast out, screaming as they left their victims. And many who had been paralyzed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup> So there was great joy in that city.

## TWO LESSONS:

### 1. Disciples of Jesus are called to serve others.

*"Most astounding to the outside observer was the extent to which poverty was overcome in the vicinity of the communities... Christians spent more money in the streets than the followers of other religions spent in their temples." - Historian Eberhard Arnold*

### 2. God works through "ordinary" people.

**The church grows not by the preaching of a few anointed Apostles, but when every believer is filled with the Spirit and testifies to the Gospel.**

**Acts 1:8 (ESV)** "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."