

Acts 7–10 Summary

Acts 7–10 marks a major turning point in the life and mission of the early church, moving the gospel from Jerusalem outward and across cultural boundaries. In Acts 7, Stephen delivers a sweeping sermon before the Sanhedrin, tracing Israel’s history and exposing a pattern of resisting God and rejecting His messengers. Enraged by his words, the leaders stone Stephen, making him the first martyr of the church. As he dies, Stephen sees Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God—an extraordinary image that suggests honor, advocacy, and welcome, as if Christ Himself rises to receive His faithful witness. This moment signals that allegiance to Jesus may cost everything, but it is also met with divine approval and glory.

Following Stephen’s death, Acts 8 records a wave of intense persecution that scatters believers throughout Judea and Samaria. What appears to be a setback becomes a means of gospel expansion, as scattered Christians preach wherever they go. During this time, Saul of Tarsus emerges as a chief persecutor, actively hunting down followers of Jesus. Yet even as Saul tries to destroy the church, God is already at work to transform him.

In Acts 9, Saul’s story takes a dramatic turn. On the road to Damascus, while still “breathing out murderous threats” against Christians, Saul is confronted by the risen Christ. Blinded and humbled, he is radically converted, called into God’s service, and commissioned to bear the name of Jesus before Jews and Gentiles alike. The former persecutor becomes a preacher, showing that no one is beyond the reach of God’s grace and that the gospel transforms even the church’s fiercest enemies.

Acts 10 introduces another pivotal moment: the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God. Cornelius, a God-fearing Roman centurion, receives a vision directing him to send for Peter. At the same time, Peter is given a vision that overturns long-held Jewish distinctions between clean and unclean, preparing him to understand that God shows no favoritism. When Peter preaches the gospel to Cornelius and his household, the Holy Spirit falls upon them just as He had upon Jewish believers at Pentecost. This confirms that Gentiles are fully welcomed into the faith. Significantly, Peter—who was given the “keys to the kingdom”—had first opened the door to the Jews in Acts 2 and now opens it to the Gentiles in Acts 10, demonstrating that salvation in Christ is for all people.

Together, Acts 7–10 shows that the gospel advances through suffering, opposition, and unexpected people. God uses persecution to spread His message, transforms enemies into ambassadors, and breaks down ethnic and religious barriers, revealing His unstoppable plan to bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

Reflection Questions

1. Stephen spoke the truth even when it cost him his life. Where might God be calling you to speak or live boldly for Christ, even if it brings discomfort, rejection, or loss?
2. Stephen saw Jesus standing to receive him. How does the reality of Christ's approval shape the way you endure suffering, criticism, or opposition for your faith?
3. Persecution scattered the church but spread the gospel. How might God be using a current hardship or disruption in your life as an opportunity for greater faithfulness or witness?
4. Saul believed he was serving God while opposing Jesus. Are there areas where pride, tradition, or certainty might be blinding you to what God is actually doing?
5. Saul's conversion required humility and obedience. What would repentance and surrender look like for you right now if God were asking you to change direction?
6. God chose ordinary believers to carry the gospel beyond Jerusalem. How are you intentionally sharing Christ where God has already placed you?
7. Peter had to unlearn long-held assumptions to obey God. What biases, fears, or comfort zones might be preventing you from fully obeying God's call?
8. Acts 7–10 shows that God's mission cannot be stopped. How does this encourage you to trust Him more deeply and take greater steps of faith this week?