

## Maturity Demands You Make a Decision

### What have you decided? (Part 8)

August 22, 2021

Text: Acts 7:54-60; 8:1-3

Big Question: When will you decide to change?

Introduction:

#### I. The Leaders Decided Not to Listen to Stephen

(Be prepared for this in business and family)

- Acts 7:54–60 (NIV): 54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, **they were furious** and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” 57 At this **they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.**
- **Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.** 59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.

#### II. Paul Decided to Persecute the Church

- Acts 8:1–3 (NIV): And Saul approved of their **killing** him. On that day a great **persecution** broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were **scattered** throughout Judea and Samaria. 2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. 3 But Saul began to **destroy** the church. Going from house to house, he **dragged** off both men and women and put them in **prison**.
1. They were trying to **kill** Christians (v1)
  2. They were trying to **persecute** Christians (v1)
  3. They were **scattering** Christians (v1)
  4. They were **reaching** Christians in Judea and Samaria (v1)
  5. They were **dragging** Christians to judgement (v3)
  6. They were putting Christians in **prison** (v3)

### III. Paul Decided To Change After a Personal Encounter

#### A. He had to be challenged

- Acts 9:1–5 (NIV): 9 Meanwhile, **Saul was still breathing out murderous threats** against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” 5 **“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied.**

**Question:** What does it take to get you to make a decision to change direction?

**Next Time:** Don’t Panic

**Read Ahead:** Acts 10:1-8