



Finding Courage: 9-11, The 10th Anniversary

Psalms 27:14: (NASB) *Wait for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD.*

Ten years ago today, the world changed. If you look back to that fateful day ten years ago, you undoubtedly remember where you were and what you were doing that morning when you heard the news of the terrorist attacks on America. You undoubtedly remember the string of emotions you went through - from horror and disbelief, to sadness and grief, to fear and then anger and perhaps even rage, and then back to the numbness of your original disbelief. This morning, ten years later, we want to respectfully reflect on the events of that day and find in it lessons of strength and courage. Come and walk with us...

 **Initial reactions at WTC, 9-11 Timeline, Peter Jennings, ABC News**


- *"I saw it hit the tower and flames everywhere!"*
- *"The northeast corner exploded!"*
- *"We saw the plane fly into the building, smoke was everywhere, and people were jumping out the windows!"*
- *"I got a lot of friends that work in that building!"*

We will be looking at five Biblical stories of courage to highlight the courage shown by so many on that day.

First Profile in Courage: Elijah - our particular story takes place three years after Elijah had proclaimed a drought on the land due to idolatry. Elijah is now coming "out of hiding" and is preparing a "showdown" with King Ahab.

1 Kings 18:17-19: (NASB) ¹⁷*When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, Is this you, you troubler of Israel?* ¹⁸*He said, I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals.* ¹⁹*Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.*

Elijah challenged Ahab. Sometimes there is one lone voice of courage...

 **United Airlines Flight 93 delayed takeoff, 8:01am-8:42am, 9-11 Timeline, Peter Jennings, ABC News**

- *The flight boards in Newark, New Jersey, but is delayed.*
- *After a 40 minute delay, it takes off. On board, 38 passengers, five flight attendants, two pilots and four hijackers.*
- *At the same time, Flight 175 veers off course over the state of New Jersey.*

1 Kings 18:20-22: (NASB) ²⁰*So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.* ²¹*Elijah came near to all the people and said, How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him. But the people did not answer him a word.* ²²*Then Elijah said to the people, I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.*



Sometimes that one lone voice, even if it faces down fear in public, remains a lone voice...

No response from United Flight 93, Air Traffic Communications Recordings

- "United 93, verify..." (silence)
- "Did you hear someone screaming?" "Yes, but we couldn't tell what it was."

There was chaos during this time and the people on the plane were totally alone. There must have been an enormous amount of fear.



The view from atop Mount Carmel, Israel

1 Kings 18:23-24: (NASB) ²³Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. ²⁴Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God. And all the people said, That is a good idea.

Sometimes a lone voice, by following the vision given to it, can change things - all on its own - in this case, by God's grace. Elijah stepped out on faith where normally no man would go.



"Where Were You When the World Stopped Turning," (Part 1) Alan Jackson

Second Profile in Courage: David the boy, facing off with Goliath

1 Samuel 17:32-37: (NASB) ³²David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine. ³³Then Saul said to David, You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth. ³⁴But David said to Saul, Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. ³⁶Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God. ³⁷And David said, The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Go, and may the LORD be with you.

Sometimes, an individual's courage and strength is enough to defy all reason...

Flight 93 hijacked? Checks in, takeover 9:16am-9:25am, 9-11 Timeline

- It is thought one of the hijackers is in the cockpit prior to takeoff. On the flight recorder, the pilots make mention of a guest who is a colleague.
- Three men on board stand up, put red bandannas on their heads and break into the cockpit. One grabs the loudspeaker mic unaware that ground control can hear every word. He says there is a bomb on board and that he is a pilot and the plane must return to New Jersey.



The pilots had been murdered. We would soon learn that regular individuals collectively banded together and likely saved thousands of other lives. Courage often begins as fear.

1 Samuel 17:42-47: (NASB) ⁴²When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance. ⁴³The Philistine said to David, Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴The Philistine also said to David, Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field. ⁴⁵Then David said to the Philistine, You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. ⁴⁶This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD'S and He will give you into our hands.



The people on this flight had a "giant" they had to fight as well.

In every case, courage will be tested on many levels and fear, though always present, can be continually put aside...



Mark Bingham - It's a terrorist attack, 9/11 The Plane That Fought Back

- "Mark this is your mom...the news is the plane has been hijacked by terrorists. They are probably going to use the plane as a target to hit some site on the ground. If you possibly can, try to overcome these guys if you can...I would say go ahead and do everything you can to overpower them because they are hell bent. Try to call me back if you can. I love you, Sweetie. Good luck, good-bye." (Rewind Note: Mark's mother was a former flight attendant with United Airlines.)

David wins the battle! Goliath has fallen. Without a sword or spear the great champion is overcome!

1 Samuel 17:51-52: (NASB) ⁵¹Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. ⁵²The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron.

Sometimes the courage of one prevailing against all odds can suddenly and overwhelmingly rally those around him. People need to be led...



President Bush's initial speech, 9:30am, 9-11 Timeline

- This is a difficult moment for America. Today we've had a national tragedy. Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country.*

Third Profile in Courage: The three Hebrew men in Babylon

Daniel 3:1-6: (NASB) ¹Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ²Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. ³Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴Then the herald loudly proclaimed: To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language, ⁵that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. ⁶But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.



Courage must show itself when conscience is threatened...

Tom Burnett calls his wife, 9:34am, 9-11 Timeline

- Tom Burnett phones his wife to tell her of the hijacking. She tells him of the planes flown into the World Trade Center. He responds, "This is a suicide mission."*

Burnett understood.

Tom Burnett - terror to inspiration, 9-11, The Plane that Fought Back

- He realized they were being used as missiles. Terror quickly turned to inspiration. "I've got to go..." (he gets off the phone with his wife)*

Courage stares fear down and says, "you must find a way!" Those on the airplane had the attitude of getting something done.

We all know that the three Hebrews did not bow to the image and were brought before the King to face his wrath.

Daniel 3:13-15: (NASB) ¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; then these men were brought before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? ¹⁵**Now if you are ready**, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?

They were given a second chance to bow down! To be brought before the King together was one of the ways courage could remain strong, for there is a strong bond forged when we step out into danger together...



"Where Were You When the World Stopped Turning," (Part 2) Alan Jackson

Daniel 3:16-18: (NASB) ¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. ¹⁷If it be so, our God whom we serve *is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.* ¹⁸But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.

They knew God could deliver them, but even if He didn't, they were going to stand for what was right.

This is what the regular people on that flight did - they took a stand and were willing to make the choice to give their lives to save others.

Collective courage for a cause produces resolve and makes facing defeat - even death - possible...

"A ship is safe in harbor,
but that's not what ships are for."
- William Shedd



Peter Jennings and firefighter at WTC, 9-11 Timeline

- *Both Trade Towers where thousands of people worked, on this day, Tuesday, have now been attacked and destroyed.*
- *"I'm just a firefighter. This is hell. I've never seen anything like it. We are all brothers, we all have to stick together."*

recap
recap

So far we've looked at three different aspects of courage:

1. **Elijah:** The courage of one person standing despite no support!
2. **David:** The courage of one person bringing an army to life!
3. **The Three Hebrews:** The courage of three together resolving to face certain death for a purpose.



God calls us to courage, to act *through* Him and *with* Him. Our "yes" opens us to His grace.

2 Samuel 10:12: *Let us prove our valor for the sake of our people in the cities of our God. The Lord will do what he judges best.*

Sometimes we carry the person out of the building, and sometimes it crashes on us. We answer the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:10: *Not I, however, but the grace of God with me.*

1 Corinthians 16:13,14: *Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong. Your every act should be done with love.*



Flight 93, 9:47am, Flight Attendant Cee Cee Lyles' message for her husband and children

- *Hi, Baby...I'm on a plane that's been hijacked. I want to tell you I love you. Please tell my children that I love them very much and I'm so sorry. I don't know what to say. There are three guys who hijacked the plane and I'm trying to be calm. We've turned around. I've heard there are planes that have been flown into the World Trade Center. I hope to be able to see your face again, Baby. I love you...*



Fourth Profile in Courage: Paul and Silas preaching and imprisoned

Acts 16:16-24: (NASB) ¹⁶It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. ¹⁷Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation. ¹⁸She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her! And it came out at that very moment. ¹⁹But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, ²⁰and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, ²¹and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans. ²²The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. ²³When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; ²⁴and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

When going about the Master's business, we will inevitably run into circumstances that will cause us to be singled out, persecuted and even abused. It is the companionship of faith that makes this an easier task to accomplish...this is what happened on Flight 93.

Tom Burnett's second call to his wife, 9:48am, 9-11 Timeline

- *Tom's call: "Don't worry. We are putting a plan together and we're going to do something."*
- *Wife: At that very second, I just let the fear out. I said, "You sit down and be quiet and don't draw attention to yourself."*
- *Tom: "If they are going to drive this plane to the ground, we can't wait to do something."*

Acts 16:25-34: (NASB) ²⁵But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; ²⁶and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here! ²⁹And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰and after he brought them out, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹They said, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. ³²And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. ³³And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. ³⁴And he brought them into his house



and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

Even if the common cause will cost you your life, it is still worth the effort and the courage.

Courage, especially when accompanied by another, can find its voice in the most unlikely places!!

Fifth Profile in Courage: Queen Esther

Quick Background: Mordecai raised Esther from the time she was orphaned Esther 2:7 and Esther respected Mordecai's authority and took his advice: See examples in Esther 2:10,20. Esther was part of a people who chose to be different for God by following the laws of Moses.

Esther 3:8: (NASB) *Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of all other people and they do not observe the king's laws, so it is not in the king's interest to let them remain.*

Esther 4:1,4: (NASB) *¹When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly. ⁴Then Esther's maidens and her eunuchs came and told her, and the queen writhed in great anguish. And she sent garments to clothe Mordecai that he might remove his sackcloth from him, but he did not accept them.*

People can die if Esther doesn't act. When we truly know, love and respect another, courage will be easier to find...

Do we scramble aircraft, 9-11 The Plane That Fought Back

- *There is confusion within and between government agencies. Senior managers of the Federal Aviation Authority discuss whether to alert the military about Flight 93.*
- *"Do we want to think about scrambling aircraft? That's a decision someone is going to have to make in the next ten minutes."*



Todd Beamer at 9:58am, 9-11 Timeline

- *The White House is evacuated. Todd Beamer puts down the airphone he has been using to speak with an operator for the last few minutes. The operator stays on the line and hears Todd say to a nearby passenger, "Are you ready? Let's roll."*

They were organized and ready to counter attack, without weapons. Before Todd did this, he asked the operator to say the Lord's Prayer with him. That was his final prayer before sacrificing his life.



"Courage is...", Strange Familiar



Take all my pre-conceptions - and let the truth be understood.
Take all my prized possessions - leave only what I need.
Take all my pieces of doubt - and let me be what's underneath.
Courage is when you're afraid - but you keep on moving anyway.
Courage is when you're in pain - but you keep on living anyway.
We all have excuses why - we live in fear somethin' in us dies.



Like a bird with broken wings - it's not how high he flies but the song he sings.

Esther 4:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰Then Esther spoke to Hathach and ordered him to reply to Mordecai: ¹¹All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days.

Courage is not the absence of fear, it is the overcoming of fear...

First Tower Collapse 9:59am/Flight 93 Crashes 10:06am, 9-11 Timeline

- *The south tower of the World Trade Center collapses.*
- *A large plane has now crashed 80 miles east of Pittsburgh.*

All of these lives were just snuffed out. Flight 93 crashed the airplane so that it could not be used as a missile to destroy other people and other places. What an amazing example.

Esther 4:15-16: (NASB) ¹⁵Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, ¹⁶Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.

Courage faces fear and death and acts anyway...

Luke 21:25-26: (NASB) ²⁵There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, ²⁶men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

There is comfort that if God gave the prophecy saying it would happen, He was aware of it ahead of time, which means He has the ability to put it in the perspective of His plan. So there is something bigger going on.

President Bush's 8:30pm speech, 9-11 Timeline

- *Today our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in very deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes and their offices. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror.*



So...where does God fit into all of this?

God has plan, which includes a ransom price for every man, woman and child:

Romans 5:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

One man's transgression brought all into condemnation. One man's just life given brings all men to the opportunity for a new kind of life. Those that died



in 9/11 are not lost forever, whether they are believers or not. There is something greater in store for them.

Look at this Old Testament prophecy that looked far ahead:

Psalms 22:27-29: (NASB) ²⁷*All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will worship before You. ²⁸For the kingdom is the LORD'S and He rules over the nations. ²⁹All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship, all those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, even he who cannot keep his soul alive.*

All the ends of the earth - it doesn't mention heaven - will worship God. This is made possible by the ransom price of Jesus. There are many Old Testament prophecies like this, and they point to the magnitude of the sacrifice of Jesus. That's part of the hope we can have when we look for courage and mourn the loss of those that died. But we can have the spark of hope that God's plan is bigger than that.

Isaiah 2:2-4: (NASB) ²*Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. ³And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths. For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.*



"Courage is..." (Part 2), Strange Familiar

Courage is when you're afraid - but you keep on moving anyway.

Courage is when you're in pain - but you keep on living anyway.

You keep on living anyway.

It's not how many times - you've been knocked down.

It's how many times - you get back up.

Courage is when you've lost your way - but you find your strength anyway.

Courage is when you're afraid - courage is when loss is great.

Courage is when you make a change - and you keep on living anyway.

You keep on moving anyway. You keep on giving anyway. You keep on loving anyway.



We believe God is greater than our circumstances! We have a comprehensive hope we can trust in individually and collectively. This brings a collective courage and allows us to stand strong in the face of fear and death. We thank God for His plan!

Habakkuk 2:14: (NASB) *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

Revelation 21:4: (KJV) *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

**So how do we find courage on this anniversary of 9-11...?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**





***And now even more to think about...
only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!***

The 9/11 Decade: Loss by the Numbers (New York Times Online 9/8/11)

Copyright 2011 The New York Times Company

8:46 a.m. and 9:02 a.m.: Time of attacks.

56 and 102: Minutes the burning towers stood.

12: Seconds they took to fall.

26: Hours after the north tower's collapse that the last survivor was pulled from the rubble.

2.3: Magnitude, on the Richter scale, of the seismic impact of the north tower's collapse.

25: Days before Sept. 11 that Zacarias Moussaoui, suspected as the 20th hijacker, was arrested on immigration charges.

7: Days passed before Christine Todd Whitman, the E.P.A. administrator, said the air in New York was "safe to breathe."

99: Days passed before Gov. George E. Pataki declared the fires had been extinguished.

261: Days passed before last piece of steel was carted away.

2,977: Total victims of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

21,817: World Trade Center human remains recovered.

9,006: Remains never matched to a victim.

1,121: Victims never identified through remains.

\$2.08 million: Average government settlement for families of those killed.

13,065: Minimum number of people found to have 9/11-related asthma and other lower respiratory ailments.

10,320: Minimum found to have 9/11-related PTSD and other mental illness.

3,000: Estimated number of children who lost a parent on 9/11.

21: 9/11-related life insurance claims investigated by the frauds bureau of the New York State Insurance Department.

17: Children of firefighters killed who later joined the Fire Department.

2: Children of police officers killed who later joined the Police Department.

40,000: Minimum number of items left behind as tributes at Shanksville, Pa.

408: New York City streets co-named for 9/11 victims.



Sixth Profile in Courage: Stephen

Acts 6:7-15: (NASB) ⁷The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. ⁸And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

Stephen was simply about the business of God's work - proclaiming Jesus and the Kingdom...

⁹But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹Then they secretly induced men to say, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. ¹²And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. ¹³They put forward false witnesses who said, This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; ¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us. ¹⁵And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

Now confronted, Stephen has a choice - will he back down under pressure or proclaim the truth...? This next section is a lot of reading, but notice how firmly Stephen focuses on Moses throughout this history that he gives.

He is clearly answering the accusations of his speaking against Moses by completely focusing on Moses as a mighty man of God:

Acts 7:1-43: (NASB) ¹The high priest said, "Are these things so?" ²And he said, Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³and said to him, Leave your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you. ⁴Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living. ⁵But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that He would give it to him as a possession, and to his descendants after him. ⁶But God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. ⁷And whatever nation to which they will be in bondage I Myself will judge, said God, And after that they will come out and serve Me in this place. ⁸And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs. ⁹The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him, ¹⁰and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household. ¹¹Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction with it, and our fathers could find no food. ¹²But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers there the first time. ¹³On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh. ¹⁴Then Joseph sent word and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons in all. ¹⁵And Jacob went down to Egypt and there he and our fathers died. ¹⁶From there they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem. ¹⁷But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt, ¹⁸until there arose another king over Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. ¹⁹It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive. ²⁰It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home. ²¹And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son. ²²Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds. ²³But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. ²⁴And



when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand. ²⁶On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another? ²⁷But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, Who made you a ruler and judge over us? ²⁸You do not mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you? ²⁹At this remark, Moses fled and became an alien in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons. ³⁰After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush. ³¹When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he approached to look more closely, there came the voice of the Lord: ³²I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look. ³³But the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴I have certainly seen the oppression of My people in Egypt and have heard their groans, and I have come down to rescue them; come now, and I will send you to Egypt. ³⁵This Moses whom they disowned, saying, Who made you a ruler and a judge? is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush. ³⁶This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren. ³⁸This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. ³⁹Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, ⁴⁰Saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before us; for this Moses who led us out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what happened to him. ⁴¹At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. ⁴²But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel? ⁴³You also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rompha, the images which you made to worship. I also will remove you beyond Babylon.

Next, Stephen brings history forward...

Acts 7:44-50: (NASB) ⁴⁴Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. ⁴⁵And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David. ⁴⁶David found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷But it was Solomon who built a house for Him. ⁴⁸However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says: ⁴⁹Heaven is My throne, And earth is the footstool of My feet; What kind of house will you build for Me? says the Lord, Or what place is there for My repose? ⁵⁰Was it not My hand which made all these things?

Now he indicts his audience by telling them the truth about their own actions and reactions to the will and power of God unfolding before their very eyes...

Acts 7:51-53: (NASB) ⁵¹You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. ⁵²Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; ⁵³you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.

Now he tells them things that he did not have to say, but his courage in the spirit could not be silenced...

Acts 7:54-60: (NASB) ⁵⁴Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶and he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of



God. ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. ⁵⁸When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! ⁶⁰Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them! Having said this, he fell asleep.

Courage under fire - we are called to such a stand and we are promised the grace and strength to take that stand - the only remaining question for each of us is "Will I stand?"