

“Stiffnecked”

In ancient cultures, the ox was commonly used to plow fields and pull carts. These animals were hard to handle under the best of circumstances. When an angry ox stiffened the muscles of his powerful neck, it was difficult or impossible to guide him. Those ancient people began to use the term “*stiff-necked*” to refer to people who were stubborn and self-willed like the oxen.

Stephen, in Acts 7:51, said, “*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*” “*Stiffnecked*” is a word that had been applied to the sins of Israel at an earlier time (Exodus 33:5; 34:9). In applying this expressions to his hearers, Stephen was using the identical language as Moses when he conveyed God’s rebuke to Israel. “*Uncircumcised in ears*” means they were unwilling to hear what God says. The opposition was to the Holy Spirit. Their fathers had resisted the Holy Spirit and persecuted the divinely appointed messengers. And so now, these very people before whom this trial was being conducted had rejected the Savior, the Messiah, and were violently opposing the messengers who had come to share with them the good news.

Are you being “*stiffnecked*” about the fact that God has said that baptism is essential to salvation (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21)? Are you being “*stiffnecked*” about the fact that there is only one church and therefore different religious groups are condemned (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4)? Let us not be stubborn or self-willed, but humbly yield to the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

Kyle Campbell