

How Men Full of the Spirit Act

Acts 6:8-15 ⁸ And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹ Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹² And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, ¹³ and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us." ¹⁵ And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

❖ Intro:

- **Yesterday I helped bury a 1st cousin.**
 - And I had the privilege of speaking at his funeral
 - He was 39 years old.
 - And he died in the prime of his life
 - He was doing a side job cutting down a tree
- **He was 39 years old**
 - He has an 8 year old little girl name Ivey
 - He has a 4 year old little boy named Jay
- **I say thing not for you to be sympathetic toward me...**
 - I hope you pray for his family.
- **I say these things so that you know our time is short upon this earth.**
- **My family:**
 - We have lost a lot of people in our family.
 - And uncle at 18, (car) an uncle before he was 40 (suicide), another uncle in his 40's (heart attack)
 - Another Uncle in his 50's(heart attack) - My grandfather was in his 60's (heart attack)
 - My cousin was 39 (logging accident)
- **Our time is short on this earth... (I have learned that)**
 - And you need to know it, and you need to be prepared for it.
 - You need to make sure your family is ready and prepared for it.

❖ Being Ready

- **When I was in High School we lost a young girl 15 years old**
 - She was a good friend
 - She loved Jesus, and everyone knew it...
- **I remember a girl in my class crying her eyes out**
 - Saying... we know where Ashley is, but if it were me
 - No one would know... No one would know where I went...
- **When I say we need to be ready...**
 - I mean, let the light of Jesus Christ so shine in you
 - That there is no mistake... There is no question that you are walking the streets of heaven
- **Being Ready does not mean:**
 - People have good things to say about you
 - It does not mean that you did some really good things on this earth and have a lot of friends
 - It does not mean you had a good attendance record at church
 - **Being ready means you have an undeniable Faith in Jesus Christ**
 - Your sins have been removed

- So that when you enter in to heaven... It is not because your good things outweighed your bad
- Rather... Your Faith in Jesus means he pardoned your sins
- Cause your good was never good enough to enter heaven
- **Nowhere in the Bible:**
 - Does being a good person help them get into heaven.
 - Being a good person in the eyes of God happens to a person when Jesus lives through them.

➤ **Jesus says: Be Ready**

- **Matthew 24:36-51** ³⁶ “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. ⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

❖ **Stephen Was A Man Who Was Ready**

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

➤ **Full of Grace and Power: Filled with the Spirit**

- If you remember back to our first encounter with Stephen
- The Church Needed some men to help distribute food and money to Jewish Greek Widows
- So the Apostles told the people of the church to choose from among them
- And the apostles gave the church some qualifications for the guys they would choose

➤ **Qualifications:**

- Men, of good reputation, full of the spirit and wisdom
- Stephen is the first one mentioned

➤ **Full of Grace and Power: Filled with the Spirit**

- **Grace and Power**
 - This grace was a kindness toward other... a grace towards those around him
 - This power meant he had the ability to persuade people
 - And to do supernatural things from God
 - He cared about those around Him and was gracious toward them
 - And He was filled with power to speak the Word of God and have people listen and respond
- **He was Filled with the Spirit**
 - The reason Stephen was full of grace and power
 - Is because the Holy Spirit was living within Him
 - And he had submitted His life to the leading of the Spirit
 - He was overflowing with the Spirit in his life

➤ **Men and women who submit themselves to the will of God**

- And the moving of the Holy Spirit within them
- Will be men full of grace and power
- **Result:**
 - He was doing great signs and wonders among the people.
- **Pattern yourself after men like this.**
 - Look to the word of God for men that you can mimic
 - For men you can learn from

❖ **Stephen:**

- **The Story of Stephen is the first killing of a Christian we see in the book of Acts**
 - Up until this point, the apostles were warned
 - They were then beaten
 - But here, Stephen is Murdered
- **It also begins pushing the church from a focus on Jerusalem**
 - To the uttermost parts of the world
 - And we will see the first mention of Paul at the end of ch.7
 - As we see Stephen's life taken from him
- **And the life taken from Stephen**
 - Will be a catalyst for taking the gospel to countless millions of people throughout the world
 - And throughout history
- **The persecution of Christians**
 - Never leads to their silence
 - It always leads to their growth

❖ **Stephen's Faithfulness led to a Dispute**

- ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.
- **With Who?**
 - Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)
 - Cyrenians
 - Alexandrians
 - Those from Cilicia and Asia
- **Why is this significant?**
 - If you remember back, to the passage about the Hellenistic Widows
 - **You see that there were two main types of people that made up the church.**
 - ◆ You had Hebrews and the Hellenists
 - ◆ And this is just two different type of Jewish people
 - ◆ One group had lived in Israel for years
 - ◆ The other group was greek speaking and thinking jews that had returned to Israel
 - And it was the group that had returned that had an issue with their widows being taken care of.
 - **So the church chose 7 men... and all of these men were greek speaking**
 - ◆ You can tell by there names
 - ◆ They all had greek names
 - **So, Stephen was someone who had returned from exile back to Jerusalem**
 - ◆ Or his parents had...
 - **These groups listed here:**
 - ◆ Were groups of Jewish people that had returned.
 - ◆ One group is known as the Libertines, or Freedmen...

- They used to be enslaved, but now they are home...
 - ◆ **And there is debate over how many groups is actually listed here.**
 - But we see that they were from different parts of the world.
 - **There were a bunch of synagogues in Jerusalem, not just one.**
 - ◆ And this is the synagogue where the dispute rose up against Stephen
 - **Interestingly:**
 - ◆ Stephen likely had grown up in this synagogue
 - ◆ He probably knew most of the people that were mad at him...
 - **Also... Interestingly...** It seems Paul was a part of this synagogue
 - ◆ Since Paul was from Cilicia... and this group is mentioned here
 - ◆ And it is where He grew up a Pharisee of Pharisees as he says
 - ◆ We see him at the end of ch 7 as He consented to the death of Stephen
 - **Not only was Paul there:**
 - ◆ He was likely one of the people that tried to dispute against Stephen but was unable.
 - ◆ So, you see, the history of the world is about the change at the persecution of Stephen
 - ◆ Because I believe it would affect Paul in a great way after Jesus comes to Him
 - ◆ And saves him... I think Stephen's death never left Paul's mind..
- **Why was there a dispute?**
- Because Stephen was doing what He was saved by Jesus to do: Spread the gospel.
 - Pivotal verse: **Acts 6:7b ... and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.**
 - After Stephen and his fellow brothers were chosen to serve the widows
 - The church continued to flourish
 - And these men were part of the reason why...
 - You see here... A great many of the priests became obedient to the faith...
 - **Here is the reason for the dispute**
 - Stephen is teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ... to the priests of Judaism...
 - Those who had not yet believed that Jesus was Messiah
 - And a whole bunch of them were believing...
 - **Priests leaving the synagogue**
 - These guys are moving on to something else in their life
 - I would assume some were very excited...
 - Being a priest was tough work...
 - But this is noticed, it is not something that someone overlooks
 - **Members of this synagogue got very upset**
 - I assume from the text they were upset and began to dispute with Stephen
 - 1) Because of all the priests being drawn out of Judaism and the old Covenant
 - 2) They did not believe the gospel about Jesus
- **Application:**
- **When Stephen Submitted himself to the Lordship of Jesus...**
 - The Holy Spirit moved within him causing him to be born again...
 - And the Holy Spirit is not one to keep quiet
 - So the Holy Spirit began working in Stephen...
 - And the Holy Spirit led him to tell others the truth of the Gospel...
 - **And Stephen began carrying out what Jesus told the disciples to do...**
 - **Acts 1:8 ... you will be my witnesses...**
 - Stephen was a witness...
 - **The Holy Spirit leads us to tell others...**

- When you begin reaching people for Jesus, or sharing Him on a more regular basis
- You will get into some disputes
- Satan will not be happy with you.
- Yet, you continue to be a faithful witness...

▪ **Our Problem:**

- We are worried about disputes... We are cowardly and scared...
- I am not saying start a fight... I am just saying stand strong for the gospel
- Do not cower from it, or be ashamed of it.
- **Why should a person be ashamed that Jesus died to give people eternal life**
 - ◆ And total forgiveness of their sins...
 - ◆ Sounds like a really good deal

➤ **So, Once Again:**

- They began to dispute with Stephen
- Because He was having success witnessing to the people of the synagogue
- And namely there were many priest that were being saved...

❖ **Stephen Was Prepared and Ready**

- ¹⁰ But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

➤ **This verse 10 is pivotal.**

- Just like verse 7 is such a pivotal verse
- It is pivotal because it is going to lead to him
 - being seized, questioned, lied about, and ultimately stoned to death

➤ **They could not withstand the Wisdom and the Spirit**

- Stephen was full of the Spirit of God
- And He was full of the Spirit.

➤ **If you want to be an effective witness for God.**

- You better be sure you are walking in the Spirit
- **When you are walking in the Spirit**
 - By Spending **quality time in the Word** of God
 - ◆ Meditating upon it and committing it to memory
 - By Spending time in **purposeful** prayer
 - ◆ Using the Word of God and your meditation on it
 - ◆ To lead you in prayer...
 - By being **Sensitive** to the leading of the Spirit in your life
- **When you are walking in the Spirit**
 - You will be an effective witness for Jesus

➤ **People will be unable to withstand the wisdom and Spirit you speak with**

- Why? Your personality? Your good looks? Your great voice?
- Because the supernatural Holy Spirit of God is speaking through you
- To your hearers..

➤ **So, here we go...**

- Things are about to get interesting for our Faithful Witness Stephen

❖ **The Charge Against Stephen:**

- ¹¹ Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹² And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, ¹³ and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law,

¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”

➤ **When Satan and man can not win... they lie**

- They could not withstand His wisdom...
- **So they secretly instigate men**
 - See how they like to go about things...
 - Be careful when you have people coming up to you in the church
 - And they are quietly saying negative things about someone else
 - To get other worked up against them...
 - They were not godly enough to take it to the person
 - So they try to instigate people secretly.
- They stirred up the elders and the scribes...
- They set up false witness against him

➤ **The Charge Against Him**

- **“This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”**
- 1) Speaks word against this holy place and the law
- 2) Said Jesus will destroy the temple
- 3) Change customs Moses delivered to us
 - So we see 3 ways in which they brought charges against him.
 - So, they took a lot of what Stephen had said... and they put their own twist on it.
 - It is unlikely that they totally made up there stories
 - Rather they used partial truths and told the story the way they wanted to

➤ **What Stephen had been telling them was marvelous...**

- And it should be a cause for rejoicing even today...
- Because Jesus coming, his death and his resurrection and exaltation changed everything

➤ **No longer was there a need for a temple**

- Jesus had already told them, if you destroy this temple, in three days I will raise it up
 - And they twisted that to say He would tear down the temple.
- There was also mention by Jesus that the temple would be destroyed within a generation

➤ **So Stephen is likely teaching this...**

- That you guys that come to this temple day in and day out
- Need to realize that it is coming down
- Not only is it coming down, there is no need for a temple..

➤ **Stephen is telling them that God has established a new covenant with man.**

- Not the covenant he established with Moses and the people of Israel.
- Where they had to bring animal offerings to cover their sins...
- Jesus had made one offering for all
- His death put an end to the need for animal offerings
- Because he was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the World...
- Jeremiah had already told the people God would do this:
 - **Jeremiah 31:31-34 ³¹ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall**

be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

➤ **And now there was no need for those parts of the law**

- The law is Holy and Pure
- But it was there to point people to Jesus the true Messiah

➤ **He is telling them the Messiah has come...**

- And He is the temple
- Revelation 21:22-23 ²² And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.
- **Jesus is the temple...**
 - And this one is going to come down... so be prepared...
 - And we know that the Romans did come in and destroy the temple around 70 a.d.

➤ **Stephen was simply trying to show them the truth of Messiah**

- And how this was God making a new covenant with them.
- And they twisted His words and made it seem like He was speaking against the word of God
- That He was in disagreement with the law of God...

➤ **Yet, what we see, is that these guys were twisted in their understanding of the Word of God**

- And as a result, it made them very angry and ready to kill Stephen
- Who was full of the Spirit.

❖ **Stephen's Face Like an Angel**

- ¹⁵ And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

➤ **So filled with the Spirit of God was Stephen**

- That even his enemies thought his face was like an angel...

➤ **Stephen went into this dispute ready to die...**

- Stephen likely had a wife and children... they are not mentioned...
- But we know he had a family
- And he knew he would be missed...

➤ **But, Stephen goes into this debate and false seizing...**

- Ready and prepared to die for the Lord.
- Stephen was no coward...

➤ **What are we ready and prepared for?**

- Are we bold for the Lord Jesus Christ, or are we hiding away filled with cowardice
- Afraid to tell others about Jesus...

➤ **Look to the great example of Stephen...**

❖ **Invitation**