

STEPHEN FULL OF FAITH AND POWER ACTS 6 & 7

Text:

Introduction:

Stephen was a man whose walk, work and words honored God.

Stephen is one of the finest examples of spirituality in the entire Bible. He was one of the first deacons of the early Church in Jerusalem. The Bible describes Stephen as one who was full of the Holy Spirit, faith, wisdom, and power.

In this great servant of God we find a man wholly dedicated to, and in love with, the Lord Jesus Christ. This becomes very obvious when we consider all the Bible has to say about Stephen.

There was a godly boldness about him, yet at the same time a sweetness of spirit. The boldness of Stephen moved him to speak out bravely for Christ in spite of opposition. His sweetness of spirit prevented him from uttering even one harsh word to his executioners.

1. HIS LINE IN THE SPIRIT

A. Stephen's Walk Confirmed It.

1. Stephen had a reputation of walking with God.

Acts 6:3-5

³ Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. ⁴ But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. ⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

The words honest report means a good reputation.

2. God expects all His children to walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16

¹⁶ *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Ephesians 5:18

¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

B. Stephen's Works Confirmed It.

Acts 6:8

⁸ And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Everything Stephen did was characterized by reliance upon God and the enabling and authority of the Spirit. That's the way all Christians are to live their lives.

C. Stephen's Words Confirmed It.

1. He spoke with wisdom.

Acts 6:10

¹⁰ And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

2. He spoke God's Word.

Ephesians 5:9

⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

NOTE: In Acts chapter seven, where Stephen defended himself before the Sanhedrin, he quoted seven different Old Testament passages, and eluded to some forty or fifty others.

He specifically quoted Gen.12: 1; Ex.3: 6 and 32: 1; Deut. 18: 15; Amos 5: 25; and Isa.66: 1, 2.

3. He spoke without weakness.

a. Boldness is the result of being filled with the Spirit.

Acts 4:31

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

b. Boldness is seen in Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin.

Acts 7:51-53

⁵¹ Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. ⁵² Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: ⁵³ Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

NOTE: Boldness like this could only come from the Holy Spirit. Stephen knew that this council had the power to put him to death; but he boldly spoke the truth just the same. This servant of God laid the truth on the line, and it cut them to the quick.

2. HIS LOVE FOR SINNERS

A. He Preached Christ In Spite Of Disagreement.

Acts 6:9-10

⁹ Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰ And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

Stephen didn't fool around with debating nonsense. He gave people what they really needed—the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. He Preached Christ In Spite Of Danger.

Acts 7:52

⁵² Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

Acts 7:57-58

⁵⁷ Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, ⁵⁸ And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

3. HIS LOOK THAT WAS STEADFAST

A. It Was A Lingering Look.

Acts 7:54-55

⁵⁴ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. ⁵⁵ But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

The word “stedfastly” means, “...to gaze intently.

Your gaze would have been fixed too if you’d seen what Stephen must have seen.

B. It Was A Longing Look.

Acts 7:55-56

⁵⁵ But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, ⁵⁶ And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

I don’t think one could get a glimpse of heaven and not experience a longing to be there. For a few brief moments the wonders of the throne room of God in heaven was opened to Stephen’s view.

Even in trials, let us never forget where we belong, and may we continually cultivate that heavenly longing in our heart.

In the book titled *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, English Puritan pastor and author Richard Baxter wrote,

“Why are not our hearts continually set on heaven? Why dwell we not there in constant contemplation. Bend thy soul to study eternity, busy thyself about the life to come, habituate thyself to such contemplations, and let not those thoughts be seldom and cursory, but bathe thyself in heaven’s delights.”

C. It Was a Loving Look

Acts 7:59-60

⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ⁶⁰ And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Even as he was being stoned to death, Stephen’s gaze was still fixed on Jesus. And as he looked lovingly into the face of his Lord, Who had already stood to receive him, he could think of no better way to show his love for Christ than to paraphrase Christ’s words from the cross.

Close:

To those who have learned to love and trust Jesus, the prospect of meeting Him face to face and being with Him forever is the hope that keeps us going, no matter what life may have for us.