

Putting Feet to Your Faith

Acts 7:1-60

- A lot has transpired since the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit in chapter two, and what initially blessed only those who received it, has now turned into a phenomenon to be shared throughout the entire city of Jerusalem and beyond. The disciples through the teaching and preaching of the gospel and the application of the miraculous have seen the church grow both numerically and spiritually, and it has the undivided attention of the spiritual authorities.

V1-60

- **V1** so much so that they paid people to lie about the character of Stephen all because they couldn't refute the spiritual wisdom he graciously was sharing with anyone willing to listen including them > **6:10-13**. After they arrested him and began to discredit him scripture says as they looked upon his face no doubt in a menacing and accusatory fashion hoping to see either fear or rage in Stephen, all they saw was the face of an Angel staring back at them > **6:15** wow!
- The high Priest invites Stephen to explain himself asking "**are these accusations true**"? Stephen begins not to defend himself but to enlighten his audience. His goal is to proclaim the truth of Jesus in a way that his audience could understand, so he begins with the history of Israel. **V2-8** so he shares the contributions that revered leaders such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon. With Abraham he shows that God cannot be put into a box and how there is always progress and change in God's program because the Lord is innovative and creative in His dealings with human beings and in human history, and we won't always understand it.
- Although God told him to leave his family Abraham didn't immediately go to Canaan but dwelt in Haran with his father as he initially came with him, but that partial obedience did not take away the promise God had made it simply caused it to be put on hold until he was ready to fully obey the Lord, for notice the promise didn't progress until he left both his father and Haran and went to the place that God wanted him to go, so although he is known as the father of faith, he didn't initially start there, for Abraham like us is an example of one who grew in faith-obedience.
- **V9-16** he moves on to Joseph who was a deliverer and ordained by God but not recognized by his brethren and describes how his brothers hated him and rejected him, having afflicted him the first time, but when they encountered him the second time they recognize him as their deliverer and Lord as only he could save them **V13-14**. This of course is Stephen way of tugging at the hearts of his listeners by reminding them that everything they did to Jesus had already done in the past in order to open their eyes in the present to give them a hope for the future. **1 Cor 10:11-12** says all these things were written for our examples not to follow down this path.

- **V17-22** he moves on to Moses and when he was born Israel was in trouble as they had fallen out of favor with this Pharaoh and he was cruel attempting to kill off their male offspring but God intervened and brought forth Moses and allowed him to be supernaturally spared from death but also brought up in Pharaoh's household as one of his and even was in the line of succession being Pharaoh's sister's adopted son. Yet God allowed Moses to understand that he wasn't an Egyptian, and that He didn't place him in that favorable position to abuse power, instead he was to be a deliverer, but like Joseph we'll see the Jews also initially reject him as deliverer as well.
- **V23-29** so Moses rejected by his brethren flees into the desert, the promise is not dead only delayed, as it will take Moses forty years before he is ready to do what God called him to. Again just as the Jews rejected Jesus the promise is not dead only delayed for the nation, but for individuals "**today is the day of salvation**". **V30-34** then an Angel of God appears to Moses, most on this council don't believe in Angels or the supernatural, Stephen points in sharing this is we cannot put God in a box just because we don't always understand what He's doing.
- **V35-43** despite Israel's repeated rejections toward Moses God would reaffirm him to the people sometimes by signs and wonders, other times through His Word and prophecy, if they had eyes to see and ears to hear it would be revealed to them, but if they persisted the Lord would give them up to falsely worship idols and receive the judgment of their disobedience. **V44-50** now Stephen is about to make it personal saying "**you accuse me of not obeying Moses when our own people didn't obey him, you claim I'm a blasphemer, our whole nation was carried away because of idolatry, and were serving the Romans after being passed around from nation to nation our homeland desecrated, and our culture mocked because of our disobedience**".
- **V51-53** here is the real problem and it has nothing to do with anyone speaking bad about the temple which he was accused of, or bad mouthing Moses or any of the other prophets, that's us majoring in the minors, the real problem is that the hearts of the people were hardened, they'd become stubborn in their ways, didn't want to examine themselves, rejected any notion that they could be wrong, and when the Holy Spirit nudged them they flat out resisted Him. Stephen says if you don't believe me check the history records which one OF God's prophets did the nation readily excepted, usually they ridiculed, mocked and if able killed them to silence them.
- **V54-60** although his face was shining as an Angel they viewed his words as if they came from the Devil himself, this is what happens when you're convicted but refuse to repent. Stephen on the other hand with all this anger, hatred, and violence pointed toward him instead of experiencing fear God has given him peace, as He's readying him for glory. Everywhere else when you read about Jesus being on the Right Hand of God He is sitting, but here He is standing up to receive the 1st of many martyrs of the early church. In the midst of dying Stephen asks the Lord to forgive them, this is absolutely amazing, how God can still our awareness even while we're dying