

## **Knowing what you believe and how to share it- Pt 1**

### **Acts 7:1-60**

This morning we'll see a wonderful example of a defense of the gospel, which altogether took approximately 15 minutes but changed the life of individuals for all eternity. One of which was the Apostle Paul.

#### **V1-8**

**Stephen talks to his accusers with respect – Prov. 15:1-2**

- He goes through Israel's history. This is necessary because people forget, so we must remind them with scripture. Man has a long history of sinful acts, very few people will say that they are without fault, and because of their acknowledgment of not being perfect you begin there.

#### **V9-16**

Joseph

Stephen really **knows his audience**. He realizes that by reminding them of the providential hand of God, how Joseph was delivered from slavery and made a ruler in a foreign land. This requires listening if you are not familiar with the person but once you have then you can speak on what they've said.

#### **V17-43**

Moses – Stephen now recounts Israel's rebellion against God. Knowing his audience and how the Jews revered Moses Stephen reminds them that even with that reverence Israel still disobeyed him countless times, even threatened to kill him a time or two, and ultimately died because of unbelief.

#### **V44-50**

The presence of God – Stephen reminds his hearers that God lives in vessels who honor him. Jer 10:23 this is why man needs the guidance of God's Word, His Holy Spirit, and His people, for without any of these man will begin to lean on his own understanding trusting in his wisdom for guidance and disregarding The Lord, Stephen says look no further than their history.

#### **V51-53**

Stephen now separates himself from the nation Why? Because they are still in a state of denial when it comes to the hand of God working in their lives. They refuse to accept God's ways because they have exalted their own.

Is Stephen being loving or unloving, wise or foolish by calling the religious leaders stiff-necked and uncircumcised at heart? He is being biblical, at some point the conversation has to become personal, where the individual understands that this is about them and not about the other 7 billion people on earth > **Math 23:27-28**- Jesus did the same in calling them out.

### **V54-56**

Here is their response, they were **Cut to the heart** – This means extreme conviction that leads to immediate action, good or bad. When you make it personal and they know you are talking about them you can expect an immediate response, and depending on their heart posture that will determine if it's good or bad.

- Notice how they gnashed, being they lashed out with their mouths, at Stephen. This is a typical response from people who reject God's work in their lives, their going to be loud and intimidating.
- God now gives Stephen affirmation that he did what was right. Notice, **V55** he's full of the Holy Spirit and he sees the glory of God.
- **Eph. 4:15**- even though their response is one of anger Stephen spoke the truth in love, **Eph. 5:10**- although they threatened him Stephen knew that what he was doing was pleasing to God, **Gal. 4:16**- though they treated Stephen as an enemy what he did was that of a friend.

### **V57-60**

- Who does Stephen imitate in **V60**? Christ.
- Notice **V58**, there's a young man name Saul, we will eventually know him as the Apostle Paul, but right now he is known as Saul and he is an unbeliever who witnesses this event, which will later help him in coming into a right relationship with the Lord > **Acts 22:20** Paul in giving his testimony to a Roman commander lets him know that he was there when Stephen was killed being a lookout for the murderers.

### **Three questions...**

1) Would I be willing to confront someone about their sin if I knew in advance that it would cause personal loss, or even possible death? 2) If I were to find out today that death was near, how would I respond, would I look for courage or escape? 3) Am I ready to die, what have I left undone, do I view my death as a homecoming or as a disappointment?