



# STEPHEN

THE UNEXPECTED FACE OF VICTORY

# THE PROBLEM

- Church was growing rapidly
- Greek (Hellenistic) Jews complained about their widows being neglected

ACTS 6:1

# THE SOLUTION

- Seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom
- Chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and 6 other guys
- Laid hands on them

**ACTS 6:3-6**

# THE RESULT OF THEIR SERVICE

- The word of God spread,
- The disciples increased greatly in number
- A large group of priests became obedient to the faith

**ACTS 6:7**

# THE SERMON

- Stephen recounts the history and rebellion of Israel
- In v.51 calls out Jews for resisting the Holy Spirit
- v.52 The final straw - he says Jesus is God

**ACTS 7:1-53**

# THE REACTION

- Gnashed their teeth
- V. 55 - Sees into heaven and sees Jesus at the right hand of God
- Yelled, covered their ears, and rushed him

**ACTS 7:54-57**

# THE STONING

- Dragged out of the city and Stoned
- Saul (Paul) held the coats
- Stephen commends his spirit to God
- Asks for their forgiveness
- He died

**ACTS 7:58-60**

**STEPHEN WASN'T  
CONCERNED ABOUT  
ANYTHING OTHER THAN  
THE GOSPEL**



# **BOLD IN TRUTH**

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me.

**MATTHEW 5:10-12**

# **BOLD IN TRUTH**

“Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**MATTHEW 5:10-12**

# **STRONG IN FORGIVENESS**

“You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

**MATTHEW 5:43-44**

# **STRONG IN FORGIVENESS**

“You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

**MATTHEW 5:43-44**

# FAITHFUL IN DEATH

“Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

**MATTHEW 6:19-21**

# FAITHFUL IN DEATH

“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**MATTHEW 6:19-21**

# FAITHFUL IN DEATH

“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

**MATTHEW 7:24-27**

# FAITHFUL IN DEATH

“The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn’t collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. “But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn’t act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

**MATTHEW 7:24-27**



# FAITHFUL IN DEATH

“The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash.”

**MATTHEW 7:24-27**

**WINNING IN THE KINGDOM  
OF GOD OFTEN LOOKS LIKE  
LOSING IN THE KINGDOM  
OF MEN**

# SEVER PERSECUTION

1 Saul agreed with putting him to death. On that day a severe persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the land of Judea and Samaria.

ACTS 8:1-4

# **SEVER PERSECUTION**

2 Devout men buried Stephen and mourned deeply over him.

3 Saul, however, was ravaging the church. He would enter house after house, drag off men and women, and put them in prison.

**ACTS 8:1-4**

# **GOSPEL WENT TO THE GENTILES**

19 Now those who had been scattered as a result of the persecution that started because of Stephen made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.

**ACTS 11:19-21**

# **GOSPEL WENT TO THE GENTILES**

20 But there were some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, proclaiming the good news about the Lord Jesus.

**ACTS 11:19-21**

# GOSPEL WENT TO THE GENTILES

21 he Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

**ACTS 11:19-21**

# **PAUL'S SUFFERING ADVANCED THE GOSPEL**

12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel,

**PHILIPPIANS 1:12**



# THE GROWING GOSPEL

- AD 64 - Nero persecuted the faith with horrific means
- AD 303-311 - Diocletian perpetrated the last major persecution of Christians and the church grew like wildfire

# THE GROWING GOSPEL

- 17th Century - Japan caused Christians to worship in Secret until the 1800's when it finally became legal

# THE GROWING GOSPEL

20th Century -

- China, one of the largest underground churches of the time
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer in WWII spent his fortune and his life trying to free the world of Adolph Hitler
- MLK Jr's campaign of non-violence against slavery cost him his life

# THE GROWING GOSPEL

Today

- Iran has the fastest-growing church on earth in a country where being a Christian will cost you everything, even your life. Gang members face severe physical beatings in order to follow Jesus and give up their lifestyle

# WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

1 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.

**ROMANS 12:1**

# WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God

**ROMANS 12:2**

# WHAT NOW?

- SPEAK THE TRUTH BOLDLY, not the LIES of this WORLD
- Live in an attitude of forgiveness for those who want to and have done us harm
- Bless the ones who hate us the most – not anger and ridicule and hatred
- Stand FIRM on the Teachings of Jesus

# WHAT NOW?

Obey and live what He said to live ...

... in the face of being canceled

... in the face of being alone

... in the face of financial ruin

... in the face of losing our lives





# STEPHEN

THE UNEXPECTED FACE OF VICTORY