

**CP - 5/22/22**

**Acts 7:54–8:3 - “The Stoning of Stephen”**

Recap: \*Stephen accused of blasphemy

\*He then defends and turned the script

\*51-53: drops the final blow of indictment

**1. They were filled with rage; Stephen was filled with the Spirit. (54–55a)**

**Them:**

- “enraged” = cut to the heart; sawed in half
- This is what the Word of God does. (Hebrews 4:12)
- They were so infuriated that they “ground their teeth at him.”
  - Gnashed their teeth at him, animal/beast like
  - Expression of rage and frustration
  - Psalm and Revelation
    - After God’s judgment, they will gnash their teeth in frustration and anger.
- This is callousness to the fullest extent.
  - They rejected so much that their hearts were turned over to anger.
  - The continuing hardening of a heart can turn to a calloused heart = the judgment of God
- This is literally a picture of hell. (Matthew 13:41–42, 8:11–12)
- This is what hell will be like.
  - Endless anger and frustration
  - People who reject Jesus won’t be remorseful after death or enter into a state of sleeping peacefully.
  - They will be eternally angry and frustrated which continues to build for all eternity.

**Stephen:**

- “But he, full of the Holy Spirit...”
  - Being full of the Spirit
  - Continuing and ongoing
  - 1 Peter 4:14
  - The Spirit granted Stephen grace in the midst of this hellish moment.
  - God will grant you grace to be obedient in the most difficult times.
  - Stephen didn’t have to adjust his life at this moment.
- In the midst of this angry, hellish moment, we see Stephen at complete peace.
  - How? Being filled by the Spirit, he knew God was sovereignly ruling all things.
  - He knew that death was just a doorway into God’s presence.
  - He could trust God with where he was.
  - The Spirit produces this type of trust and hope.
  - God doesn’t ask for our understanding of all things but our trust in all things.

## **2. Stephen had spiritual sight; they were spiritually blind. (55b–57)**

### **Stephen:**

- “gazed into heaven” = looking for Jesus
  - The Spirit always turns our eyes to Jesus.
  - Anything that doesn’t point to Jesus isn’t of the Spirit.
  - Being filled with the Spirit will allow us to see past our circumstances.
- “saw the glory of God”
  - Only a few were blessed with a glimpse of heaven.
  - Stephen was allowed to see the glory of God.
    - The same glory that was with Israel and Jesus
- “and Jesus standing at the right hand of God”
  - Stephen was the first to see Jesus in his glorified ascended position.
  - Standing? Jesus is always portrayed as seated.
    - “Seated is a sign of a finished work”
    - “Standing is a sign of concern and welcoming”
  - Isaiah 66:1-2
- God’s eyes are on those who are humble and contrite, those who tremble at his word.
- So enthralled at what he saw, Stephen burst out with joy and anticipation.
  - “Behold” - listen up
  - “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God”
- This was the final straw for them, the greatest blow to their hypocrisy and rejection.
- Matthew 26:63–64
  - Jesus is where he told you that he would be.
  - And with this final statement, they had had enough.

### **Them:**

- 7:57 - What happens next is in impulse and in unison.
  - They cried out with a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed at him.
    - They carried on the tradition of their fathers in rejecting the Messiah.
    - This is all done together without even thinking.
    - They just howled and stopped their ears to not hear anything else.
- rushed - “hormao” = fury
  - Used to describe the mad rush of the herd of demon-possessed swine into the sea of Galilee (Luke 8:33)
- They had lost their minds.
- They cast away all dignity - The highest court in Israel was reduced to a howling, murderous mob.

## **3. They thought death would be his end; Stephen knew it was only the beginning (58–59)**

### **Them:**

- They had no grounds to murder him, but they did it anyway.
- They cast him out of the city (law).

- Witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul (important) (stay with him)
  - The witnesses would be the first ones to throw stones.
    - Victim would be pushed off ledge about 10 feet, head first.
    - The first witness would drop a large stone on his heart.
    - The second witness would repeat.
    - Then the crowd would begin to throw stones.
- We don't know if they followed protocol or not or all just started at once.

#### **Stephen:**

- As this was happening (get that image), he was praying.
- He prayed for Jesus to receive him.
  - Resembles the prayer of Jesus on the cross
- Stephen had full expectation that when he died he would be in the presence of Jesus.
  - Impact of Paul - absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8)

#### **4. They were filled with hate; Stephen was filled with love. (60)**

- He asked God to not charge them for this sin.
- He was praying for their salvation.
  - "We owe Paul to the prayer of Stephen"
- What? How?
  - Is there someone you are withholding forgiveness from?
  - Let Stephen be an example to not hold on to things.
- He fell asleep = peace

#### **Acts 8:1-3**

- Saul, Scatter
- They didn't even bury Stephen.

#### **Application:**

- 1. Don't keep hardening your heart to Jesus.**
- 2. God looks upon the humble, the contrite, and those who tremble at His Word.**
- 3. Who do you need to forgive?**
- 4. Jesus has promised to be with you from this life to the next.**
- 5. You never know how God will use you to reach someone.**
- 6. Heaven is a guarantee for the believer.**