

Small Group Guide - 5/1/22

Acts 6:8-15 - "Trust and Obey"

Sermon Outline/Notes

This passage marks a transition in the trajectory of the church

- Peter to Paul
 - Jerusalem to Gentile nations
 - model for Paul going into synagogues
 - Stephen- Hellenist Jews
 - Peter- Jerusalem Jews
 - Paul- Gentiles
 - Stephen- Jews from Gentile areas
 - 2 chapters is all we know of this man.. he dies at the end of 7
- he is great proof that the effect of a man's life has nothing to do with the length of it. And the effect of a man's ministry has nothing to do with the length of it.***

Stephen was one of the 7 chosen that Luke preached on last week. Out of the 1,000s of men that were apart of the church at this time, Stephen was one of the 7. That speaks a lot about him. This passage this morning shines a brighter light on the character of this man. But also, sets the tone for chapter 7 and the rest of the book of Acts.

Let's try to understand a little more about him and why he was chosen.

4 controlling factors of Stephens life:

*full of= dominated by or under the control of

- when one is filled, they are under the control of what they are filled with
- emotions
- Acts 5:17- leaders were filled with jealousy and that jealousy controlled how they acted
- over and over again we've read the apostles were filled by the Spirit, under His control

What was Stephen full of? And all 4 are linked

1. Stephen was full of faith (5)

*he was full of faith (trust)

*He believed God

*7:1-51- He believed that God was in control of history therefore He was confident that God was in control of His life

***Romans 14:8- For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's**

*7:52- Believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah

*7:55-56- Believed Jesus was alive and exalted to power

*7:51- Believed in the Holy Spirit

*Stephen believed that God was sovereign over all things even his life

*He resigned it to the rule of God

*Stephen understood that he wasn't in control, and completely trusted God

2. Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit (5)

- *controlled by the Spirit
- *obeying the Spirit
- *Stephen believed God and submitted to the Spirit lead

3. Stephen was full of grace (8)

- *verse 8 flows from verse 5
- *because Stephen trusted God and was obedient to His will, He was full of grace and power
- *grace = God's favor
- *grace comes through faith
 - *he was full of loving kindness towards people
- *7:60- as he was being stoned, he asked God not to hold this sin against these people
- *How was he able to pray for those who were actually stoning him?
- *He was full of grace
- *Resigning his life over to the rule of God, freed him to be gracious to all men
 - *Stephen wasn't busy protecting his own life and image, so he was able to be gracious to all men.. even those executing him
 - *sound familiar?
 - *we will see something else familiar here in a minute
- *but see the connection... because He was full of faith, he was able to be full of grace
- *because he totally believed that God was sovereign over his life, it freed him to love people

4. Stephen was full of power (8)

- *again this flows from v.5
- *because he was full of faith, he was full of grace
- *and because he was full of the Spirit, he was full of power
- *When a man is full of faith and obedient to the Spirit, he will be gracious toward men and the power of God will be at work in his life
- *the grace and power of God were on display because Stephen trusted and obeyed God

Now let's jump into the narrative to see what happens.

*Stephen debates leaders of different synagogues (9-10)

- *synagogue were for Hellenistic Jews
- *set up when they were cut off from the temple
- *480 plus synagogues in Jerusalem
 - kept for Jews who would travel to Jerusalem for festivals
 - each people group had their own synagogue
- *a few listed here. Evidently Stephen must have made his way to all of them at some time or another
- *here we have men from these different places joining up together to come debate
- *Freedman (Libertenes)- Jewish slaves that were taken to Rome then freed 63 BC
- *Cyrinians and Alexandrians- North Africa (Simon the Cyrene)
- *Cilicia and Asia- Asia Minor
 - *Tarsus is in Cilicia- Great chance that Paul was here in this meeting
 - certainly if there were sending their best minds, they sent Paul
- *they came together to dispute/ honest debate
- *could you image the debate between Stephen and the unredeemed Saul/Paul
- *But 10 tells us they couldn't withstand the wisdom and Spirit in which he was speaking
 - *knowledge of man can never withstand wisdom given from God**

***The leaders instigate false witnesses and stir up the people to seize Stephen (11-14)**

*false accusations

*blasphemy against Moses and God (notice the order of importance for them)

*blasphemy against the temple and the law

-Sound familiar?

*the people of v.12 who violently seized Stephen, could be the same people of 5:13

-rejection of Jesus can quickly turn to hatred of Jesus

*v.14- Jesus would destroy this place and change the customs of Moses..

-old covenant vs. new covenant

***The council gazes at him and sees that his face is like that face of an angel (15)**

*peace

*fierce

*God's confirmation of Stephen

***Exodus 34:27-35** (Moses face shining the glory of God"

*Acts 6:15- Stephen's face swinging the glory of God

***2 Corinthians 3:7-11**

Small Group Questions

1. What spoke to you from the Bible passage and sermon Sunday morning?
2. What does it mean to be full of: faith, the Holy Spirit, grace, and power?
3. How does being full of faith free us to be gracious toward men?
4. How does being full of the Holy Spirit lead to God power being at work in our lives?
5. Why can the knowledge of men never withstand the wisdom given by God?
6. What do you think drove the leaders to act the way they did?
7. Do you think it is a coincidence that Stephen was accused of the same things that Jesus was?