

018 - Acts 6:8-15 The Spirit By Which He Spoke  
April 8, 2012 GRBC

Scripture Reading: Psalm 27

Confession of Sin: Hebrews 9:13-14

Sermon: The Spirit By Which He Spoke Acts 6:8-15

Benediction: Psalm 27:14

Acts 6:8-15 And Stephen, full of faith grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. (9) Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, and of the Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. (10) And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. (11) Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." (12) And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. (13) They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; (14) for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." (15) And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

#### I. Stephen testified powerfully about Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit

##### A. See how powerfully the Holy Spirit testified of Jesus Christ through Stephen's character

1. He had a good reputation (3)
  - a. we don't know exactly what he had a good reputation for
  - b. we could say some of the things that would have been important
    - i. he promptly paid anyone who worked for him
    - ii. he was just and generous to widows and orphans, to strangers, and to the disabled
    - iii. he kept control of his tongue
2. He was full of the Holy Spirit (3)
  - a. his life showed the fruit of the Spirit
  - b. as Barnes and MacArthur, he was highly influenced or controlled by the Spirit
3. He was full of wisdom (3)
4. He was full of faith (5)
5. He was full of grace (8)
6. He was full of power (8)

the bible teaches us elsewhere that the Holy Spirit does not produce in us timidity or fear toward saying and doing what the Lord commands, but power to do it, out of love (2 Tim 1:7)
7. When a person of this character spoke, what he said had to be taken seriously. His lifestyle, his character endorsed his message.
8. APPLICATION: What a picture the Lord has provided us in Stephen! Let us strive toward this.

B. See how powerfully the Holy Spirit testified to Jesus Christ through Stephen's miraculous signs

1. Stephen believed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; he had been baptized in the name of Jesus; now he had been chosen by the church as one of the seven servants in the church; many of Stephen's fellow Jews doubted or despised these beliefs; but by the Holy Spirit, Stephen did great wonders and signs to prove the truth of what he believed and spoke
  - a. there is never a shortage of people claiming to be speaking a message from God
  - b. so in these early days of Christ's new covenant church, the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles, and some of those they laid their hands on, to perform miraculous signs
  - c. they were signs, and what they signified was the message being preached by the one who did them
    - i. recall how Jesus had said to a lame man, "Your sins are forgiven."
    - ii. to show that it was true there is forgiveness of sins from Jesus, He miraculously made the lame man rise up and walk
    - iii. imagine how hard it would have been to criticize the beliefs of someone who would explain the gospel to you, then heal a blind man!
  - d. APPLICATION
    - i. this kind of thing in the bible leads many people today to wish for miraculous signs to be done, or to be eager to believe those who claim they do them
    - ii. but the right reaction is to believe and speak what Stephen believed and spoke, not on the basis of miracles done today, but on the basis of miracles done through Stephen; because those miracles were testimony from the Holy Spirit that Stephen's message was true

C. See how powerfully the Holy Spirit testified to Jesus Christ through Stephen's preaching

- a. some Jews rose up and disputed with Stephen
  - i. from the Synagogue of the Freedmen
  - ii. Cyrenians and Alexandrians
  - iii. those from Cilicia and Asia
- b. they were not able to resist Stephen's message
  - i. it was full of wisdom
    - a. it was factually accurate
    - b. it was true to the scriptures
    - c. it was reasonable
  - ii. it was by the Holy Spirit
    - a. the truth always has something of the power of the Holy

Spirit in it

b. when the truths contained in the scriptures are put forth, the Holy Spirit never fails to make those truths fulfill the purpose for which He sent them forth

c. in this case, it seems the Holy Spirit gave an extra measure of potency to the message Stephen was proclaiming

## II. Unbelievers opposed Stephen's powerful message about Jesus Christ

### A. They spread lies about him

1. he blasphemes Moses and God

2. blaspheme:

a. this means literally "speak evil"

b. to speak impiously of God

3. it is patently false that Stephen spoke blasphemously of Moses and God

### B. They stirred up several groups to oppose him

1. the people (clever that they knew they needed to do this; note how the people did not stop the stoning)

2. the elders

3. the scribes

### C. They seized him and brought him to the council

### D. They brought false witnesses to lie about the implications of his doctrines

1. they may have correctly summarized his teachings (14)

a. Jesus will destroy this place (temple)

b. Jesus will change the customs which Moses delivered to us

2. but they lied about what those teachings amounted to

a. they said these things amounted to blasphemy

b. but they actually honored God and Moses

3. think about how Stephen would have meant these things

a. as to the destruction of the temple: for 1500 years, the tabernacle and the temple have been the place where sinful man can be reconciled to holy God through the sacrifice of innocent blood offered by priests; but a building made of stone cannot really contain God; an offering of animal blood by priests who are themselves sinful can never really atone for people's sins; an atonement cover made of gold sprinkled with blood cannot really hide people's lawbreaking and covenant breaking from God; but now the perfect God-Man, Jesus the Christ has come; in Him all that the temple stood for is made reality; He is the tabernacle and the temple where God really can reside;; His is the innocent blood that really can atone for sin; He is the perfect priest who can mediate between sinful man and holy God; He is a cover for the ark of the covenant that truly can hide our lawbreaking from the eyes of God; and so, since all that the temple has stood for is now accomplished in Jesus Christ, the physical building is obsolete; within one generation it will be torn down; and all

who insist on worshiping in the temple instead of in Jesus Christ will be destroyed with it; this is not blasphemy against God, or Moses, or the temple, but the highest form of praise to God, and honor to Moses, and glory to the temple!

b. as to the customs delivered by Moses: for these same 1500 years, there had been a long, detailed list of ceremonies that Yahweh had commanded Israel to obey in His worship; they had to go up to the temple three times each year for festivals, extra sabbath days; they had to sacrifice cattle, sheep, goats, birds, wine, and grain on the altar; they had to go to human priests for atonement from sin; they had to wear certain clothes, abstain from certain foods, perform ceremonial washings; and all of this was a burden, that James said neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear; but now all that these things represented was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ; the covenant that required all these things had grown old, had become obsolete, had been superceded by a New Covenant, and was ready to vanish away completely; to declare this is not to blaspheme God, but to praise Him!

III. Stephen again testified powerfully about Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit---this time by the look on his face!

A. Stephen was called in front of the council because he was proclaiming

1. that the temple was to be destroyed by Jesus Christ

2. the old ceremonies from Moses were abrogated by Jesus Christ

B. The false witnesses characterized Stephen's gospel message as blasphemy

C. He was standing in just the situation Jesus Himself had been in a few months before

D. This is a combination of circumstances that one would think to be very distressing to Stephen

1. he is falsely accused of dishonoring God

2. he is facing likely beating or even death

E. Yet when the council looked on Stephen, his face looked like the face of an angel!

F. Did it miraculously glow like the face of Moses, whom the false witnesses said he was blaspheming? If so, this was a refuting by the Holy Spirit of the false accusation

G. It seems to me that the idea is of peace and calm that so characterized Stephen that his face looked utterly serene; the stories handed down by those who saw angels would have described them as looking eminently peaceful; and here Stephen's face looked just that way

H. Oh, how convicting to me! When pressed by the least persecution or rejection, my face contorts with the anger, disappointment, grief, sadness, or gloom of disappointed self-love!

1. they don't accept my message---woe is me!

2. all others are unfaithful, and I am the only one left---boo hoo!

I. Let me instead of all this moaning, have the face of an angel, glowing from near contact with God, figuratively speaking; calm and peaceful from the assurance that the

Holy Spirit of Christ is in me, and my gospel message of Jesus Christ instead of the temple; Jesus Christ instead of old covenant ceremony, is not blasphemy, but the very best kind of good news for sinners!

“full of the Holy Spirit”

Barnes:

eminently under the influence of the Holy Spirit

MacArthur:

controlled by

Gill:

the sense is, that Stephen was continually telling the people, that in a little time their temple would be destroyed, and an end be put to temple worship, and to all the rituals and ceremonies of the law of Moses

there was such a calmness and serenity in it, which showed his innocence and unconsciousness of guilt; and such a beauty and glory upon it, that he looked as lovely and amiable as the angels of God, who when they appeared to men, it was in very glorious and splendid forms: his face might shine as Moses's did, when he came down from the mount; or in some degree as Christ's did at his transfiguration; and this might, as it ought to have been, taken as an acquittance of him by God, from the charge of blasphemy, either against God or Moses

JRY:

I find it interesting, and, I suppose, encouraging that we are still opposed today for saying that the temple is destroyed and the law of Moses abrogated.