

Sermon Discussion Questions for Sunday, January 10, 2016

“Stephen, Full of Grace and Power” | Acts 6:8-15

Main Idea: God fills yielded believers with grace and power to serve His purposes.

1. Review Acts so far.

Acts tells of: Christ's work, through his witnesses, for his purposes. Key verses are Acts 1:8 you will receive power and will be My witnesses ...And 13:36 David served God's purposes of his generation.

Acts is Foundational, Transitional, Narrative History of the Church's first 30 years. Bridge between the gospels and the rest of NT. A description of Christ's work in His witnesses for His purposes.

The 5 BIG themes in Acts: Risen and returning Lord Jesus Christ. Holy Spirit. All-sufficient Word of God. God's chosen witnesses. God's Sovereign purposes.

Chapter 1 Time between Christ's Ascension to heaven and giving of the Spirit/birth of the Church. Christ's witnesses are called and they actively wait in the Upper Room Obeying Jesus. Praying. Fellowship. Searching Scripture, seeking God's will. As a result Matthias is chosen to replace Judas Stage is set for Pentecost.

Chapter 2 Day of Pentecost. 50 days after Resurrection. Birth of the Church and Baptism of the Spirit. The Spirit indwells believers permanently for salvation & fills with ongoing power for service. What happens every time a person converted / brought to faith in Christ. Peter preaches, boldly stands up to a mocking crowd, Explains the Word, Exalts Christ, Exposes sin, Exhorts to repentance. 3000 souls saved.

In the first church believers continually attended the temple, apostles did wonders and miracles. Awe of God. Four passions of a church devoted to Christ... God's Word, apostles teaching; Caring and Sharing Community, Fellowship; Remembering Jesus, the breaking of the bread, communion; Depending on God. The Prayers.

Chapter 3 one of the signs and wonders through the apostles Acts 3:1-10 - The Healing at The Beautiful Gate, jumpstarts intense persecution, & more people coming to faith in Jesus. Preaching repentance. God wants to turn people from their sins.

Chapter 4... Acts 4:1-12 - No Other Name. Acts 4:13-31 - Responding to Persecution. Acts 4:32-37 - Everything in Common. They prayed to speak the Word with boldness. God answered their prayer.

Chapter 5... Acts 5:1-11 - The Deaths of Ananias and Sapphira. God purifying His Church, won't allow sin to infect the fledgling movement. Act 5:12-42 - Counted Worthy to Suffer Dishonor for the Name. Blessed to suffer for the name of Christ.

Chapter 6... a complaint arose...Jewish widows from Gentile lands were being overlooked. Seven Servants chosen to meet the need. Church unity, leadership responsibility, and ministry. 6:7 RESULT the word of God continued to increase, God makes the Gospel preaching effective; the disciples multiplied greatly, changes hearts so people come to faith in Christ. Believers are transformed by the Holy Spirit as they listen to the teaching of the Word.

Sermon Review:

Discuss the placement of Stephen (Acts 6:8-8:2) and Philip (Acts 8:3-40) in Acts as the bridge between the ministries of Peter and Paul.

As his ministry is described, three aspects of Stephen's short life are revealed:

1. STEPHEN'S GODLY life. His CHARACTER. Full: Dominated by. Totally controlled by. yielded + controlled by, led by. Stephen was controlled by God's grace & the power of the Spirit. Grace. Enabling care and help - a gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 4:33. Power. The result of the presence of God's Spirit. Acts 1:8.

2. STEPHEN'S GRACIOUS interactions. His COURAGE. 6:9-14 Stephen didn't make it personal and didn't get defensive in the midst of fierce opposition. God's wisdom trumps human reasoning.

3. STEPHEN'S GLORIOUS appearance. His COUNTENANCE. 6:15 What does an angel's face look like? What this is emphasizing is the presence of God. In the Old Testament the only time God put his glory on the face of a man was Exodus 33 the shining face of Moses. Only time in the New Testament is Acts 6:15 Stephen's face shone like Moses, marked by God's pleasure, favor, presence, power. Transcendent glory. Read 2 Cor. 3:7-18; 4:1-6.

APPLYING THE MESSAGE:

1. YOUR LIFE...controlled by God? What are you filled with/controlled by? Some substance? Some sin? Garbage or the Word of God?

How is it we can be exposed often to God's Word and not experience deep, abiding heart and life change? We hear but do not do. We deceive ourselves. Don't stop hearing the Word. Start doing what it is says. In Christ's strength.

YIELD TO GOD. God wants to control you. The Lord Jesus Christ is revealed clearly in Scripture. Jesus died a substitutionary death in shedding His blood on the cross in the place of lost sinners so that all who believe may be saved and live forever with Him.

Amidst a multitude of sins, Christ's blood is absolutely effective for all who are turned by God's mercy and grace to look upon the only Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. 1 John 4:10 says, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us, and send His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

2. Your Ministry...Is it Gracious? Are you unafraid to discuss the Truth. Can you debate graciously? Takes courage.

3. Your Face...can people see the reflection of Christ in you?

To those needing comfort... He is with you in the trial. Cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you. Like Stephen, trust God to make sense of everything you go through, and prepare you for what is to come.

Believers...Yield everything to God. Don't count your life precious, but expendable. The one who saves his life will lose it. But the one who loses it for Jesus' sake will find it. God wants you to be personally concerned with what concerns Him most.

God cares about every detail of life. But do you really think He cares hugely about what we spend so much time stressing about? Our feelings, our comfort/safety, and our looks? God cares more about our character, our courageous proclamation of the Gospel, and if people clearly see Jesus in us; all flowing from faith in Christ and commitment to His Word. Forget about yourself. Live for God's glory.

Stephen didn't make any of this happen. God did it as he yielded to him. Stephen's maturity, boldness, and countenance was God-given.

John Owen wrote, "We need to think much about JESUS if we wish to enjoy Him fully. 1 Peter 1:8. If we are satisfied with vague ideas about Him we shall find no transforming power communicated to us. But when we cling wholeheartedly to him and our minds are filled with thoughts of Him and we constantly delight ourselves in Him, then spiritual power will flow from Him to purify our hearts, increase our holiness, strengthen our graces, and sometimes fill us "with joy inexpressible and full of glory."

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Pray together utilizing the P-R-A-Y acrostic.

Praise God. Acknowledge His character.

Remember the Gospel. Recount Gospel truth.

Admit your need. Declare your dependence.

Yield to God. Commit everything to His sovereign good pleasure.