

Acts 6:8-15

- **CALLED TO SERVE...**
 - A Growing Church...
 - After the SECOND arrest of the APOSTLES - and their REFUSAL to obey men...
 - The RESULT was people were getting saved in RECORD numbers [multiplying]
 - Not just SAVED - they were becoming DISCIPLES [μαθητής] of Jesus...
 - But with that GROWTH came a new PROBLEM - partiality within the church...
 - The enemy wanted to use their differences [language] to try and DIVIDE them!
 - Many hands...
 - The TWELVE - knew they needed to TEACH and PRAY [spiritual ministry]
 - So they asked the DISCIPLES to choose SEVEN men to SERVE [διάκονος] practically...
 - They gave qualifications: from among you - full of the Spirit - good reputation - and wisdom...
 - Because these men would represent both the Church and Jesus Christ!
 - Called to serve...
 - The church chose Steve - Philip - and FIVE other men...
 - The APOSTLES laid hands on them - recognizing their CALLING to the MINISTRY...
 - And the results was the MULTIPLICATION of the ministry...
 - Because there is nothing quite as wonderful as seeing people step up and help in ministry...
 - God rarely does a work through just one person - God uses an army!
- **1ST - FAITHFUL TO JESUS... vs. 8**
 - 1st - STEPHEN... vs. 8
 - Full of faith...
 - [but] Stephen full of faith!
 - The church had chosen SEVEN men to minister PRACTICALLY...
 - Their purpose was supposed to be helping to feed the WIDOWS - **Acts 6:1**
 - BUT [δέ] - the word here in the GREEK is meant to give a strong CONTRAST...
 - STEPHEN [Στέφανος] - began to do a LOT more than just help wait on tables...
 - Because he was FULL of faith [πίστις]!
 - **Mark 9:23** - "All things are possible to him who believes [πίστις]."
 - We might ask what are the LIMITS of what God can do in our lives...
 - Does He only do GREAT works through really TALENTED people...
 - As it turns out the answer NO - God is NOT limited by our ABILITIES...
 - The only things the HOLDS back His work in our life - is our FAITH...
 - Because although there is NOTHING HE cannot do - He will NOT force us to do ANYTHING...
 - If we want to see God AMAZING works in our lives - all we have to do is ASK...

- Mind you - if we ask for the **WRONG** things [lots of money] - then He will **NOT** answer...
- But if we ask to be **FILLED** with the Spirit - that is a prayer God loves to respond to!
- **James 4:2-3** - "You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask [for the wrong things]!"
- Filled with Power...
 - And [he was filled with] **power**!
 - As a **RESULT** of his **FAITH** - God filled **STEPHEN** with His **POWER** [δύναμις]
 - This was **NOT** human power - this was the **POWER** of the Spirit...
 - We were told - **STEPHEN** was a man who was full of the **SPIRIT** - **Acts 6:5**
 - **Acts 1:8** - "You shall receive power [δύναμις] when the Holy Spirit has come upon you!"
 - There are **THREE** prepositions that are used to define the **WORK** of the **SPIRIT**...
 - **PARA** [παρά] - the Spirit comes **ALONGSIDE** and convicts the world of their **SIN** - **John 16:8**
 - **EN** [ἐν] - the Spirit comes and lives **INSIDE** of the believer - **I Corinthians 6:19**
 - **EPI** [ἐπί] - the Spirit comes **UPON** the believer to give them **POWER**!
 - If someone gave us brand new car - title and key [nice gift]
 - But when we got in and pushed the button [fancy] - nothing happened [no gas]
 - If we do **NOT** have gas - then the car will **NOT** move very fast [push it down the road]
 - Yet that is how many believers live their lives - they lack **POWER** [and are exhausted]!
 - The **THIRD** aspect of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is the often misunderstood...
 - It can be called the **BAPTISM** of the Spirit - being **FILLED** with the Spirit...
 - What it describes is something that happens **AFTER** salvation...
 - Giving us the **POWER** [δύναμις] of God - so we can be do great **WONDERS** for Jesus...
 - And all we have do to is **ASK** - and God will **FILL** up our gas tank - **Luke 11:13**
- Great wonders...
 - [Therefore he] **did great wonders and signs among the people**!
 - Because **STEPHEN** was full of **FAITH** [πίστις] - and asked to be **FILLED** with the **SPIRIT**...
 - Giving him the **POWER** [δύναμις] of God - he **KEPT** [imperfect] doing **GREAT** wonders...
 - **GREAT** [μέγας] wonders [σημεῖον] - the word can be translated as **MIRACLES**...
 - Interesting we are **NOT** told what those **MIRACLES** were - **NO** mention of **HEALINGS**...
 - Instead we are told the **MIRACLES** were done in [ἐν] the people...
 - I think the **MIRACLES** of **STEPHEN** were the salvation of those he shared the **GOSPEL** with!
 - Jesus told His **DISCIPLES** - they would do **GREATER** works than He did - **John 14:12**
 - But what is **GREATER** than healing the blind - or **RAISING** the dead!
 - The problem with **HEALING** - is that people will get **SICK** again...
 - Even if someone comes back from the **DEAD** - they will still **DIE** [Lazarus is not with us today]
 - The **GREATEST** miracle that we can be a part of - is seeing people come to Jesus...
 - When we have **FAITH** - and are **FILLED** - we will have **POWER** to be **BOLD** for Jesus...
 - And see the **MIRACLE** of lost **SINNERS** being given new life!
- 2nd - Using our gifts...
 - For God...
 - Before we can move on to see the details of **HOW** God used **STEPHEN**...
 - We need to take a look at **HOW** a man who **WAITED** tables - became a **POWERFUL** leader...
 - **STEPHEN** was given certain **TALENTS** - and he **CHOSE** to use them for the Lord!
 - I do **NOT** give up easily - when I use that selfishly you would call me **STUBBORN**...
 - That same trait when used for God - becomes **PRESERVICE**...

- It is the same GIFT – but when used for the right purpose – it becomes a blessing!
- God has given to each one of us certain ABILITIES - areas where we are GIFTED...
- We do NOT choose these gifts – they are GIVEN to us by God - **Romans 12:6**
- Too often we take these TALENTS - and use them for selfish purposes...
- But we will NEVER become what God desires until we give our GIFTS to bless others!
- **I Peter 4:10** - “As each one has received a gift minister it to one another.”
- Different Talents...
 - When Jesus gave the PARABLE of the FAITHFUL servant - **Matthew 25:14-30**
 - The MASTER gave DIFFERENT gifts to His SERVANTS [five - two - and one]
 - When the MASTER came to take an account of His SERVANTS...
 - The Lord said [imperfect] to the one who had been FAITHFUL [πιστός] over a FEW things...
 - He would [future] set him over [καθίστημι] MANY things - **Matthew 25:20**
 - We often get caught up in WHAT our GIFT[s] are - comparing them to OTHERS...
 - Where what we should be doing is just USING whatever GIFT[s] we have for God...
 - Because when we are FAITHFUL to use our GIFTS for God - He give us greater opportunities!

○ 3rd - Day of small things ...

- Humble beginnings...
 - Being a SERVANT [διάκονος] was NOT a high position [like being a janitor]
 - But through his position - STEPHEN learned HUMILITY...
 - And he learned NOT to give up – he learned to be FAITHFUL even in the little things!
 - A lot of people will say they WANT to be used by God...
 - Only to be handed a broom - or asked to take out the trash...
 - And they walk away – because they think those jobs are beneath them [not humble]
 - Or they ask to SERVE - and start out with a LOT of excitement...
 - But after a few weeks they start to show up late - leave the work unfinished [not faithful]
 - I have noted TWO traits on the people God uses...
 - They are HUMILITY – there is no task too small for them to do...
 - And they are FAITHFUL – they finish what they started!
- Do not despise...
 - God did NOT do MIRACLES through STEPHEN his FIRST day on the job...
 - STEPHEN spent a lot of time wiping tables – taking out the trash...
 - But because he was FAITHFUL – he had proven he could handle more...
 - And so God began to do more and more AMAZING things through his life!
 - When I first started serving in church – it was NOT teaching Bible studies...
 - I began serving by taking out the trash – sweeping up after service...
 - But the longer I was around – the more opportunities I was given to serve!
 - God does not promote us right to a position of responsibility...
 - When we are FAITHFUL in the LITTLE things – then the Lord gives us MORE!
 - **Zechariah 4:10** – “Do not despise small beginnings - the LORD rejoices to see the work begin.”

● 2ND - BOLD FOR JESUS... vs. 9-15

○ 1st - Defending the faith... vs. 9-10

- Freedmen... vs. 9
 - Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen.
 - [Cyrenians - Alexandrians - and those from Cilicia and Asia]!
 - STEPHEN was filled with the SPIRIT and POWER - doing MIRACLES...

- BUT [δέ] there were certain JEWS from one particular SYNAGOGUE [Jewish church]
 - FREEDMEN [Λιβερτίνο] - men who had been SLAVES - but had been set free...
 - They were from Cyrene [Libya] - Alexandria [Egypt] - Cilicia and Asia minor [Turkey]!
 - There are several theories as to WHO these men were...
 - But most hold they were either GENTILE slaves set FREE by converting to Judaism...
 - Or JEWISH slaves who spoke GREEK - that had been set FREE!
- Reaching out... vs. 9
 - Disputing with Stephen!
 - STEPHEN had a GREEK name – ministered to GREEK widows in the church...
 - Making him a THREAT – because he was willing to share with ANYONE...
 - He had no problem reaching out to a Greek speaking Jewish synagogue!
 - We should be willing to reach out others - DIFFERENT people - with the Gospel...
 - We do NOT expect people to become like us - we are willing to go to them!
 - I Corinthians 9:22 – “I have become all things to all men that I might save some.”
 - Wisdom of God... vs. 10
 - They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke!
 - These FREE men - kept asking [present] questions [συζητέω] of STEPHEN...
 - The suggestion is that they were trying to find ERRORS in the Gospel message...
 - But they were NOT [οὐ] able to stand against [ἀντίστημι] his WISDOM [σοφία]
 - Because as he SPOKE [imperfect] he was full of the SPIRIT [τῷ πνεύματι]!
 - The world thinks they are FREE - but they are BLIND to the TRUTH...
 - It does NOT matter if they are trusting in a RELIGION...
 - Or if they reject RELIGION - and embrace HUMANISM [there is no God]
 - What they cannot SEE - is that they are still in BONDAGE to SIN - Romans 6:16
 - As we are FILLED with the SPIRIT - we are ready to give them the ANSWER...
 - Because our WORDS are NOT our own - we are NOT sharing our OPINION...
 - Through the POWER of the SPIRIT - we are sharing the TRUTH - John 17:17
 - And the world has NO answers - when they are confronted with the WISDOM [σοφία] of God!
 - Matthew 10:20 - “It is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”
- 2nd - Liars... vs. 11-13
- Blasphemy... vs. 11
 - Then they secretly induced men to say:
 - We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God!
 - Because these FREED men could NOT win their debate with STEPHEN - they cheated...
 - The BRIBED [ὕποβάλλω] men to LIE about him saying:
 - STEPHEN had BLASPHEMED Moses and God!
 - This was NOT something new - it had been done long before...
 - When a man called Naboth refused to sell his vineyard to wicked king Ahaz - I Kings 21:3
 - The king hired WICKED men who lied and had Naboth killed for BLASPHEMING God...
 - But it did NOT turn out well for Ahaz - he got the land - but God was NOT happy!
 - I Kings 21:19 - “Thus says the LORD: Have you murdered and also taken possession!”
 - Arrested... vs. 12
 - They stirred up the people - the elders - and the scribes.
 - And they came upon him - seized him - and brought him to the council!
 - These FREED men TORE [root συγκινέω] into the PEOPLE - ELDERS - and SCRIBES...

- Making them panic that STEPHEN was a THREAT that had to be immediately addressed...
- So they came and violently arrested [root ἀρπάζω] him...
- And brought STEPHEN before the SANHEDRIN [συνέδριον]!
- This was NOT something new - it had been done to the Apostles...
- They had been teaching the people in the Temple when they were ARRESTED - **Acts 5:26**
- False witnesses... vs. 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!
 - They prepared [ἵστημι] men to LIE [μάρτυρας ψευδεῖς] about STEPHEN to the SANHEDRIN...
 - Saying - he would NOT stop speaking BLASPHEMY against [κατά] the Temple and the Law!
 - This was NOT something new - it had been done to Jesus - **Matthew 26:59-60**
 - The SANHEDRIN had sought LIARS so they could condemn Him to death!
 - As it turns out - the ENEMIES of God have always tried to silence His messengers...
 - The problem is that the world LOVES [ἀγαπάω] the darkness - **John 3:19**
 - The same LOVE [ἀγαπάω] that God has for us - the world has for SIN...
 - Therefore they will do ANYTHING to stop the MESSAGE - turn off the LIGHT - **John 15:18**
- 3rd - Half truths... vs. 14
 - Destroy the temple...
 - We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place!
 - The LIARS made TWO accusation against STEPHEN...
 - FIRST - they had heard him say - Jesus will [future] DESTROY the TEMPLE...
 - No doubt STEPHEN had been talking about [past] the RESURRECTION of Jesus!
 - The LIE was very subtle - Jesus did say He had POWER [Δύναμαι] to DESTROY the TEMPLE...
 - And He would rebuild it in THREE days - but He was talking about His body - **John 2:21**
 - But Stephen was NOT talking about something Jesus WOULD [future] do...
 - He was talking about something Jesus had ALREADY [past] done!
 - Change customs...
 - [He will also] change the customs which Moses delivered to us!
 - SECOND - they heard STEPHEN say Jesus had FULFILLED the Law...
 - He was had NOT come to CHANGE it - HE came to CHANGE us!
 - **Matthew 5:17** - "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."
 - The LIE again was very subtle - what Jesus taught did seem to CHANGE the LAW...
 - He was saying NO one could ever been GOOD enough - **Romans 3:20**
 - Jesus was the ONLY one who was ever able to keep ALL of the law [fulfilled]
 - But then the ONLY one who ever EARNED heaven - choose to DIE in our place...
 - So that ANYONE could be SAVED - not by the LAW - but by GRACE!
 - **II Corinthians 5:21** - "God made Christ - who never sinned - to be the offering for our sin so that we could be made right with God through Christ."
 - Twisting words...
 - We have an ENEMY know knows how to TWIST the Word...
 - The very FIRST question in the Bible - is the snake asking - did God say - **Genesis 3:1**
 - Only to then go on MISQUOTE what God said to Adam and Eve [every tree]
 - He quoted from Psalm 91 when tempting Jesus on the Temple mount - **Luke 4:10**
 - I had a young man come up to meet this week...

- He was reading Christian book that had some questionable content...
 - His justification was the author was quoting the Bible - I responded - so did satan!
 - That is why it is so IMPORTANT that we KNOW our Bibles...
 - Our enemy is subtle and cunning - he loves to give HALF truths...
 - They might sound right - and if we are NOT careful - we can be deceived...
 - Get into the Word - VERIFY what is being said - KNOW the whole TRUTH!
 - **Acts 17:11** - "Search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things [are] so."
- 4th - Message from God... vs. 15
- All who sat in the council - looking steadfastly at him - saw his face as the face of an angel!
 - As the WHOLE [παῖς] counsel [συνέδριον] STARED [ἀτενίζω] STEPHEN...
 - They SAW that his face looked like an ANGEL...
 - ANGEL [ἄγγελος] - the word means MESSENGER [of God]
 - Because Steven was about to give them a WORD they would NEVER forget - **Acts 7**
 - It would be so POWERFUL - that they would KILL him just to make him stop!
 - The world does NOT want to hear the TRUTH - they prefer the LIE...
 - But God sends us out into the WORLD as His MESSENGERS [ἄγγελος]
 - Because there is only ONE hope - ONE way to be saved...
 - And God LOVES the world too much to let them believe the LIE...
 - God wants us to be BOLD for Him - and share the GOOD news with EVERYONE!