## Acts 6:8-15

## Called to Serve...

- o 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 [ $\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\dot{\eta}\varsigma$ ] 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!
- o 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!
- o 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!

## • 1<sup>st</sup> - Faithful to Jesus... vs. 8

- o 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  $[\delta \epsilon]$  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  $[\pi\alpha\rho\dot{\alpha}]$  the Spirit comes ALONGSIDE and convicts the world of their SIN **John 16:8**
- EN [ev] 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 [ɛˈv] 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!
- o  $2^{nd}$  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...
    - ullet 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!
- o 3<sup>rd</sup> 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."
- 2<sup>ND</sup> BOLD FOR JESUS... vs. 9-15
  - o  $1^{st}$  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  $[\delta \acute{\epsilon}]$  there were certain JEWS from one particular SYNAGOGUE [Jewish church]
      - FREEDMEN [Λιβερτῖνος] 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 [ἀνθίστημι] 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 [ $\sigma o \phi i \alpha$ ] of God!
- Matthew 10:20 "It is not you who speak but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."
- o 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 [ὑποβάλλω] 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  $\dot{\alpha}\rho\pi\dot{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ ] him...
    - And brought STEPHEN before the SANHEDRIN [συνέδριον]!
    - This was NOT something new it had been done to the Apostles...
    - $\bullet~$  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 [ $\kappa\alpha\tau\dot{\alpha}$ ] 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 [ $\dot{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\dot{\alpha}\omega$ ] the darkness **John 3:19**
    - The same LOVE [  $\dot{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\pi\dot{\alpha}\omega$ ] 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**
- o 3<sup>rd</sup> 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."
- o 4<sup>th</sup> 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 [πᾶς] 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 the 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!