

# WORSHIP SERVICE - 6.15.2025

## PART 19 - THE KIND OF MAN GOD USES

### I. INTRODUCTION

- We live in a time when our convictions are tested on a daily basis.
- It's not the testing at the point of the sword, or a gun, or the threat of being burned alive at the stake.
- It's a testing of social pressure that insists on silencing us and tempting us to compromise.
- And when your trial by fire does come, what will it reveal about your faith when it does?
- The message is titled, *The Kind of Man God Uses*, and while it is directed primarily at men, the distinguishing marks that characterized Stephen are those things that should mark every follower of Jesus Christ.
- As we study the brief life of Stephen, we will find some of the characteristics of true biblical manhood displayed.
- Main theme: God calls his people to live with godly character, courage and conviction, holding fast to the truth no matter what happens.

### Acts 6:8-15

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. 10 But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. 11 Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." 12 And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, 13 and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak 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 will change the customs that Moses delivered to us." 15 And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

- Six chapters into the book of Acts and we have only thus far seen the church in Jerusalem.
- Jesus had told his apostles that they would be his Spirit-empowered witnesses first in Jerusalem, then the regions of Judea and Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth.
- And now we are in a transition point in the narrative.
- Peter, has been the figure most prominently featured in Luke's recording of the early church.
- But soon another character will emerge of great importance and that is the apostle Paul.

- But before that happens, there are two other characters Luke reveals. who are integral to laying the foundation for the mission to the Gentiles.
- Two remarkable men, Stephen and Philip, who were not apostles, but part of the seven who were chosen to serve tables in the distribution to widows, were used powerfully in the expansion of the gospel outside of Jerusalem.
- His ministry was short-lived but it was certainly not short in impact.
- He did not die before God accomplished his purposes through the life of Stephen.

## II. THE CHARACTER

- When we speak about being the kind of man that God uses, we have to first and foremost look at the character of that man.
- Stephen was an exemplary figure.
- Consider how out of the thousands of men in the Jerusalem church his name came to the top of the short list of qualified men—men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.
- In just a few short verses in chapter six, Luke piles on a number of distinguishing characteristics that marked this man Stephen.
- Stephen was a man:
  - Full of faith (5)
  - Full of the Spirit (5)
  - Full of grace (8)
  - Full of power (9)
  - Full of wisdom and conviction(10)
- These qualities seemed to flow powerfully in this one personality. Whatever Stephen possessed, the impression was that he had these qualities in plenitude.
- A man full of faith.
- His speech, the content of which we see in chapter seven, describes his faith.
- He believed that the sovereign God ruled all of human history and was sovereignly in control of his life.
- He believed Jesus was the fulfillment of messianic prophecy, that he had risen from the dead and was exalted to the right hand of the Father.
- Are you full of faith?
- Is your faith a fair-weather faith or does your faith stand strong through the storms of life?
- A man full of the Spirit.
- To be full of the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit, to come under the influence of the Holy Spirit, marked by a life of obedience to God, the cultivation of godly character and spiritual fruit, and a deep awareness of the presence of God.
- Ephesians 5:18, Paul writes, “Do not get drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit.”
- A person who is drunk is under the influence of alcohol, it affects the way they think and talk, it affects their behavior.
- Likewise, a person filled with the Spirit comes under his influence and that affects their whole life.
- Are you full of the Spirit?
- A man full of grace.
- Stephen was keenly aware of God’s grace and his ongoing need of God’s grace.
- Before one is gracious in character, he must be in awe of God's grace.
- A person full of grace lives with deep gratitude, humility, and dependence on God.
- A person full of grace demonstrates that grace in action, displaying kindness and gentleness when others deserve harshness, is patient when

others are difficult to deal with, and extends forgiveness when they are wronged.

- A person full of the grace of God possesses a strength to endure sufferings and trials without becoming bitter and resentful.
- Are you full of grace?
- A man full of power.
- We see the Spirit operate through Stephen in a manner we see him operate only through the apostles.
- He performed signs and wonders like the apostles. This showed his close link with the apostles and the purpose God had for him in the expansion of the gospel outside of Jerusalem.
- The power is a divine enablement for bold witness and godly living.
- Jesus promised that in Acts 1:8 “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...”
- That power gave him the confidence to speak with boldness and authority and to speak gospel truth with conviction.
- The kind of man God uses is a man full of the power God calls men, fathers, and all believers to walk in—to serve, speak, and stand for Christ with Spirit-enabled courage.
- Are you full of the Spirit’s power?
- A man full of wisdom and conviction.
- Stephen’s opponents could not withstand his wisdom and conviction.
- Wisdom is rooted in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom.
- A wise person lives with deep reverence for God, seeking to obey and honor God, and to live in a manner that is pleasing to God.
- Stephen’s bold witness and bold speech reflects a man who is more concerned with pleasing God than avoiding conflict.
- This is not worldly-wisdom. This is the wisdom from above, that is pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and sincere” as James writes in his letter (James 3:17).
- This wisdom comes from the Spirit, this wisdom is the wisdom we should ask God for if we lack it (James 1:5).
- This wisdom comes from the Word of Christ dwelling richly in you (Colossians 3:16).
- Stephen knew when to speak, how to speak, and what to speak in the moment. We need more men like that!
- That comes from the Spirit of God and the Word of God.
- Luke 21:12-15 But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. 13 This will be your opportunity to bear witness. 14 Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, 15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict.
- Are you full of wisdom? Are you full of the Word of God?
- Can others see these qualities in you?
- Men, do your children and families see Christ in you?
- What are you filled with?
- Ask God to fill you with faith, power, and wisdom from the Spirit.

### III. THE COURAGE

- The courage Stephen displayed under fire flowed from what characterized his life.
- Who he was publicly was a result of what his life was like privately.
- The reason Stephen was able to prevail publicly was because of who he was privately.

- It's easy to profess the name of Christ when there is no challenge to our faith.
  - Fire reveals what we're made of.
  - You cannot stand publicly if you have not prepared beforehand by standing privately.
- 
- In our passage, Luke doesn't tell us exactly what Stephen said to inflame the crowd and turn them against him.
  - Whatever it was, it offended and riled up a particular group who violently seized Stephen and dragged him before the council.
  - Let's look at this.
  - V9 tells us that the group that was disputing with Stephen belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen.
  - This synagogue likely consisted of Hellenist Jews that were freed slaves or descendants of freed slaves from the regions mentioned.
  - Stephen's name indicates that he was either Greek or a hellenist, that is a Greek-speaking Jew. Most likely the latter.
  - Since Stephen was a Greek or Hellenist, it makes sense that he would have been witnessing to this group of people.
  - Their dispute with Stephen reflected the cultural and theological tensions that existed between Hebrew and Hellenist Jews.
  - Stephen's preaching threatened their identity and threatened any control they had over the people.
  - They had to discipline one of their own, a Hellenist, who performed deeds and teachings that were contrary to what they taught and believed.
  - Because they were no match for Stephen's Spirit-empowered witness and proclamation, they conspire to silence Stephen and eliminate him.
  - They instigate men who will bring false accusations against Stephen.
  - They stir up the people and the elders and the scribes who take Stephen by force to bring him before the council.
  - They accuse Stephen of blaspheming Moses and God, the temple, and the law. That he was teaching that Jesus would destroy the physical temple and hang the customs that Moses had given them.
  - Blasphemy was a capital offense under Jewish law so these were serious charges.
  - They twist Stephen's teaching about Jesus fulfilling the law to bring this slanderous charge of blasphemy.
  - Notice, how these are the same tactics used at Jesus's trial and the same types of charges brought against Jesus.
- 
- We see the same tactics used against Christians today.
  - The world often distorts the gospel to justify the tactics that are employed to try to silence Christians.
  - False accusations are a tactic of the enemy to silence God's people.
  - Stephen's speech in chapter seven reflects how he didn't back down or cower under the intimidation and opposition he was facing.
  - With great courage he delivers the longest recorded speech in Acts.
  - He boldly declares the gospel truths that Christ is the fulfillment of the law. He is the new temple of God.
  - And all of the prophets they claim to revere prophesied of the coming of Christ, whom they murdered.
  - That was courage under fire.
- 
- The kind of man God uses is a man like Stephen.
  - Not only did Stephen boldly speak up about Christ and proclaim his gospel, when challenged and threatened, he took a stand for Christ.
  - He spoke up when it was time to speak up.
  - He stood up when it was time to stand up.
  - We need this kind of courage of conviction.
  - Sometimes you are going to stand alone.

- Sometimes you will be the only one standing for Christ—and you need to have the courage to stand fast.
  - Young people, at some point you may find yourself in a position where you will have to stand alone for Christ.
  - Your friends, your classmates, may not believe what you believe about Jesus, and they will mock you, make fun of you, ridicule you, and you will need to have the courage to speak up and stand up for Christ.
  - When they mock your faith, respond with kindness and truth.
  - As hard as it is, you have to go against the crowd, go against the culture, not worry what people think about you or say about you, or how they will exclude you from certain things.
  - You may have to go it alone—but you're never alone—God is with you!
  - Pray for courage to share Jesus with a friend.
  - Men, stand strong when your convictions make you a target.
  - You will be tempted to compromise to get ahead. Your integrity will be tested.
  - Let the consistency of your godly character convict others.
  - You may have to stand alone but God is with you!
  - Speak the truth, don't cower under pressure especially in difficult conversations.
  - You were made to lead—lead with Christ-like character, courage and conviction in your home, workplace, church, and community.
  - Guard your family against cultural lies by teaching biblical truth to your children.
  - Rely on God's grace and power to equip you as a husband and father.
  - Ladies, embrace your own call to live and speak the gospel with clarity, courage, and grace.
  - In your friend circle, in your workplace, don't be the one who stays silent when truth is undermined.
  - Have the courage to speak with godly conviction and stand alone if that's what it takes.
- 
- We can expect if we're exemplifying godly character and courage, that we will be a target for false accusations, mockery, and slander.
  - Be a man, a woman, whose life and words cannot be refuted—even if attacked.
  - Stephen was liked and popular when he was performing signs and wonders, but the crowd quickly turned against him as he heralded the gospel truth about Jesus.
  - The true Christian life will invite opposition.
  - Courage is required. Courage is given for those who rely on and are filled with the Holy Spirit.
  - We need to be willing to speak up and stand up for Christ even when it is hard.
  - But remember, the foundation for courageous witness is possessing godly character and conviction beforehand.

## IV. THE COUNTENANCE

- 15 And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.
- They were verbally and physically attacking Stephen.
- But Stephen's face was radiating the glory of God.
- And his adversaries saw it.
- It was as if God was demonstrating his approval of Stephen's character, Stephen's courage, Stephen's message by putting his glory on Stephen's face.
- This was akin in style to the transfiguration scene of Moses and Jesus.

- After Moses' encounter with God on Sinai, his face shone because he was talking to God and was in the very presence of God. Everyone saw it. It was so obvious and so convicting to the people that he had to put a veil on his face. (Exodus 34)
- Stephen's opponents claim he is blaspheming Moses and God, yet he is depicted as one like Moses, who had been with God.
- The high priest, the one who went into the presence of God, yet never experienced the manifest presence and glory of God, asks the one with radiance of the glory of God if he has been unfaithful to God.
- Because Stephen stood up for Christ, Christ was standing on the side of Stephen.
- Just as Stephen was a man highly regarded by the church, this shows that he was also highly regarded by God. He was the kind of man God uses.
- Stephen's life reflects an intimacy with God, a life devoted to Christ, a life lived before the presence of God, before the face of God.
- He was a man becoming more and more like Christ.
- 2 Cor 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.
- As we grow in Christlikeness we are becoming like him, from one degree of glory to another.
- Others will be able to notice that.
- Can others notice that you have been with Jesus?
- Can they see it on your face?
- Stephen stood before powerful men, men who had the power to end his life, which they ultimately did.
- But he stood with the presence of Christ. His face shone, not with fear but with faith, grace, power, wisdom, and conviction filled with the Spirit of God.
- What made Stephen so remarkable of a man to emulate was not personal greatness, but that he was so full of Christ.
- Jesus is the one we have to ultimately look to as the model for the kind of man God uses.
- He displayed all of the characteristics perfectly and completely.
- Jesus was full of faith: Jesus trusted his father fully at all times—through hunger, temptation, betrayal, and the cross. He displayed unwavering faith in God's plan and character.
- Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit: In his humanity, the Spirit was poured out on Jesus without measure. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, he was baptized and anointed by the Spirit, he was led and empowered by the Spirit.
- Jesus was full of grace: John 1:14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...he was full of grace and truth. Everything about Jesus's life radiated grace—how he healed the broken, forgave sinners, and restored the outcast.
- Jesus was full of power: Divine power flowed through him, performing miracles, displaying his authority over nature, demons, sickness, and even death.
- Jesus was full of wisdom: The incarnate Christ grew in wisdom before God and men. The way he spoke, his parables, his rebuke of the religious leaders, his answers to questions, showed his perfect wisdom and discernment.
- Jesus was full of courage: Jesus faced the cross willingly, he spoke the truth boldly before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate.

- Everything we find admirable in Stephen pointed beyond him to the perfect man—Jesus—who embodied all of these traits fully and flawlessly.
- And Jesus isn't just our model for these, he also gives them to us by His Spirit.
- We can be the kind of man God uses, we can be a people who live full of faith, grace, power, wisdom, and courage because our Savior has gone before us.

## **APPLICATION AND REFLECTION**

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?