"STEPHEN - A VICTOR IN GOD'S EYES"

ACTS 6:5-8:3

5-24-2026

*** Like Stephen, we should want to be a Victor in God's Eyes!**

What is a true conqueror? Who is the one who wears the victor's crown?

I. HE IS SPIRITUAL (6:5; 6:8-15)
(Stephen was controlled by God)

A. THE DESCRIPTION OF HIS SPIRITUALITY (6:5)

1. Full of Faith

2. Full of the Holy Spirit

B. THE EVIDENCE OF HIS SPIRITUALITY (6:8-15)

1. He had unusual ability (v. 8)

2. He had unusual wisdom (v. 9-14)

3. He had unusual appearance (v. 15)

II. HE IS COURAGEOUS (7:1-58)
(Stephen stood up for the Truth)

A. HE DEFENDED THE TRUTH (7:1-53)

B. HE DIED FOR THE TRUTH (7:54-58)

III. HE IS CHRIST-LIKE (7:59-60)
(Stephen was like his Master [Savior])

A. HIS TRUST (v. 59)

B. HIS FORGIVENESS (v. 60)

CONCLUSION: Stephen was greatly used by God

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(Stephen _____ for the _____)

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INTRODUCTION:

The world would look at Stephen's life (and how seemingly tragically it ended and how short it was) and say, "What a waste!"

(NOTE: Jesus' ministry was short, but He fulfilled God's will)

The time/money/talents, etc. that we give to Christ will always be looked at (through natural, human, short-sighted eyes) as a waste. What matters is what God thinks! What God approves of.

"Stephen" - a man who lived up to his name (which is - "victor's crown")

The other crown spoken of in the Bible is (Eng. diadem) which is a "royal crown." You can inherit a "royal crown" but the only way to receive a victor's crown is to earn it! (Wiersbe, p. 83).

Rev. 2:10 - "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown a life."

We don't want wasted lives. But how men measure victory and how God measures it are not always the same.

*** Like Stephen, we should want to be a Victor in God's Eyes!**

What is a true conqueror? Who is the one who wears the victor's crown?

I. HE IS SPIRITUAL (6:5; 6:8-15)

(Stephen was controlled by God)

A. THE DESCRIPTION OF HIS SPIRITUALITY (6:5)

Acts 6:5 draws special attention to Stephen: "Who was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit."

He is singled out as one who was:

1. Full of Faith

Faith is: Full trust in God; willingness to do the impossible - cp. 6:8-7)

Faith is our source of victory in every area of our lives.

I John 5:4b - "and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our
faith."

2. Full of the Holy Spirit

I believe that the fullness of the Spirit is the direct result of our daily faith.

Do you want to be Spirit-filled?

Start believing God!

(NOTE: the Spirit's filling and faith are tied together in Barnabas' life - Acts
11:24)

What is it that grieves God's Spirit? Unbelief

What is it that quenches God's Spirit? Unbelief!

The one sin that God can't forgive in the lost man is unbelief (Mt. 12:31-32)
when God's Spirit is testifying of God's truth.

The one sin that will rob your victory is unbelief.

B. THE EVIDENCE OF HIS SPIRITUALITY (6:8-15)

1. He had unusual ability (v. 8)

2. He had unusual wisdom (v. 9-14)

6:9

"Cilicia" = NOTE: Tarsus was in Cilicia. Very probably, Saul was involved in the disputing (who was from Cilicia - 21:39).

6:10

Jesus promised: "For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your

adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." (Lk. 21:15).

6:11-14

When hardened unbelievers fail to stop a man's message, they then attack the <u>man</u> himself.

They treated Stephen the same way they treated Jesus:

1) hired false witnesses
2) stirred up the people
3) accused him of attacking the Law of Moses & the Temple &
4) killed him

(cp. Mt. 26:59-62; Jn. 2:19-22)

3. He had unusual <u>appearance</u> (v. 15)

6:15

Stephen's face spoke louder than his words. It glowed!

Whenever someone has been in the presence of God for a long time there will be a certain undeniable glow about him/her.

They were accusing him of blaspheming against Moses (v. 14), so God gives Stephen a glow like Moses had (Ex. 34:29-30), so as to say: "This man is not against Moses! He is like Moses - He is my faithful servant!" (Wiersbe, p. 87).

II. HE IS COURAGEOUS (7:1-58)

(Stephen stood up for the Truth)

A. HE DEFENDED THE TRUTH (7:1-53)

3 charges against Stephen:

They said he spoke against -

1) Moses and the Law (6:11, 13)
NOTE: v. 11 How they put Moses before God in word order)

2) God (6:11)

3) the Temple (6:13)

Stephen in his sermon answers all three accusations.

Stephen's sermon begins with "the God of glory" (v. 2) and ends with "the
glory of God" (v. 55).

In Stephen's sermon, he shows his belief in God.

He believed that God:

1) Gave birth to a nation through Abraham (v. 1-8)

2) Gave sustenance (protection) to Israel through Joseph (v. 9-19)

3) Gave deliverance (redemption) to Israel through Moses (v. 20-43) &

4) Gave a place of worship (a place to meet God) to Israel through
Solomon (v. 44-50)

In Stephen's sermon, he shows his attitude toward the Law of Moses!

He believed that God gave:

1. Living Oracles (words) (v. 38)

(He believed that God's words was alive--practical, to be lived and obeyed--not just dry creeds just to be known)

2. The Law to Moses by Angels (7:53)
(cp. Dt. 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2)

The Jews also believed this (Josephus - Ant. 15:136)

In Stephen's sermon, he shows his attitude toward the Tabernacle and Temple.

He believed that God was not limited (confined) to a specific geographical location.

God is not to be put into a box! (cp. Jesus words: Jn. 4:20-24).

7:47-50

When we use the expression "God's House" in ref. to our church building, we do not mean that this is a dwelling place for God. We mean this building belongs to God. He owns it! The church is people, not the building!

7: 48-50

The Temple, which was to be a great blessing, actually became one of Israel's greatest curses. They came to Jerusalem to worship it, instead of worshipping God.

7:49

Acts 17:24 - "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands"

Stephen is quoting Isaiah: READ Is. 66:1-2.

A superstitious reverence for the Temple building was

contrary to God's intention and to Solomon's! (II Sam. 7:1-13; I Ki. 8:20).

The Jews treated the Temple like a rabbit's food or a good luck charm, thinking that they had security and that God would protect them (no matter how they lived) as long as they had the Temple

(READ Jer. 7:1-4, 8-10). (NOTE: v. 10 - we are not saved to sin, we are saved from sin!)

7:51

Stephen now applies his sermon very pointedly!

He who was asked to defend himself is not taking the offensive as the prosecutor.

Jesus handled religious hypocrites very similarly in his pointed denunciations of their sin (EX: Mt. 23).

"Uncircumcised in heart and ears" -

"Heart" = God wanted pride and sinfulness to be cut away from the heart (Lev. 26:41; Dt. 10:16; Jer. 4:4).

"Ear" = God wanted the barriers to hearing His Word cut away also (Jer. 6:10)

The man thrust of Stephen's sermon centers on Israel's rejection of God, God's prophets, and God's Messiah.

1. They rejected God's Spirit (v. 51)

Resist = oppose by being hard against

How does one "resist the Holy Spirit"?

a. by hardening their hearts and deafening their ears to His Word (His message)

The Jews resisted the Holy Spirit by rejecting God's Word (Pride!)

They refused to accept anything new.

They "embalmed" the O.T. Law and didn't see that Christ fulfilled it.

Then they replaced the true intent of God's living truth with dead traditions (mt. 15:1-20)

How does one "resist the Holy Spirit"?

b. Further, by rejecting His messengers (prophets in O.T.; apostles in N.T.)

2. They rejected God's Prophets (v. 52)

3. They rejected God's Messiah

NOTE: Joseph (7:9-19), Moses (7:20-43), and Jesus ("the Just One" - v. 52) all have this in common (and Stephen points it out) -- they were all rejected by Israel!

Joseph - sold into slavery by his brothers (v. 9)

Moses - misunderstood (v. 25), rejected (v. 27)
Jesus - betrayed and murdered (v. 52)

But NOTE: They were all rejected the first time but accepted the second (Joseph - v. 13) (Moses - v. 35ff) (Jesus will be accepted at His second coming - Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10).

We will not always be heralds of a popular message.

It's easy to preach (witness, etc.) to people who want to hear! You need special grace to preach to those opposed to your message.

B. HE DIED FOR THE TRUTH (7:54-58)

7:54

To gnash one's teeth was a sign of rage (Ps. 35:16; Lk. 13:28).

7:56

"Heavens opened" = like at Jesus baptism

7:55-56

Stephen saw the glory of God. No one has seen God the Father (except God the Son and the Holy Spirit) at any time.

We will see in the Son what the Father is like. Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9; cp. Jn. 12:45).

Jesus is called "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15); Heb. 1:3 - "Who

being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"

Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father (Heb. 1:3, 10:12; Ps. 110:1; Mk. 16:19; Lk. 22:69), but now He stands up to welcome Stephen home!

(NOTE: "Son of Man - a messianic title; Dan. 7:13-14 - "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed")

Jesus stands to welcome home a mighty victor! A hero! A conqueror!

7:57

Why do they block their ears? They are trying to block out what they would consider "blasphemy."

They didn't want to hear about Jesus! When He was the answer to their problems, to their understanding of Scripture, to their eternal destiny.

7:58-59

The method of stoning: The criminal was taken to a height and thrown down. The witnesses had to do the actual throwing down. Once he was wounded from the fall, great boulders were hurled down upon him until he died (Barclay, p. 61 & 62).

Stephen stood up for the truth! I must preach to please God! Gal. 1:10 - "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

III. HE IS CHRIST-LIKE (7:59-60)

(Stephen was like his Master [Savior])

A. HIS TRUST (v. 59)

7:59-60

Stephen not only faced a trial similar to Christ (false witnesses, etc.), but he died with a similar prayer on his lips (Acts 7:59-60; Lk. 23:34, 46).

"Receive my spirit - For the believer, we leave our body behind at death, and our spirit goes to be with the Lord.

To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:8; cp. Ecc. 12:7; Phil. 1:23).

There is no greater security, no greater peace, than to know that at the moment you die you will be with Jesus! Safe! In His almighty hand!

Jesus when he was "reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (I Pet. 2:23).

I Pet. 4:19 - "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

B. HIS FORGIVENESS (v. 60)

Stephen, who earlier denounced their sin and disobedience (7:51-53) still had a heart for the people! He was concerned that they be forgiven.

The man who follows Christ the whole way will find strength to do things which it seems humanly impossible to do.

When George Wishart was to be executed, the executioner hesitated. Wishart came to him and kissed him. "Lo," he said, "Here is a token that I forgive thee." (Barclay, p. 62).

A heckler once shouted to a street preacher, "Why didn't God do something for Stephen when they were stoning him?" The preacher replied, "God did do something for Stephen. He gave him the grace to forgive his murderers and to pray for them!" A perfect answer! (Wiersbe, p. 93)

When Christians die, they "fall asleep" (Jn. 11:11; I Th. 4:13) (a euphemism for death).

The body sleeps, but the spirit goes to be with the Lord awaiting resurrection and reunion with our spirit (I Th. 4:14).

For Stephen, his death meant coronation (Rev. 2:10).
Death for the Christian is a promotion!

CONCLUSION: Stephen was greatly used by God!

Stephen seemingly lost with men, but he won with God. God used his life dramatically!

8:1

God used Stephen to serve the widows at the Jerusalem church.

God used Stephen to proclaim His message.

God used Stephen to give the Jewish nation (as a whole) one last chance at the Gospel.

Because they rejected it, God used Stephen's death to spark opposition which would spread the Gospel out to Samaria (Acts 8), to Caesarea (Acts 10), and to the uttermost parts of the earth --in fulfillment of Acts 1:8.

And God used Stephen to convict Saul of his need for salvation. Saul (Paul) never forgot this event (Acts 22:19, 20).

Stephen's life was a source of conviction.

Jesus said to Saul, "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks (ox goads)." (Acts 9)

No doubt Saul never forgot Stephen's glowing face. He never forgot his bold preaching (NOTE: Paul began his sermon the same way - Acts 13:16ff)).

He never forgot Stephen's prayer for Jesus to accept his spirit and to forgive those who were stoning him.

And he never forgot how Stephen saw God's glory and Christ. Saul immediately recognized the Lord when he saw Christ's brightness himself (Acts 9).

"God never wastes the blood of His saints!" (Wiersbe, p. 94).

We may not (right away) understand why God does what He does! But we know it is for the best (Rm. 8:28). It is for His glory. It will turn out for good!

Jim Elliot and his four comrades were killed by the savages (Auca people) he was trying to win to Christ. The result: many are now Christians!