

## I. THE CHARGE OF STEPHEN

- A. Remember that Stephen was a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost ACTS 6:5
  - 1. Remember that the work of the Lord had prospered ACTS 6:7
  - 2. Remember that Stephen did many wonders and miracles ACTS 6:8
  - 3. Remember that his face shone like an angel ACTS 6:15
  - 4. Remember that he preached great expository message ACTS 7:2
  - 5. Remember that he had turned the tables on those wicked men!
- B. The message that he preached was historical, not hysterical
  - 1. This council was probably used to people trembling before them
    - a. They were used to having power over people, getting their way
    - b. They had probably never heard someone speak to them like this
    - c. But they ASKED – “Are these things so?”
      - i. BTW, the question had to do with the lies they had told
      - ii. Stephen ignored the devil’s lies and spoke the truth
      - iii. Don’t engage with the world’s lies. Give them Bible!
  - 2. He preached to them about God’s people and God’s adversaries
    - a. Abraham believed God, but his children went to Egyptian bondage
    - b. Joseph was a type of Christ, but his brothers sold him into slavery
    - c. Moses followed God, but the people had Aaron make idols of gold
    - d. David was after God’s own heart, but had no peace from enemies
  - 3. Stephen: YOU think you’re like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and David
    - a. But you are NOT! You’re the ENEMIES OF GOD
    - b. You are not like the ones that served Him
    - c. You are like the ones that resisted Him
- C. The council thought they had Stephen on trial, but he puts them on trial
  - 1. They had made wicked lies against him
  - 2. But he levels Holy Spirit directed charges against them
  - 3. They are charged with:
    - a. Resisting the Holy Ghost (vs. 51)
    - b. Persecuting the prophets (vs. 52)
    - c. Slaying the JUST ONE – Jesus (vs. 52)
    - d. Disobeying the Law of God (vs. 53)

## II. THE CONVICTION OF THE SLAYERS

- A. All those listening fell under STRONG CONVICTION (vs. 54)
  - 1. The Bible tells us that they were CUT to the HEART
    - a. Perhaps you remember hearing preaching before you were saved
    - b. I do! I remember going to churches with my brother!

- c. Those churches, filled with US Marines, preaching the Word!
  - 2. And why wouldn't they be cut? HEB. 4:12 – “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
  - 3. A DISCERNER! (Webster's 1828) “One who sees, discovers or distinguishes; an observer.”
    - a. That means the judge can see through the lie
    - b. That the Bible doesn't change no matter our excuses
    - c. And it deals in the SOULS of men!
      - i. See that? The thoughts (that's the intelligence)
      - ii. And the intents of the heart (that's the emotions)
      - iii. Not the spirit of man, not the body, but the SOUL
- B. What is conviction?
  - 1. It means you KNOW you are wrong! CONVICTED, just like a court case
    - a. You get a speeding ticket. You were speeding or you weren't
    - b. But with God, there's no question. He knows!
    - c. ROM. 3:23 – “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”
    - d. The judge has already spoken, the gavel has already struck!
  - 2. There are only TWO ways to deal with conviction:
    - a. Repentance: 2 COR. 7:10 – “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”
    - b. Rejection: The sorrow of the world. Sorry I got caught.
    - c. It only worketh DEATH – and it does in this case as well.
      - i. The death of Stephen physically
      - ii. The deaths of their souls eternally unless they got Saved
      - iii. And we know of one who did!
  - 3. We know that Saul was standing there (vs. 58)
    - a. Maybe it's just my imagination, but when I read Paul's own words
    - b. He says later: ACTS 22:20 – “And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.”
    - c. Did Paul go his whole life wondering if he'd ever measure up to the example of Stephen?
- C. They became physically violent – UNCONTROLLED hatred and anger
  - 1. You see it on the news today at protests
    - a. Someone says something the woke crowd doesn't like
    - b. And they lose their minds – I'm not talking about “chanting”
    - c. I'm talking about swinging blunt objects, throwing punches, burning down buildings, kicking people on the ground
    - d. God help our nation!
  - 2. They gnashed on him with their teeth (vs. 54)

- a. Such a violent rage that they were grinding their teeth together
- b. I don't believe they bit him; they hadn't rushed him yet (vs. 57)
- c. This phrase is used when a person is out of control and powerless
  - i. Such as the ones without a wedding garment in Matthew 22: "cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth"
  - ii. It indicates despair and pain and helplessness
  - iii. So enraged that they could not function
- 3. Then he DEMONSTRATED that they were on the wrong side (vs. 55)
  - a. They couldn't take it any longer – they cried in a loud voice
  - b. They ran upon him in one accord
  - c. All in complete agreement, they cast him out of the city

### III. THE CASTING OF STONES

- A. They stoned him.
  - 1. A form of capital punishment used primarily in the Old Testament
    - a. Sins that resulted in stoning were:
      - i. Murder, idolatry, adultery, and necromancy or sorcery
      - ii. Blaspheming the name of God
    - b. A public execution that required the accuser throw the first stone
    - c. It required community involvement
    - d. DEU. 17:7 – "The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you."
  - 2. It was a terrible way to die
  - 3. Stephen did not cry, he did not beg, he did not weep for himself
- B. He met their killing rage with a godly testimony
  - 1. He had courage – he was dying for the truth, and he knew it
  - 2. He had confidence – he died calling upon God
  - 3. He had conformity – he died like Christ, praying for his enemies
  - 4. He had calmness – he "fell asleep"
- C. Oh, that word, "asleep!"
  - 1. That beautiful term that describes the death of one of God's saints
  - 2. Not dead, but merely asleep in Christ
  - 3. Not gone, but simply absent from the body and present with the Lord
  - 4. Not forgotten, but only awaiting the resurrection day!

### IV. THE CHRIST THAT STOOD

- A. How could Stephen have such courage, confidence, conformity, and calmness?
  - 1. He looked into the glories of Heaven and SAW (vs. 55-56)
  - 2. The heavens were opened to him (not the sky, not space, 3<sup>rd</sup> heaven)
  - 3. And he saw JESUS CHRIST!

- a. When facing death, how important to know the Savior
  - b. When facing life... how important to know the Savior!
- B. He saw the Lord Jesus Christ, high and lifted up, the Holy Advocate **STANDING**
  - 1. Jesus said in LUKE 22:69 – “Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.”
    - a. Many times, we are told throughout the NT of Jesus sitting
    - b. But not **THIS** time!
    - c. He is standing while His faithful servant is stoned
  - 2. It is an attitude of:
    - a. Interest – all heaven must have been standing that day
    - b. Intercession – to plead for Stephen as his Advocate
    - c. Interference – to restrain the fury of heaven
    - d. Interception – ready to receive Stephen into heaven
  - 3. Why would God let that happen to Stephen?
    - a. It was the defining moment (I believe) that led to Paul’s salvation
    - b. We don’t always know why things happen, but God is in control
- C. We know that Christ stood, because Stephen stood!

## V. **BECAUSE OF THE SAVIOR**

- A. Stephen was the first Christian martyr
  - 1. He died for the cause of Christ – there have been many since
  - 2. But Stephen’s death only happened because of his **LIFE**
  - 3. He **LIVED** for Christ
  - 4. So many say they’d die for Jesus, but will they live for him?
- B. Will you?
  - 1. They were willing to die for Christ. Are **WE** willing to live for Him?
  - 2. Are we willing to trust Him? Not just with our life, but our eternal soul?
  - 3. Have you trusted Him?
- C. Stephen was sure of his salvation and his place in heaven.
  - 1. Are you?
  - 2. He could have confidence and calmness in the face of death
  - 3. Because he had a relationship with the Heavenly Father
  - 4. Won’t you come today? You can be adopted into God’s family!
  - 5. Be saved today!