

## Acts 6:1-15

“And in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. 8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. 11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God. 12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council, 13 and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against the holy place and the law: 14 for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”

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## *The Early Church's First Administrative Problem*

“Chapter 6 brings us to another church crisis, it differs greatly from Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias and Sapphira were the first case of deliberate deception, hypocrisy coming into the church, and the Lord dealing with it there, and then telling us after that, the church multiplied, it grew, there were tremendous things that were going on, that the folks in the church were of one heart and one mind, great things taking place. And another difficulty arises. Now God never hides those. He’s honest about the failings of Abraham, he’s honest about the failings of David or Moses, he’s honest about the failings in this church, puts those things before us for instruction. This crisis in chapter 6 comes with church growth. We were told earlier that there were those who sold lands and so forth, and they brought the proceeds and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But the church has grown from 120 in the upper room to 3120 in one day, and then 5,000 others were added. Now it’s telling us men and women were being multiplied and added to the church. So it’s hard to tell, the church size in Jerusalem, when they met in Solomon’s portico, there may have been over 13,000, 15,000 people gathering at this point in time. It seems the 12 are there, teaching, interspersed through those crowds, and the religious leadership is becoming more and more aware of the fact that there are many that are turning away from them. And because of the growth, now it seems, this accusation arises that the Grecian widows are not being dealt the same fair hand that the Hebrew widows are being dealt. In this world, there are many that had come from around the Roman world, the Mediterranean world, they were Hellenist, they were Greek speaking, they were Jews, some by converts, some by lineage, they would worship in Hellenist synagogues when they were in the area of Jerusalem. They would use the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. The Hebrew widows, born and raised there, most of them spoke Aramaic and Greek, some spoke Hebrew, certainly in their synagogues they used the Hebrew Old Testament. But they’re all thrown together now into one church, there’s been a great work of God, and the Jew and Greek Hellenists are serving the same Master, the same Lord. And they’re enjoying being of one heart and one mind, and having all things in common, it’s a wonderful thing

that is taking place. But the growth, with growth comes growing pains, has produced a problem in regards to the apostles' managing everything on the day to day level, the practical level. So this accusation is going to be made, and it's put in front of us because some churches never survive chapter 6 of the Book of Acts [i.e. some local, some denominational churches, down through the ages, they never solve this problem], this ends up to be a split, it ends up to be divisive, hurtful to many people that are attending the church [in those churches that don't survive these problems, solve them], and it's good for us to see the failing here, and see the way that they decide to settle this issue and put it to rest. It says, in **chapter 6 (verse 1)**, **"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."** I'm glad to see that in the perfect Church there was murmuring, I thought it was just here. This is the apostles, the church born on Pentecost, signs and wonders are coming, the teaching of the Word, there's incredible things going on. But where there are humans, there are problems. And it doesn't tell us whether this accusation is founded or unfounded, there is a genuine perception that the Hebrew widows are being taken care of in a better way than the Grecian widows. Now look, the Old Testament has much to say about widows and orphans. It's an instruction. We hear in the New Testament, again, in the end of the **first chapter of James, 'Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is to remember orphans and widows and to keep oneself unspotted from the world,'** and so forth, and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy chapter 5 we hear about instruction about caring for widows, it was a responsibility the early Church took seriously. This controversy arises here, a difficulty. It says then, **"Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore"** because of this, **"brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."** (verses 2-3) So, they say **'Look, the reason that the church has grown is because we've been faithful to our calling, which in fact is teaching the Word of God. It doesn't make any sense now for us to leave the Word of God to take care of the daily ministration on the practical level. One form of neglect is not satisfied by another form of neglect, that would also be neglect.'** So they say it's not reason, the word "reason" in the Greek means "satisfactory," it

means “acceptable,” it means “pleasing.” ***‘It wouldn’t be right for us to leave the teaching of the Word of God, in this new Church, establishing the doctrine of the Church, to care for the tables.’*** Now it isn’t just waiting on tables, there’s money involved, there’s dividing that money, there’s taking care of widows, there’s deciding who is a genuine widow who had genuine need, who should be taken care of by their family, there’s decisions to be made. And they say it’s not acceptable, it’s not pleasing, it’s not satisfactory for us to leave the Word of God, it’s literally “to abandon.” The idea is, they realize ***‘if we give ourselves to this, we’ll be leaving behind the thing that we’re called to.’*** There’s nowhere that says one ministry is inferior to the other, they’re both necessary and they’re complimentary. You know, as our church grows, there’s just more and more things to do. There’s no way to keep up with them all. Sometimes I come and read the bulletin to see what’s going on here. It’s a busy place and all kinds of wonderful things that go on. I know my calling. God has called me to be a pastor-teacher, and to feed the flock, and I know what he’s called me to. Because of that, just the demand of time to do that, you know that you find you can’t do every wedding, and you can’t do every funeral, you can’t do all of the hospital visits. In the old building the church had grown, there were about 3,000 adults, and I looked at my schedule one day, and I realized that I had 19 weddings between September 1<sup>st</sup> and December, and Cathy was doing a Tuesday night study, so I was home Monday night, she was here (in the church) Tuesday night, I was here Wednesday night, doing a Wedding rehearsal Thursday night, Wedding rehearsal Friday night, two Weddings Saturday, locked up here Saturday night studying, here Sunday, and I realized, hey, I said to my secretary *‘Judy, I can’t have a family one day a week, it can’t work, so I’ll do a wedding a month.’* In fact, one day I had two weddings, on Saturday, I went to the wrong wedding first, wondered why nobody was there. Those things happen, everybody was happy, everybody got married that day, I think they all got married to the right person. But, you know, I find sometimes folks will get offended, if one of the pastors can’t do the wedding or do the hospital visit, and we all do those things, and I feel bad sometimes I can’t. ***But I find in church life, the unpardonable sin is when people come and they don’t get fed. The important thing is for the Word of God to be taught.*** If people get fed, they’ll stay and complain, then they’re happy. If they don’t get fed, then they’ll go somewhere else.

## *The Office Of A Deacon Created*

So, we do our best, but we have a wonderful group of volunteers, we have literally hundreds of volunteers that make this work, in the parking lot, in security, in Sunday school, sports, it's just incredible, the number of folks that volunteer on a regular basis. [Thought, when you volunteer to help your church congregation, you'll be helping free up your pastor to do his job of feeding the flock, then the church will grow.] So, the apostles find themselves in this situation. "The daily ministrations" there is the word where we get "deacon." It says **"It's not fitting we should leave the Word of God and serve,"** that's the word where we get "deacon," **"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."** (verse 3) Here's the four requirements they ask, by the way, for someone to be involved in this, this is on a very practical level. 1) First of all, **'you should pick one from among yourselves,'** don't bring in professionals from the outside. Believe me, years ago, parts of the Church [greater Body of Christ] were bringing in professionals from Wall Street to give them advice on their finances, which would be a joke today, wouldn't it? For young professionals from Wall Street to give anybody advice for their finances, no thanks. It says, first of all, it should be from among yourselves, this choice of whom you select as a deacon, people that you know, people that you serve side by side with and labour with. 2) Secondly, it says **'they should be of good report,'** that's our word *"marcurio,"* they should have a witness to their life, they should have *'a good rep.'* Again, you don't want to get somebody *'Hey, ya, I'd like to work in Sunday school, I dance at Chip and Dales on the weekend, but I can be there every Sunday morning,'* no, no, no, no, no, thank you, no, no, just come and sit and get fed and grow for awhile. **'They have to be of good reputation,'** it says. 3) **"full of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]"** not just kind of spiritual, full of the Holy Ghost, which is being controlled by the Holy Ghost, and it indicates, 4) **'full of wisdom.'** Because look, all the ingredients for a church-split are here, money, discrimination, favoritism, mad-grandma's, everything that you would need to cause a church split is sitting here in front of us. And the apostles, they called the people together, and they say to the people, **'Look, you pick seven men.'** Now, I'm sure, as the folks met, Stephen's name came up right away. I'm sure Philip's name came up right away.

There were those there that were serving, they didn't need to be patted on the back, they didn't need their name on the bulletin, they didn't need to get on the stage. Again, I encourage you, if you want to serve, get involved, don't wait for me to die so you can get on the pulpit, someone else is in line behind me. It's to serve Christ, and to come and let your hands be his hands, and your mouth be his mouth, and your feet be his feet, and serve his Bride that he's coming for, to care for her until he comes. I would really encourage you, plug in somewhere. Just to be involved in the life of the local church is important, just on any level. But here to do these things, it's interesting, the requirements. And the apostles said, **“whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” (verses 3c-4) “and to the ministry”** that's where we get our word “deacon” again. This passage doesn't specifically tell us that the seven men chosen were deacons [but most doctrinally interpret these verses to mean that], because it says the apostles are serving, they're being deacons relative to the Word, someone else is being a deacon serving relative to tables, that there was daily ministrations serving taking place. But certainly, I would say, born out of this church crisis, probably comes to us the challenge in regards to those who would come alongside the elders to serve. We hear in Timothy, **1<sup>st</sup> Timothy**, [describing again, the office of a deacon, which was being established in Acts 6:1-6] **“Likewise must the deacons be grave”** the idea is “dignified” **“not double-tongued, they're not supposed to be tale-bearers and gossipers, not given to much wine (here at Calvary it's not given to any wine), not greedy of filthy lucre, holding the mystery of the faith in pure conscience, and let these also first be proved and of good reputation. Then let them use the office of a deacon being found blameless, even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husband of one wife, ruling their own children and their own houses well. For if they that have used the office of a deacon well, they will purchase to themselves a good degree of great boldness which is in the faith of Jesus Christ.”** It almost gives us the impression of an open door, to step in and serve in some capacity is the place of lab-work, of training, it's not just all head-knowledge. And if they do that faithfully, they do it well, they buy to themselves, it says, great boldness. We're going to see Stephen doing miracles and confounding Saul of Tarsus. We're going to see Philip, the first missionary, the first evangelist of the Church, we're going to see as

these men are chosen, there then is a history and a change from Peter and the apostles in Jerusalem to Saul of Tarsus and for the Gospel going into the greater Mediterranean world. And it is through this difficulty here that God allows all of these incredible things to borne out of it. Look, they handle it wisely, there's no division when this is over, it seems good to everybody the way it was handled. I'm thankful when somebody, if they see something they perceive is wrong or unjust in the church, rather than forming a little *'this is unjust club,'* what they do is they come and say *'Hey, you guys, are you aware of this, are you guys aware that this is going on,'* sometimes we need you to be our ears and our eyes, certainly, the Bible says ***'the Lord has made us one,'*** so that we can serve more effectively. The apostles don't form a *'We're going to find out whose fault this is and lynch them club,'* they say ***'Hey, you're right, this needs to be addressed, we're coming to the point, the church has grown to the point, stuff is laid at our feet, we've tried to administrate this, it's too busy now, we can't do everything. So we want you to pray, we want you to come us, choose seven men that you think are fit to do this, and this is what we want to see in these men, we don't just want anyone, it's important they have character and spiritual depth, and we'll appoint them over this business, but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.'*** And look at this, ***"And the saying pleased the whole multitude:"*** when you can make 15,000 people happy something spiritual's going on, I'm telling you.

### *Who Were These 7 Deacons?*

***"the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen,"*** which will be all of chapter 7, ***a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost, and Philip,"*** that's all of chapter 8, ***"Prochorus, Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them."*** (verses 5-6) confirming their position as leading and serving in the church. Not that the laying on of hands imparted a particular thing, we hear something about that when we get to Timothy. [The laying on of hands symbolizes different things in different parts of the body of Christ, some believing it was the early form of ordination to a

position, a custom carried over from the Old Testament. It certainly was an ordination for these seven men to this newly created position of being a “deacon.”] It just seems they’re affirming before this growing church, these seven men as coming alongside to help them and to serve. Here’s the beautiful thing about this, all seven names are Greek names. The complaint was by the Grecian widows. The vast majority of the church in Jerusalem were Jews. The leaders were all Jews. And in an act of Agape’ love, they said **‘You know, the Grecian part of our fellowship feels neglected, that there’s discrimination.’** And this vast majority of Hebrew believers chose seven Greek men to make sure those Greek widows were taken care of, and trust them enough to take care of those of the Hebrew widows also in Jerusalem. Stephen, a remarkable man we’re coming to, who is going to be brought before us. Philip again, the persecution heats up in Jerusalem it says, and they’re driven everywhere, through Judea and Samaria, it says, except the apostles. Jesus told them to **‘wait in Jerusalem until you’re endued with power, then you’ll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth,’** the apostles did not want to leave Jerusalem. When persecution arose everybody else was driven out, not the apostles. In fact, it was Philip, he was the one who went where none of them would go. He would go to Samaria. Because the Samaritans were despised by the Jews. And these Jewish apostles were still learning of the impact of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its going to the Gentile world. [Comment: Most do not realize that this early Church remained Jewish in days of worship, practice, and even racially for nearly 300 years of its existence, from 30AD to 325AD. Saul’s, the apostle Paul’s evangelism took place mainly in Jewish synagogues throughout Asia Minor and parts of Greece, and then into Rome, amongst what would be called Diaspora Jews, drawing both Jews and God-fearer Gentiles who were attending within these synagogues (who were not pagan Gentiles) into the Body of Christ. For a research article which reveals this, using modern historical and archaeological sources, see <https://unityinchrist.com/history2/index3.htm>] Philip becomes the first missionary, first evangelist as it were, and the apostles have to go to Samaria to see if everything they’re hearing is true. The third man we have little about, Prochorus, he becomes the secretary of John the apostle, writing for him, keeping notes for him, then he becomes the bishop in one of the early churches, and then was martyred. The rest of the men we know nothing about. Nicolas we’re told by some, in tradition, becomes the founder of a

group called the Nicolaitans, but there is not a shred of historical or traditional evidence to produce that. He's a proselyte, he was raised a Gentile, converted to Judaism, and now is a Christian, and it just throws his name in there, this incredible man who was woven into this group of men.

*Thousands, Even Thousands Of Priests Are Leaving The Temple Worship & Joining The Church*

The apostles then lay hands on them, confirming them and the responsibility they would have, and look, **“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (verse 7)** and there were more problems then, more people means more problems. And take note of this, **“and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”** Now that's an interesting observation, a great number of the priests, obedient to the faith. Josephus tells us there were four courses with 5,000 priests in each course, actively serving Jerusalem at the time, 20,000 priests going through their courses. One other scholar I read said there were 18,000. If we're very conservative, say there were only 15,000 priests at this point in time, what's “a great company” of them? What's a great company of 15,000? Is that 3,000 or 4,000, priests, thousands. No wonder the Sanhedrin is going to get heated up and angry, “a great company of the priests,” some of them may have known Zechariah and Elizabeth and heard the stories of Elizabeth becoming pregnant in old age and giving birth to John the Baptist. Some of them may have known Anna and Simeon in the Temple courts. Some of them were either serving in the Temple at the time of the evening sacrifice or heard from the others, when the veil was torn from top to bottom, they came scurrying out of there, I'll tell you that. But there's a great stirring now, a great number of the priests are also coming to the faith. And look what it says, it says **“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.” (verse 8)** Now that's the first time we have anybody in the Book of Acts doing signs and wonders other than the apostles themselves. And look, this is a man, we don't know what learning he has, we hear his sermon, which is the longest sermon in the Book of Acts, chapter 7, obviously he was speaking Scripture here, he had a great knowledge of the Scripture.

But we're not told about his formal training. He's a man there who wanted to serve, 'So we need somebody to help us with the widows and caring for their needs, and waiting on tables,' he jumped in with both feet, he was ready to go. Because it tells us, this man is full of the Holy Ghost. Then it says he's full of power, *Dunamis*, well of course if you're full of the Holy Ghost power. He's full of wisdom, this is a man whose leading a full life, and would have led a full life. And if we'd have never heard of him, we'd have seen him in heaven with many crowns, like the vast number who will serve Christ in obscurity, and receive their reward in heaven. This is a man with full life, waiting on tables, full of the Holy Ghost, full of power, full of faith, full of wisdom, doing signs and wonders, just how incredible.

### *The Sanhedrin's Reaction Against Stephen's Witness*

And it says in **verse 9**, **"Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen."** The synagogue of the Libertines, that's the synagogue of the freed men, there were throughout the Roman empire many Jews that had been subjected into slavery by Rome as it becomes a Republic, and then who had earned or purchased their freedom, and they come back to Jerusalem, to the synagogue of the Libertines. The Cyrenians are of North Africa, Alexandrians are from North Africa [on the western shores of the Nile Delta]. **"them of Cilicia and of Asia,"** they were there **"disputing with Stephen."** Now we're told in Acts chapter 21, verse 39, when Paul is ready to speak to the crowd in the Temple courts, but Paul said **"I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city."** Paul tells us himself, he is from Tarsus, a city of Cilicia. So as Stephen is coming into this synagogue of those of Cilicia, I'm sure he encounters Saul of Tarsus, who is a giant intellect. Chapter 22, verse 3 says he's raised at the feet of Gamaliel. He (Saul) was one of the greatest intellects of his age, and he comes into the synagogue, and he's confronted with this upstart, this unlearned whatever he was, fisherman, I don't know what he was, Stephen, we're not told. And it says in **verse 10**, **"they were not able to resist the wisdom**

**and the spirit by which he spake.”** You can imagine Saul of Tarsus going home, blowing steam out of his ears. All of his study, all of his education, and this young whippersnapper, filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with wisdom, everyday putting him in his place as he tries to dispute with him, I’m sure it was grinding inside of Saul. Now Saul will pick up this ministry, when Stephen’s dead, and he’s converted, he will go to the synagogues wherever he goes, to dispute. I mean, he just steals everything from Stephen, it’s really wonderful to see, really wonderful to see. So, here is this man, Stephen, remarkably in this situation. And they’re so angry, in **verse 11** it says, **“Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.”** “suborned,” that’s King James for “hired,” ***‘they hired men which said ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.’*** These were the same kinds of accusations that were brought against Jesus Christ. They hired men to say ***‘We’re heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God,’*** **“And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him. and caught him, and brought him to the council,”** they take him to the Sanhedrin, the same group that Jesus had been drug in front of, **“and they set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against the holy place, and the law:”** (verses 12-13) and he hadn’t done any of this, **“for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.”** (verse 14) Remember that was one of the accusations they leveled against Christ, he said he would destroy this temple and rebuild it in three days. **“for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place,”** Jesus had said ***‘there won’t be one stone left upon another, that would not be thrown down.’*** **“and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.”** (verse 14) So, here they come, they take this we believe young man, Stephen now, and they drag him before the Sanhedrin. Very interesting, because, as we follow through now, and you realize the detail we have from Luke, this testimony had to come from an inside spectator, which no doubt was Saul of Tarsus. So much of what we’ll read in his Epistles are taken from this experience, you know, here he confronts this young man, without his education, who just is profound in his understanding of the Old Testament and of the Law and the things concerning Christ the Messiah. And Paul will say, in Philippians, ***‘I’m a Jew of the Jews, I’m circumcised on***

*the 8<sup>th</sup> day, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and here's my credentials, but I count all of these things as dung, that I might meet him, and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his suffering, if by any means I might be made conformable unto his death,'* because he would hear Stephen cry out **'Lord, lay not this thing to their charge.'** And he would see Stephen go through a set of circumstances that would haunt him to the day he was saved. And here is Stephen, the same accusations that were brought against Christ. And the Sanhedrin were thinking *'Oh no, not the apostles, it's bad enough they're doing miracles, now you got this Stephen guy, this Hellenist doing miracles, we need to put a stop to this,'* and they drag him then in front of the council, look in **verse 15**, it says, **"And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."** And again, no doubt Luke hearing from Paul. They drug him before the council, the Sanhedrin, and as they sat, they would sit in a large semicircle, and he would be placed in the middle, there were tiers where they would sit, there were 70 of them, and they would look down at this man, 72 and the officers. And it was a building in the Temple precincts, and here they would look down at this man Stephen who had been brought before them, and it says **'they're looking, in the process of looking stedfastly,'** and it says **'because his face looked like the face of an angel.'** Listen, it couldn't say *'Wow! his face looked like a neon bulb,'* because they'd never seen a neon bulb, they can't say that. They can't say his face looked like the sun, but they say his face was shining, and it says they're riveted. They bring this young man in, they they're all sitting there with their mouths hanging open, looking at his appearance, he has the face of an angel. And they're bringing him here to accuse him of undermining Moses. Moses is the one whose face shone when he came down from the mountain. Now they're looking at this young man, and his face before them is shining like the face of an angel. And they never saw anything like that before, they're riveted on him, there's no chapter break here when Luke wrote this, and it says **"Then said the high priest, Are these things so?" (Acts 7:1)**

## Acts 7:1-53

**“Then said the high priest, Are these things so? 2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charan, 3 and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charan: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him from this land, wherein ye now dwell. 5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much* as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child. 6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years. 7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. 8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs. 9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10 and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph’s kindred was made know unto Pharaoh. 14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, 16 and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulcher that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor, *the father* of Sychem. 17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18 till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. 19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. 20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father’s house three months: 21 and when he was cast out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own**

son. 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. 23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: 25 for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. 26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? 27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? 29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons. 30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. 31 When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord spoke unto him. 32 *saying*, I *am* the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. 33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. 34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee to Egypt. 35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. 36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. 38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: 39 to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, 40 saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto

the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of forty years in the wilderness?* 43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacles of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. 44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. 45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus [Joshua] into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; 46 who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. 47 But Solomon built him an house. 48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophets, 49 *Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?* 50 Hath not my hand made all these things? 51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do ye*. 52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: 53 who have received the law by disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.”

“There’s no chapter break here when Luke wrote this, and it says **“Then said the high priest,”** who is Caiaphas, who had been in charge of Christ’s trial, and he would be the high priest for four or five more years after this, he says, he breaks the silence, everybody’s sitting there astounded, that’s the sense of it, staring at this man’s face, and finally the high priest said **“Are these things so?”** And he opens up the door now for the longest sermon in the Book of Acts. This is very interesting. The Holy Spirit wanted us to have this record. There’s more information here about the death of Stephen than anyone else in the New Testament but Jesus himself. This is a man chosen, we have no prior history of him, chosen to wait on tables, he comes to this prominent place, and as a Hellenist, he will confound the entire Sanhedrin. They had rejected John the Baptist, he called them a brood of vipers and so forth. And they allowed the

political powers, Herod, to put him to death, beheaded him. They had rejected Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, and they themselves played a major role in it. Now they will reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit through Stephen, and their behavior at this particular council sets their course towards 70AD and their history for the next 2,000 years. This is one of the most profound testimonies that had ever come in front of this religious group. He stands there, initially being accused by them, and by the time he gets to the 51<sup>st</sup> verse, they're being accused, and he's the accuser, and the tables have turned on them in a very profound way. The high priest says to him, "**Are these things so?**" Which things? Well the things said in verse 11, that he spoke blasphemous words against Moses and against God. Now in verse 13 *'This man ceases not to speak blasphemous words against **this** holy place, and against the Law,'* so they trumped up these charges, "**Are these things so?**" And here he goes.

### *Stephen's Witness Before The Sanhedrin*

**"And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers,"** he brings them in, he gives us some incredible information here, "**hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charan,**" Well thank you Stephen, we don't have that in Genesis. That's very important information, the God of glory, not just called Abraham, but actually appeared to him when he was in Mesopotamia. We're told in ***Joshua, chapter 24, verse 2*** says ***'Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood'*** speaking of the Euphrates ***'in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nacor, and they served other gods.'*** Again down in ***14, 'Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.'*** We're told clearly that Abraham was an idolater, there were no Jews, Abraham was an idolatrous Gentile from Ur of the Chaldees, and the God of glory appeared to him there, and called him. God's election and God's sovereignty, and chose him, this man who has a major role in the faith of Islam and the faith of Judaism and the faith of Christianity, Abraham. ***'He appears to him in Mesopotamia,***

*before he dwelt in Haran,*’ “and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charan: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so *much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years.” (verses 3-6) that they would go down into Egypt. Of course Abraham has Isaac, and then Isaac has Jacob, and Jacob then has the twelve sons or the twelve tribes, the children of Israel, coming from the twelve of Jacob, and they go down for four hundred years into Egypt. “**And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.**” (verse 7) to Midian, to Sinai. “**And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt:**” please notice, “**but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt: and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.**” (verses 8-10)

*Down Through Israel’s History They’ve Refused To  
Recognize God’s Ordained Deliverers*

What he’s doing is he’s slowly luring the Sanhedrin into his point. ‘Oh ya, that’s the God of Abraham, yup, Abraham’s our father, that’s right, we’re onboard with you, yessir, yessir, we’re there, yup, they went down to Egypt, and Joseph, yup, Joseph went down there.’ And what he’s going to say is **Joseph was God’s anointed saviour as it were, deliverer, and you didn’t receive him, God had chosen him, he was sold into Egypt by his brethren,**’ in fact, they didn’t, there are some fascinating things, here they didn’t receive him until his 2<sup>nd</sup> coming as it were. In the mean time he took a Gentile bride, he preserved her for 7 years of famine, the types are staggering as

you go through. But he's making a point with them, that this was God's ordained deliverer, they didn't recognize God's ordained deliverer, and they refused to receive him, because that's the case he's going to build in regards to Christ, to Jesus. **“and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers”** he mentions them over and over again, **“found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.”** (verses 10-16) Now they came to Egypt, very interesting, they were called the *'Habiru'* where we get “Hebrew” from, it just meant they were nomadic, they kept flocks. In Egypt they're called the *'fenshu'* those with the shepherd's staff, and in Egyptian hieroglyphics they despised the fenshu. So what they did was, they had great favour because Joseph basically has sustained the known world, so they gave them Goshen, they gave them a place where they could dwell on their own, be separate from the Egyptians, because the Egyptians despised the shepherds.

### *The Israelites Need A Second Deliverer*

But of course God had blessed them so that their wives bore more children, they were growing more quickly than the Egyptians, and then it's going to tell us, look, we'll come to it down in verse 18, and continuing in **verse 15, “So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.”** (verses 15-18) Now, interesting here, “another” is “heteroff” not “alos” it's “another of a

different kind.” Just for a great overview, those of you who love to dig into this stuff, if you have Alfred Edersheim’s *“Old Testament History,”* read his introduction to Exodus, he describes a very interesting sequence of Hyksos kings, which we know little about, the shepherd kings, evidently for a number of years, coming into Egypt were this Hyksos dynasty, the shepherd kings. The shepherd kings settle in Upper Egypt, which is really lower Egypt, because south of the equator everything’s backward, I know. They settled there in Lower Egypt, which is upper Egypt [upper being next to the Mediterranean Sea], and they ruled over that area for a good deal of time, and the rest of the (real) Egyptian dynasties were in Lower Egypt [next to the Sudan, in what is called the Theban dynasties, ruling out of Thebes] south of there, [What happened was this, the Theban dynasty of Pharaohs ruling over Thebes in the south conquered and drove out the Hyksos Pharaohs in Memphis, Upper Egypt, uniting the two Egypts again into one kingdom ruled by Theban Pharaohs, Pharaohs that “knew not Joseph” or the Hebrews. This Pharaoh “that knew not Joseph” was in historic reality three Pharaohs, one coming after another. For a good historic research paper about the Exodus of Egypt, see <https://unityinchrist.com/lamb/exodus1.html> and read through that first “html” page.] ***‘until a time when another king, another of a different kind arose, which knew not Joseph.’ “The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father’s house three months:”*** now I believe he’s going to give 26 verses to Moses. And by the way he wasn’t born Moses, we don’t know his given name, we know that Moses is an Egyptian name given to him by Pharaoh’s daughter. [*Mose* means “son of” in Egyptian, as in Thutmose, “son of Thut.” They simply called him *Mose* because they didn’t know whose son he was of.] Isn’t it interesting, he’s the greatest leader in Old Testament history and we don’t know his real name. ***“In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father’s house three months: and when he was cast out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.”*** [in that study I gave the link to, you will see that Pharaoh’s daughter was Queen Hatshepsut, who became one of the most powerful ruling female Pharaoh’s ever to rule over Egypt.] Now Stephen again tells us something we have nowhere else. ***“And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was***

**mighty in words and in deeds.”** we don't have that in the Old Testament, we have that mentioned in some histories, historians by Josephus, that Moses studied language, science, medicine, astronomy, math, geology, geometry and so forth in Egypt, **'and that he was mighty in words and in deeds.'** which is interesting, because he's going to say to God at the burning bush **'Don't send me, I can't talk.'** One tradition says he had defeated the Ethiopian army, he was a commander in chief of the Egyptian forces, and defeated the Ethiopians before he was 30 years old. **“he was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.”** he knows by now, **“And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.” (verses 22b-25)** “for he supposed” and no doubt this was complete sincerity. He's the second deliverer Stephen is pointing to. Of course, their major Deliverer, he's saying, *'and remember, our father's didn't recognize Moses when he came,'* and Moses certainly acted out in the flesh here, thought he was going to deliver all of the children of Israel with his own strength. And when he delivered, he slew this Egyptian, they rejected him, and that's his point with the Sanhedrin, **'Our fathers didn't recognize Joseph, they didn't recognize Moses,'** and he's being called into account because of Jesus Christ? **“And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? And then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.” (verses 26-29)** Charlton Heston, you saw the whole thing in the movie. **“And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.” (verse 30)** it's not fair that God can do that in one verse, you know, you put in a lot of time, he says *'O ya, forty years is over until the next thing,'* it's so different to him than it is to us. Moses has 40 years in Egypt, the most opulent, wealthy, power-filled position you could imagine, and then 40 years on the backside of the desert where he's trained in God's seminary, being prepared [leading sheep, and sheep are much like humans, very

stupid when it comes to following leadership]. Look, I'm convinced, if you want to be used of the Lord, he's willing to make young men old fast these days, because there's not a lot of time left...[don't believe that, see:

<https://unityinchrist.com/mathew/Matthew24-1-31.htm>].

**“when forty years were expired, there appeared unto him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.” (verses 30-32)** It says in Exodus chapter 3 that he didn't look up, because he didn't want to look upon God. It tells us the Angel of the Lord was in the midst of the burning bush, and it says Moses did not want to look on God, no doubt, a pre-Incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. As he drew near the voice of the Lord came to him, and it says in **verse 32 ‘then Moses trembled, he dared not to behold.’ “Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.” (verse 33)** by the way, a custom that still exists amongst the Samaritans today, there aren't many of them left in the region, a custom that exists today still among Muslims, when they go into the mosque, their shoes are outside the holy place, it's origins here. **“Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.” (verses 33-34)** If any of you read the story, Moses isn't really excited about the new program here.

### *The Israelites Refuse This 2<sup>nd</sup> Deliverer*

**“This Moses”** like there's another Moses to be confused about here, he's driving his point somehow, **“This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.” (verse 35)** you know, your fathers. Now he's going to get around to Jesus Christ.. **“He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of**

**Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.”** (verse 36) Now they’re accusing him of speaking against Moses, and speaking against the Law, he’s going to say *‘No, no, it’s your fathers that spoke against Moses, it’s your fathers that cast him out, it’s your fathers that didn’t want to hear the things that he had to say,’* it wasn’t at all Stephen, and he’s turning slowly the tables on them, **verse 38** says, **“This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.”** when he prophesied of the coming of Jesus Christ. And he’s saying, *‘You’re the ones not listening to Moses now.’* **“This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.”** (verses 38-40) Now Stephen is using the Septuagint as he goes through this, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. *‘Even after he got our fathers out of Egypt and into the wilderness, they were looking back, saying, Oh the leeks, the onions, the garlic, the fleshpots, O, Club Med, what are we doing out here with this manna, manna in the morning, manna in the evenings, manna at suppertime, manna pie, manna bread, manicotti, manna-splits,’* you read about the grumbling and complaining, and Stephen’s saying *‘That was your fathers, that was your fathers, trying to get away from Moses.’* **“To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt” ‘and that’s what you’re accusing me of? Have you ever read your Bibles?’ “but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him.” ‘saying to Aaron, Make us gods to go before us, for as for this Moses which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we don’t know what’s become of him.’ “And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.”** (verses 39-41) I wonder what it’s like for the Sanhedrin to sit there, listening to this stroke upon stroke upon stroke with his face shining like an angel, they’re riveted, I’m sure they’re just riveted in this situation. **“Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of**

**heaven;**” the sun, the moon, the stars and so forth, the different deities of the pagan cultures **“as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.”** (verses 42-43) “Moloch” one of the most cruel worships in the Old Testament, idolatrous, offering their newborn children to Moloch. He says *‘You remember what God had to say to our fathers, who refused to honour Moses, who refused to listen to his Law, who refused to do everything you’re accusing me of?’* **“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.”** (verse 44) It was made according to the pattern in heaven, **“Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus [Joshua] into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;”** (verse 45) now he’s talking about coming into Canaan with Joshua, but because he’s Greek and he’s using the Septuagint we have the same name, ah, the Hebrew name Joshua, the Greek name is Jesus, the same name, he’s talking about the fact that Joshua brought them into the land, **“whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house.”** (verses 45b-47) Solomon is the one who built the Temple, Solomon the wisest man that ever lived. **“Howbeit” ‘but, you men know this, 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8:27,’ “the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?”** Isaiah is now who he is going to quote, **“Hath not my hand made all these things?”** (verses 48-50)

*“You Always Resist God’s Deliverers & The Holy Spirit”*

He gets around to saying ***‘Look, you’re accusing me, I’m not receiving Moses? You never received any of God’s ordained deliverers, in fact you cast them away. You’re accusing me of not listening to the Law, of defaming the Law? You’re the ones***

**that became idolaters and had to be carried away to Babylon, you refused to listen to the Law. You're accusing me of speaking evil in regards to this Temple? You guys have venerated a religious building, and God himself is the one who said that he can never be contained in a building built with hands.'** It doesn't say that God can't be found there, it says he can't be restricted to the structure. When we come here on Sunday to the house of God, we come really to gather to the God of the house. And quite often we're here and his presence is here, and it's obvious, he comes into our midst in a wonderful way. And when we don't sense him, where two or three are gathered he's there in our midst. But he's certainly not contained within it, he has no restriction here. He's here because you're here, you're the church, during the week when the sanctuary is empty, it isn't the church, it's the church when you're here. And he says **'you haven't listened to Moses, you haven't listened to God's Law, and you venerate a religious building and turn your back on the God that it's supposed to represent.'** Verse 51, he comes to his first point, **"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."** You know, you don't start that way in your sermon, you build up to that, you take your time, you work them in. Here's the Sanhedrin, nobody's ever talked to them like that before, he's laid the foundation, they've gone 'Ya, ya,' they can't disagree with everything, he's brought them to the point where he says now **"You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."** his face shining, Saul of Tarsus is glued to this teaching, because in Romans 2 he's going to talk to us about the circumcision of the heart, he picks up, again, he steals from Stephen throughout his ministry. Again, no plagiarism laws in those days, Stephen was gone and I guess Paul was free to use any material, because Stephen hadn't put out any tapes or books are anything. Again, you steal from one person, it's plagiarism, you steal from seven it's research. But here, Saul of Tarsus is experiencing something that he cannot escape. And that's where the Holy Ghost is taking us, to Saul of Tarsus. He will watch this man, well let's just read quickly, we're going to have to start here again next week, we can't end here, there's too much here. **"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before the coming of the Just One; of**

**whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.” (verses 51-54)** “they were cut to the heart,” literally the Greek is “*they were sawn asunder*” that’s not the way you want to do heart surgery, you want a very sharp scalpel. “They were sawn asunder,” and look what it says, “and they gnashed on him with their teeth.” Now it doesn’t mean they all ran forward and bit him. That’s not the idea. Isn’t it interesting, they agree with him throughout, he’s sets the trap, he lays the foundation. It’s their history, they can’t disagree with it, but he comes to the point, he says **‘You’re no different than your fathers, you resist the Holy Ghost just like they did in each of those circumstances. And only you’ve been betrayers and murderers of the Holy One, the Just One.’** And it says when they heard this, their hearts, it pierced to their hearts with conviction, and instead of saying ‘*You’re right,*’ instead of bowing, they’re infuriated, ‘*That’s all I can stand, and I can’t stand no more,*’ they’re just driven over the edge with anger. Again, listen, they are resisting the Holy Spirit here. The resisting of the Holy Spirit is the work of man. We’re not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, again a word of love. And it’s been staggering to me, and for me to have written what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4 would have been blasphemous. You and I can grieve God Almighty, his heart. Paul says in **1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians ‘I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who sleep, that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope,’** that word “sorrow” is the same word. We’ve had the pain, and I’ve felt it and you’ve felt it, it’s crushing, the loss of a loved one, a spouse, a parent, a best friend, that pain that we feel, that you would sorrow not as those who have no hope, that’s our word “grieve.” We’re told to grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, which we’re sealed with until the day of redemption. That we can grieve the Holy Spirit, it’s talking about language, and bitterness, immorality. That the Holy Spirit, the question in the church is never *how much of the Holy Ghost do you have?* it’s always *how much of you does the Holy Ghost have?* Stephen was filled, full of the Holy Ghost. The believer can grieve the Holy Ghost, if we live in rebellion, we live in sin, it actually pains his heart, he’s jealous over us, we’re told. The believer can quench the Holy Spirit, that can happen corporately, in a church, it can happen in the life of an individual. Now look, in Charismania there’s a lot of strange stuff that goes on, and when you try to say anything they tell you not to quench the Holy Spirit

(and that's not what it means, these guys are in error when they tell you that). The idea is, in the life of an individual, the Holy Spirit should have sway. And sometimes another critical believer can do that, sometimes you yourself, instead of yielding can resist, and quench, dampen down the fire of the Holy Spirit in your life. It's a shame when you see it happen in a congregation, particularly it's because of religious or organizational constraints. Warren Wiersby said the problem with those churches, they suffer from hardening of the categories, as time goes on, and there's no longer any flex, no longer, my Pastor Chuck said "*Blessed are the flexible, they shall not be broken*" one of his own proverbs. But not to quench the Holy Spirit in the life of a local congregation, you should be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. But the word "resist" is the work of the unbeliever, the pre-salvation work. He says **'You always do resist.'** And look, this is the best testimony that you can imagine, Stephen's testimony is so potent, his face is shining like an angel, it tells us here he is full of the Holy Ghost. Because sometimes with your relatives, your friends, or the people you work with you think '*Oh man, I did a lousy job, why didn't I think of that?*' For me, lots of times driving home, I feel like the Lord gives me the rest of the sermon on the way home, '*Why didn't you give me that before church?*' Because sometimes after we've witnessed to somebody, we can feel like '*O man, I did a lousy job, O man,*' no, no, listen, here's the perfect testimony, the perfect witness, Spirit empowered, just kind of driven by God, and the results are anger and resistance. That's not our responsibility, it's our responsibility to bring Christ to men, and only God brings men to Christ [cf. John 6:44]. It's our responsibility to bring Christ to men, one man sows, another man waters, Paul will realize this and write about it, only God brings the increase. Stephen sowed, others watered, others watered, Saul was angry, he hauled men and women off to prison, but God brought the increase. So don't be discouraged, and again, we'll come back next week, we'll pick up here. When someone's angry, don't be offended at that, that might be the next person to get saved. You have some people that are gonna placate you, '*I'll go with you on Easter, it's a cool place, ya, you have a drummer, it's so nice there, maybe I'll come once a year, ya, that's good for you, that's good for you.*' And then you have somebody else you're witnessing to and they want to strangle you, they're gnashing their teeth, they want to chew on you and bite your fingers off...that's the person closer to the edge than anyone. That's the person that can change the world. You know, some people are going to look at Stephen and go '*What a waste,*' it's

going to tell us in **verse 3 of chapter 8, that devout men came and took his body, and made a great lamentation for him,**' and a lot of them probably thought *'What a waste! Imagine this man if he'd have lived, had of lived for thirty more years, he had miraculous powers in his life, no one could withstand his wisdom, what a waste, this man is dead.'* No, no, not at all, he changed Western civilization, because it says **'A man standing there, consenting to his death, they laid his garments at his feet, his name was Saul, his name was Saul.'** Ya, you can say *'he only made one convert, but he made a whopper,'* and never let that...we think of a man working in a shoe store, witnessed to a young D.L. Moody working there, and had a burden for this kid that he had in Sunday school, and led him to Christ. He may have been only one, but man he was a whopper. And who knows where you work, if you're in a computer lab, a carpenter, a mechanic or wherever it may be, you grandparents, wherever it may be...I have grandkids now, and I don't know about this world, I am in some ways disheartened about the moral course that's being set. I'm not a depresso, don't get me wrong, my brain's not going bad, I don't need to see an analyst. The Lord told us all these things would happen, and he said, **'so that you'll know, so that you can watch and be sober and be vigilant, because I'm at the very door. When you see these things, lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh,'** and we're to be able to give every man an answer in regards to the hope that we have. We're not supposed to be Eor's *'being a Christian is lots of fun, you should get saved,'* ah, no thanks. No, we have a tremendous hope in the days we live in. But again, I look around, I think, you know, you see these kids, you see your neighbours, the people you're witnessing to, classmates at school, never diminish the importance of a single soul. Jesus says **'What does it profit a man if he gains the whole cosmos, and loses his own soul, he gains the entire universe, and loses his own soul.'** Jesus says, to God, a single soul is more valuable than the entire universe. Because that's all gonna roll up like a scroll and be gone (cf. Revelation 21:1), and a soul is eternal. For Stephen it was Saul, I don't think Stephen would turn back the clock and say *'No, wait until those arguments in the synagogues have great time and get stoned to death, no thanks,'* I don't think he said that at all. I think for the rest of his, Saul's earthly life, Paul the apostle, crowns, diamonds and gems were being put on the crown of Stephen in heaven. And his name means "Crown, Stephanus," the victors crown...so read ahead, remarkable portion of Scripture, we'll move on from verse 51 on then into chapter 8, read through

these things, just remarkable, remarkable things here as this picture of Stephen wraps up, the picture of persecution begins, Philip driven up to Samaria, the Ethiopian eunuch, the things that take place are incredible, so just read ahead, be familiar, let's stand together, let's pray...[transcript of a connective expository sermon on Acts 6:1-15 and Acts 7:1-54, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

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