

"The Trial of Stephen"

Part 8

Acts 6:8-7:60

Introduction: The last time we were together we listened as Stephen finished his sermon and he then confronted his accusers.

Notice Acts 7:51

This is where we stopped as we looked at the first part of the verse. Stephen reminded these people that they were stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. Stiffnecked meant they refused to bow their heads to Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The uncircumcised hearts meant the flesh was never cut away from the heart because they were never saved,

Deuteronomy 10:14-16

¹⁴ Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

¹⁵ Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

Stephen's audience rested in their physical circumcision but that was meaningless apart from spiritual circumcision.

Romans 2:25, 28-29

²⁵ For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

²⁹ But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

This now brings us to where we are tonight in our study.

➤ **Their Problem**

Notice Acts 7:51b

Here was their problem, they were resisting the Holy Spirit as their fathers did. They were resisting the convictions of the Spirit and they were ultimately resisting the grace of God. This is a very important verse because there are those who teach of an "irresistible grace". This verse makes it very clear that unsaved people can and do resist the convictions of the Holy Spirit as well as the invitations of the Spirit. Notice what Jesus said.

John 5:40

⁴⁰ And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

Man has the ability to respond to the Holy Spirit. He can reject the Spirit, or he can repent under the convictions of the Spirit.

There is something that many people do not understand at that is the Holy Spirit was very active in the Old Testament also. People were not indwelt with the Spirit as we are in the body of Jesus Christ, but the Holy Spirit still worked in the hearts of the unsaved.

Genesis 6:1-3

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

² That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

*³ And the LORD said, **My spirit shall not always strive with man**, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*

Application:

We think of unbelievers resisting the Holy Spirit but even believers can and do resist the Holy Spirit in their lives. The Holy Spirit is given to us, and His ultimate purpose is to manifest Jesus Christ through our lives. That means we are called to surrender to Him, but many are guilty of hindering the Spirit. They refuse to surrender to the Spirit's leading and they live for the flesh instead. Therefore they are guilty of resisting the Holy Spirit as He longs to manifest Jesus Christ in them. The Spirit's leading is suppressed and this results in a life void of true joy. Think about what Stephen's audience was missing because they resisted the Holy Spirit!

➤ **Their Pattern**

Notice Acts 7:52

Their fathers had persecuted and killed the prophets who foretold of the coming of Jesus Christ and they had killed Jesus. No doubt that some of these people whom Stephen was addressing on the Sanhedrin were the same people Jesus spoke to and I want you to notice what He had said.

Matthew 23:29-37

²⁹ *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,*

³⁰ *And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.*

³¹ *Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.*

³² **Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.**

³³ *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*

³⁴ *Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:*

³⁵ *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.*

³⁶ *Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.*

³⁷ *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

Notice what Gill writes concerning Matthew 23:32

Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers; *"Of their sins; for there were bounds and limits set how far they should proceed, and no further; as yet they had not got to the end of their iniquity: their fathers had gone great lengths in sin, but their iniquity was not yet full, as is said of the Amorites, Genesis 15:16 these their sons were to fill it up. They had shed the blood of many of the prophets; and indeed there were none of them but they had persecuted and abused, in one shape or another: some they entreated shamefully, others*

they beat: some they stoned, and others they put to death with the sword, or otherwise; and now their children were about to fill the measure brimful, by crucifying the Son of God, which they were at this time meditating and contriving; and by persecuting and slaying his apostles, and so would bring upon them the vengeance of God. The Jews well enough understood these words, which were spoken to them in an ironical way, and expressing what they were about, and what they would hereafter do, and what would be the issue and consequence of it."

When these people killed Jesus, they were simply completing/filling up what their fathers had started. There is a passage in the Old Testament that gives insight as to what was happening with those who killed Jesus.

Exodus 34:6-8

⁶ And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

⁷ Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

⁸ And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

The sins of the fathers had been passed on to the children. The fathers had killed the prophets who foretold of Jesus Christ and their children killed Jesus Christ.

Application:

This is a principle that is carried out today also. Parents need to understand that their sins can have impact the lives of their children and many times the children will follow down the very same path. Praise God that the blood of Jesus Christ can break the chains and set the children free.

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Notice Acts 7:53

Here is an interesting verse. This verse is one of four verses that speak of the angels in the giving of the Law.

Deuteronomy 33:1-2

And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

² *And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.*

Galatians 3:19

¹⁹ *Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

Hebrews 2:2

² *For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;*

Here in Hebrews we see that the angels spoke the Law and possibly they spoke it to Moses. There is much surrounding the giving of the Law that is a mystery.

Notice the words of Whitcomb:

"The law was given by Moses (John 1:17), and angels were involved (Gal. 3:19); grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17), and angels were involved (Luke 2:8-14). These two most significant dispensations (law and grace) were both introduced by the presence of a great host of angels. The heavenly throng has great interest in what is taking place on the earth (1 Tim. 3:16; Eph. 3:10)."

Notice Acts 7:53 again.

These men had accused Stephen of blaspheming the Law and here Stephen turns the tables on them and reminds them that they did not keep the Law. Stephen echoes the Words of Jesus.

John 7:19

¹⁹ *Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?*

➤ Their Reaction

Notice Acts 7:54

These men were cut to the heart which means they were under great conviction by the Holy Spirit. The words which Stephen spoke were used by the Spirit to pierce the hearts

of these men. This is what the Holy Spirit can do when God's people use the Word of God to witness to the unsaved. This was exactly what needed to happen, but their response was one of rage. They were now so angry that they clinched their jaws and gritted their teeth in frustration. The gnashing of teeth is the result of violent rage.

Notice Acts 7:55-56

Many verses in the Bible speak of Jesus being seated at the right hand of the Father but here we see Him standing. So what are we to make of this? He seems to be standing in anticipation of receiving Stephen into His presence. Stephen will be the very first Christian martyr.

Conclusion/Application:

What an encouragement this is to each of us who are believers today.

John 14:1-3

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

² *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Jesus has prepared a place for us and when our day to die arrives He will be standing ready to welcome us directly into His presence.

"It will be worth it all when we see Jesus! Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ. One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrows will erase, so bravely run the race till we see Christ!"