

Acts 6:8 – 6:15 and 7: 51- 8:1

AC 6:8 Now Stephen, **a man full of God's grace and power**, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. ⁹ **Opposition** arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)--Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, ¹⁰ but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

AC 6:11 Then they **secretly persuaded** some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God."

AC 6:12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. ¹³ They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. ¹⁴ For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

AC 6:15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

AC 7:51 "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- ⁵³ you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."

AC 7:54 When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

AC 7:57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

AC 7:59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

AC 8:1 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

How to get stoned.

1. Stephen meets the criteria as a deacon / servant.

AC 6:8 Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people

– full of grace and power

Refer last week full of the Spirit and wisdom.

He has The Holy Spirit, wisdom, grace and power. – A good all - round set of ministry skills.

2. A. Persecution happens

.⁹ Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)--Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, **¹⁰** but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

B. Some people will go to any length to discredit God and his people.

AC 6:11 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God."

AC 6:12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. **¹³** They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.

3. But **Be prepared to tell the story.**

Notice here Stephen uses a story that the Jewish leaders identify with – they know their history.

AC 7:2 To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.

a. Tells the story to remind them how God works.

Then

b. Applies it to them

3. Sometimes the truth gets people annoyed.

a. Verbal disagreement

AC 7:54 When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.

b. Physical disagreement

AC 7:57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, **58** dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

4. What is worrying is that the leaders did this.

Ie church leaders – Saul /Paul

AC 8:1 And Saul was there, giving approval to his death.

What a tragedy – People who said they knew God criticizing those who obviously know God.

But

How easy it is to do. If someone perceives God differently we think they are a heretic or that they should go to another church. Lets be real here. None of us know everything about God. We at first should listen, evaluate, discuss the issues. There are so many peripheral issues that we make primary. If a person doesn't believe in the resurrection of Jesus, well we have to question their theology seriously but differing views on gifts, predestination, the second coming, creation etc are not essential for salvation. Lets discuss them and learn from each other, but love each other at the same time If we don't we become very like the leaders that killed off Stephen.

How to get stoned.

1. Stephen meets the criteria as a _____ / _____ .

AC 6:8 Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.

He has The Holy Spirit, wisdom, grace and power. – A good all - round set of ministry skills.

2. A. _____ happens

.⁹ Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)--Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen,

B. Some people will go to any length to _____ God and his people.

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3. But **Be prepared to** _____ .

Notice here Stephen uses a _____ that the Jewish leaders identify with – they know their history.

AC 7:2 To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.

c. Tells the _____ to remind them how God works.

Then

d. _____ it to them

3. Sometimes the truth gets people _____ .

c. _____ disagreement

AC 7:54 When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him.

d. _____ disagreement

AC 7:57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

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