

“Stephen – Part 3”
Acts 6:8 – 7:60
(Stephen’s Defense – focus on Acts 7:17-36)
(Preached at Trinity, May 4, 2005)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at this rather lengthy section dealing with the Stephen’s defense of the faith and ultimate martyrdom.
 - A. In **Chapter 6:9-15** we read of the false witnesses falsely accusing Stephen of the high crimes of blaspheming God, Moses, the Law, and the Temple.
 - B. After the false witnesses made their accusations the high priest looked at Stephen and asked, “Are these things so?”
In other words, “How do you plead, Guilty or Not Guilty?”
2. Beginning with **Verse 2** Stephen begins his defense. In his defense he recites Israel’s history as he brings them face to face with their sin and Christ.
He was telling them something they all knew very well. He was speaking before the Sanhedrin. They knew their history. They knew the Scriptures.
Yet, they were not able to properly apply the Word of God to their own life.
In rejecting the Messiah they were imitating their apostate fathers who from the beginning rejected God’s purpose and plan. Stephen was not the blasphemer – they were.
3. More important to Stephen than the defense of himself was the opportunity to confront his audience with their sin and Christ.
As I pointed out last time, we can see throughout this passage the very nature of preaching. Preaching draws implications and nuances out of the Biblical text and presses it upon the hearers. Sometimes it is very direct. Sometimes it is very subtle.
 - A. Preaching should always cause us to reflect inwardly. What does this have to say to me?
 - B. We should always prepare ourselves for preaching. We should pray, God help me to be a hearer of the Word – and help me to be a doer of the Word.
4. In the passage we looked at last time Stephen defended himself against the charge that he had blasphemed God. To the contrary, Stephen affirms the God of glory who is working out His covenant purposes perfectly.
5. Tonight I want to continue through this passage as Stephen now turns to the subject of Moses. They were accusing him of rejecting Moses. To the contrary, Stephen praises him. As we go through this section of Stephen’s message I want to direct your attention to two things.
 - A. Stephen’s preaching continues to condemn his audience – yet, they do not hear. We’ll continue to see the importance of applying preaching.
 - B. We’ll also see God’s particular sovereign grace upon the lives of his elect people. It is amazing to watch God’s providence unfold in the life of Moses. It is also amazing to watch God’s Providence unfolding in your life.

- I. Stephen continues to unfold Israel's history
- A. The people of Israel multiplied in Egypt
1. They were content there – even after their deliverance they reminisced about the days back in Egypt.
Numbers 11:5 – “We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.”
 2. They would have remained in Egypt but God had other plans.
The time had come for them to possess the Promised Land
Verse 17 – “But when the time of promise drew nigh”
 - a. This clearly describes our life apart from Christ
 - b. We were content in our sin. We loved our sin. Although we were enslaved by our sin we were satisfied in our sin.
 - c. God had to deliver us by His strong hand.
 3. It was time for God to deliver Israel from Egypt
God began the process that would lead to their deliverance from Egypt
 - a. First God raised up a Godless king who did not know Joseph – **Verse 18**
 - b. Alarmed at the rapid population growth of the Jewish race he forced them into slavery and later commanded an evil population control.
- B. The God of glory continued to unfold His Sovereign purpose by bringing His deliverer into the world
1. God brought to pass the birth of Moses
Acts 7:20 – “In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:”
 - a. Notice in his defense Stephen calls him “exceeding fair”
Literally, ESV - beautiful in God's sight.
NAS - lovely in the sight of God
 - b. All of the elect are beautiful in the sight of God
Song of Solomon 7:6 – “How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!”
ESV Song of Solomon 4:7 – “You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you.”
 - c. But this points even more to another Deliverer – the ultimate Deliverer – “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”
Isaiah 42:1 – “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”
 2. Moses was kept hidden for three months and then placed into a basket and floated down the Nile
 - a. Again, God's sovereign design is made manifest - he was discovered by the Pharaoh's daughter
 - b. Again we are reminded of Christ
Herod ordered the death of all children under the age of two but God preserved His Deliverer.

3. Moses was raised according to the wisdom of the Egyptians where he became mighty in word and deed – Moses was being trained to become Israel’s deliverer
 - a. His Egyptian education was extensive – one of the greatest education of the ancient world.
 - b. The Egyptians developed mathematics, chemistry, engineering, architecture, and astronomy to a high point. We still do not understand their embalming skills. Pyramids stand as one of the great wonders of the world.
- C. God had further training for Moses, however – Moses was proud. He had been raised in the house of the king. He had to be humbled

See Verses 23-29

 1. It “entered into his heart to visit his brethren” – **Verse 23**
 - a. God began to stir his heart
 - b. He was raised as an Egyptian but did not forget his heritage
Remember, God had providentially arranged that the mother of Moses serve as his nurse
Exodus 2:7-9 – “Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? ⁸ And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. ⁹ And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give *thee* thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.”
 - c. Moses was educated as an Egyptian but his mother taught him the ways of God
 2. In a providential course of events Moses ended up fleeing from Egypt
 - a. Israel’s obstinate rejection of Moses extended their bondage by 40 years.
 - b. Again Stephen paints a picture of Israel’s rejection of Christ
“Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?”
 3. Moses would spend 40 years in the land of Midian as a lowly shepherd
 4. God would have His way in the life of Moses
Numbers 12:3 – “(Now the man Moses *was* very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.)”
- D. Finally, the time had come for God to raise up His deliverer - **Verse 30**
 1. God appeared to Moses in the burning bush
 2. He announced that He was the God of the Covenant – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 3. God then announced His plan for Moses
Verse 34 – “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.”
- E. Stephen drives home is point
Acts 7:35 – “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.”

1. Had Stephen's hearers not be blind they would have surely made the connection. Notice Stephen uses the same tone they had used of Jesus in **Acts 6:14** – "This Jesus . . ."
2. Sometimes preaching is subtle, sometimes direct – this time it is ringing loud and clear. To drive the point even deeper Stephen adds: **Acts 7:37** – "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."
3. Had they not been blind they might have seen that Moses was speaking of Jesus. Others had seen it. After Jesus fed the multitude the crowd proclaimed this. **John 6:14** – "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world."
4. In the days of Moses Israel continued to rebel in spite of the signs and wonders worked in their midst – in Egypt, in the Red Sea, in the Wilderness
 - a. It was a great demonstration of how hard their hearts were
 - b. Israel's rejection of Christ also exposed their hard hearts – Jesus did miracles before them continually. Even at the moment of His arrest He restored the ear of Malchus – yet they refused to believe.
 - c. Stephen's audience should have easily made the connection. The hardness of their hearts kept them from seeing.

II. Throughout this passage we've continually seen God's grace upon His elect

- A. We've seen God's miraculous providence in the life of Moses
 1. He was favored from birth
 2. He was protected from birth
 3. His childhood was directed by Divine Providence
 4. Every detail in his life was directed by Divine Providence

There was never a time when God was not with him

 - a. Imagine the 40 years in the wilderness of Midian
 - b. This was a man who had been well educated. He had been raised with access to the riches of Pharaoh
 - c. He must have thought he had been forsaken
 5. God raised him up to be used for His good pleasure
- B. Why have you been able to see and believe?
 1. Why have you been able to apply God's Word?
 2. Why have you been able to see the truth?
 3. It can only be attributed to God's grace applied to you by His Spirit
- C. Look back at God's hand upon your life
 1. You too have been favored from birth

"exceeding fair" -- ESV - beautiful in God's sight.
NAS - lovely in the sight of God
 2. You too have been protected from birth.
How many times has death been at your door?
 3. You too have been directed from your birth
Every event, every turn, every person that had an effect upon you was sent from God – He has been training you

Conclusion:

1. God has made you what you are. He has redeemed you and given you a new heart.
2. He has sent forth Christ to be your Deliverer.
3. What is God doing in your life today? Are you serving Him? Are you growing in Him as His graces are being made manifest in you?
4. And are you praising Him for His infinite mercy. The only difference between you and these religious leaders is grace.