



# FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH BIBLE STUDY FELLOWSHIP

Sunday, March 28, 2021

## Report for 3/14/21

Bible Study Attendance		
In Person	72	
On-Line	5	
Total	77	

Tithes and Offerings	
General Offerings	\$7,076.12
Designated Offerings	\$5,415.50
Total	\$12,491.62

### Prayer Needs

- \* Our country
  - \* Leadership
  - \* Kindness & Compassion
- \* Those affected by COVID
  - Be sure to check on folks
- \* Our church family
  - \* Youth Pastor View of a Call  
Jeremy Goodson
  - \* Commitment of Faith  
family to gathering for  
Worship
  - \* Knowing how to care for  
people during these trying  
times

### New at Faith

**Ladies Bible Study**  
Tuesdays 2 PM  
Contact Sarah Ruut  
469-323-9026

### Firepit Fridays at Faith

7:30 pm  
West Parking Lot  
Lifting Prayer to the Lord  
Contact Doug Spivey  
214-557-6867

### Ladies Potluck

**Fellowship Dinner**  
First Thursdays 6:30 - 8 PM  
Contact Laura Dawley  
972-983-9061

### EASY WAYS TO GIVE

- ◇ In Person Offering Boxes or  
Drop off at the Church Office
- ◇ Text Faithgiving to 73256
- ◇ Log into the Realm  
Connect app or give online to  
faithprinceton.org
- ◇ Mail to PO Box 656,  
Princeton, TX 75407

### DAILY BIBLE READING PLAN

Mar 21	Judges 8-9	Mar 25	Judges 19-21
Mar 22	Judges 10-12	Mar 26	Ruth 1-4
Mar 23	Judges 13-15	Mar 27	1 Samuel 1-3
Mar 24	Judges 16-18	Mar 28	1 Samuel 4-8

### ACTS 7 NOTES

In Acts 7 we witness the death of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. We first met Stephen in Acts 6 as one of the first group of deacons chosen to serve the needs of the growing congregation of believers. He was a bold witness for Christ, which got him in trouble with the religious leaders of the day and ultimately led to his death. It is interesting to note that our English word "martyr" derives from the Greek word *martureo* which means "to witness." Stephen was willing to witness for the Lord all the way to death.

Jerry Vines begins this study of Stephen by speaking of his character: Three times we are told Stephen was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (vv.3, 4, 54). According to Scripture, then, Stephen's character was driven and molded by the Spirit of God. What a testimony to His faith! The Bible records in Acts 6 that Stephen was a "servant." It records in Acts 7 that he was a "witness." Acts 7 ends with Him praying for the forgiveness of His attackers and seeing heaven open up and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. May we follow Stephen's wonderful example of wholehearted devotion to His Lord.

Blessings,  
Bro. Stan Fike, Pastor

### Acts 7

#### A new Meaning on What Defines a Christian

By Dr. Jerry Vines

Section 1 The Character of Stephen's Faith

Acts 7: 1a; Acts 6:5

Section 2 The Courage of Stephen's Faith

Acts 7: 1b-16

Section 3 The Context of Stephen's Faith

Acts 7: 17-50

Section 4 The Challenge of Stephen's Faith

Acts 7: 51-59



*By the Book™* A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from Jerry Vines Ministries  
 2295 Towne Lake Parkway  
 Suite 116 #249  
 Woodstock, GA 30189

### Let's Begin

*We do not know a great deal about Stephen. We know he was one of the original seven deacons. We have reason to believe he was a Grecian Jew. We also know that he earned a profound respect from the early church. We also know a tragic thing: Stephen became the first Christian martyr of the early church. In fact, Stephen put a new face on what it means to be a Christian. His name means "crown". Perhaps his name was indicative of his parents' hope for a crown.*

*Stephen's character was well-proved in the early church. He was the first one of the seven selected to be deacons. His faithfulness, dependability, and consistency in the Christian faith became legendary. The Lord rewarded such character. Often times, fidelity in small places fits one for service in larger places. While his time was brief, like a meteor in the sky, it was brilliant.*

*Today's lesson focuses on the character of this man. As we study this chapter, we'll follow the outline below:*

- I. The Character of Stephen's Faith (7:1a; 6:5)**
- II. The Courage of Stephen's Faith (vv. 1b-16)**
- III. The Context of Stephen's Faith (vv. 17-50)**
- IV. The Challenge of Stephen's Faith (vv. 51-59)**

### I. The Character of Stephen's Faith (7:1a; 6:5)

Three times we are told Stephen was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (vv. 3, 4, 54). The term "full" literally means "filled up" or "thoroughly permeated." According to Scripture, then, Stephen's character was driven and molded by the Spirit of God. It is no surprise to us that Stephen becomes the first martyr. Let's note some marks of the martyr, Stephen.

First, Stephen was a *spiritual* man. Wisdom is indicative of being filled with the Spirit. He's described as being filled with wisdom (6:5). Spiritual men are inevitably wise men. Biblical wisdom can be described as sanctified common sense. It is both practical and profound. Knowledge is important; but wisdom outranks it. Wisdom is knowledge wisely applied.

It takes wisdom to minister to human need. The deacons' job was to minister to widows, serving tables, and to do so while ironing out the wrinkles

of church conflicts. For Stephen, however, an added dose of wisdom was required. He needed wisdom in articulating a solid defense of the Gospel. And God gave it to him!

The Spirit-filled man has access to channels of wisdom not available to other men. This wisdom is a heavenly gift straight from God (James 1:5; 1 Cor. 2:13). All the schools of learning one could attend could not offer the wisdom given by God.

Also note the spiritual man is a *stable* man. He can teach the most learned men lessons about heavenly things. Why? Because his faith is strong, thoroughly permeated with the conviction that Jesus Christ is the answer to man's need. How refreshing it is, in the midst of so much doubt, to see a man who says, "I believe!" Stephen had convictions. He believed something. In today's world, it's hard to get people to say they believe anything absolutely.

#### Reflection Connection

*Does your church do a good job in handling conflicts? Why or why not? Ask the pastor to lead a group time on what the Bible says about handling conflicts between Christians.*



A college professor once confidently asserted, "There are no such things as absolutes." One student raised his hand and said, "Professor, I'd like to know one thing." The professor acknowledged the student who then said, "Are you absolutely sure there are no such things as absolutes?"

A spiritual man is also a *sweet* man. Rather, he is a man of grace. He possesses graciousness of spirit. His capacity and ability to serve is attributable exclusively to God's amazing grace (1 Cor. 15:10). That's the *spiritual* man. That's the first mark of the martyr, Stephen.

Secondly, Stephen was also a *sensitive* man. Not in the sense of being easily hurt or offended. Instead, Stephen's heart and mind were in tune to God and others. In short, he had his ears tuned in, he had his antennas up. Thus, he was sensitive to *Divine revelation*. Stephen's defense, beginning in verse two, is a masterful, remarkable summary of the Old Testament Scriptures. No defense of the Gospel of Jesus can be effective apart from the rehearsal of the Word of God.

*Sweet does not mean either weak or soft.*

Thirdly, Stephen was a *splendid* man. He was simply so much like his Saviour.

A Christ-likeness visibly radiated from his countenance. His face was like an angel: "And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (6:15). There are many faces in our world—the innocent face of a baby, the bewildered face of ignorance, the tortured face of pain, or the calm face of courage. With Stephen, however, we have the shining face of the Spirit-filled man.

### Reflection Connection

*How much time do you spend in memorizing the Word of God? Be specific. Also be honest! Do you have a particular system by which you learn the Bible? Why or why not?*

### Reflection Connection

*To make a good defense for the Gospel of Jesus, one must learn to begin where the listeners are. Think of your own circles of influence. Think about the people with whom you work, or with whom you study at school. What are some things you need to keep in mind as you give testimony to Christ? Be specific and prepared to share with the entire group.*

## II. The Courage of Stephen's Faith (vv. 1b-16)

They dragged Stephen before the Jewish Council and falsely accused him of speaking in the name of Jesus and against the Law of Moses. When the Council looked at Stephen they saw on his face the glow of the Divine Presence and they asked this question: "Are these things so?" (v.1). Think about it — the raw courage required to stand before a group of sworn enemies and tell something that very well may be a death sentence. That's what Stephen did.

Carefully designating Abraham as "our father Abraham," Stephen used terminology with which every Jew would readily identify. They loved to call themselves the "children of Abraham." Abraham represented the birthplace of faith for the Jewish people.

Stephen, then, began with Abraham. Why Abraham? First, because of *Abraham's faith*. His faith led him to depart from his home land. That's how strong it was. Stephen's own faith was founded on "the God of glory" which "appeared to our father Abraham" (v. 2). In addition, it was not a weak voice which Abram heard. Instead, it was the voice of the Father from heaven, "Depart from your country and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you" (v. 3). Abram was so sure he'd heard from God, he immediately struck out solely on faith (v. 4).

Next, Stephen performs a brilliant move. After speaking about the faith of Abraham's departure, he fast-forwards to the future of Abraham's descendants,



"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" (v. 6). After giving an overview of what was to come, he connects the historical dots of Hebrew history. The entire focus was about grace. God led His people by grace.

Such a message, however, did not go down well with Stephen's listeners. Defending Jesus against His critics is never a popular decision. But it is a necessary one if we are faithful to Him.

### III. The Context of Stephen's Faith (vv. 17-50)

The entire speech which Stephen delivered cannot be understood apart from its context. Already we have noted Stephen's faith is imbedded in the faith of Abraham. It is also imbedded in the faith of Joseph (vv. 9-17). In fact, faith must be seen in the context of difficulty.

Thus, we see "another king arose, which knew not Joseph" (v. 18). And, the coming of this king proved disastrous for Israel. They sunk into a deplorable state of slavery. We don't know the identity of this particular pharaoh. What we do know is that he represented a new regime that knew nothing of Joseph and, consequently, had no appreciation for Joseph's descendants.

One might rightly ask, "Why does God do things the way He does?" No better answer exists than William Cowper's, "God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform." Yet, we know in the midst of it all, God rules and faith develops.

*Faith must  
be seen in  
the context  
of difficulty.*

Observe: this was not just everyday persecution. Instead it was torturous for the people of God, "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" (v. 19). Defending Jesus in a hostile age may end in grave difficulty. Only faith — strong faith — can survive the test.

Moses is introduced as the beginning of Israel's salvation (vv. 20-41). Tragically, in their blindness, just like Joseph's brothers rejected him, the Jews rejected Moses, and the Jewish Council rejected Jesus. This climaxed with Stephen's piercing words, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so do ye" (v. 51).

### IV. The Challenge of Stephen's Faith (vv. 51-59)

The men who stood before Stephen had listened to his testimony for some time. No doubt, they stood speechless as he rehearsed the history of Israel, drawing on the characters of Joseph, Moses, the tabernacle and the temple. Indeed, some of what he said they did not refute. There was no need. They agreed! Yet, it became increasingly obvious Stephen was beginning to get on their nerves. Luke

#### Reflection Connection

*Is it difficult to remain faithful during a time of deplorable conditions? Why or why not? Do you think your faith has been strengthened through the difficulties that you've personally faced?*



writes the horrible incident that next took place, "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their teeth*" (v. 54).

What do you suppose set the religious leaders aflame? According to Luke, Stephen made three charges against his listeners: they were *resisting* the Spirit, *renouncing* the Savior, and, ultimately *rejecting* the Scriptures. It was at this juncture they were "cut to the quick" and began "gnashing their teeth" at Him.

Think for a moment precisely who these people were who gnashed him with their teeth. These men were supposedly the spiritual leaders of Israel! Yet, reduced to animals and driven with rage, only one thing remained on their minds. This man had to die and the sooner the better! Here is a spiritual lesson for us to learn: *If you can't refute the message, reject the messenger.*

### Reflection Connection

*People today may not "gnash with teeth" at us, but what other tactics must we be prepared for when our testimony could receive hostile results? Explain.*

Even so, Stephen was not alone. His faithful witness was recorded in heaven. And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself took notice, "And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (v. 56). Stephen had an Advocate the mob knew nothing about. Some have suggested it was a literal vision Stephen saw. Whether or not he saw Jesus with his eyes or with his heart is unimportant. The fact is, he saw Him; and his seeing Him must have been spectacular!

The challenge Stephen offered cannot be missed. He directly assaulted the false religion the spiritual leaders had created and offered instead a Biblical faith. The message Stephen uttered was true to the Gospel of Jesus. It cost him his life. What does our witness cost us?

The final scene of Stephen's life on earth is magnificent, "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 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" (vv. 59-60).

When death knocked on Stephen's door, he was ready to meet God. Even more humbling for us, is Stephen's last breath, a prayer for the very ones who were murdering him. One easily recalls the words of Jesus when they were nailing Him to the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

*Stephen was not alone. His faithful witness was recorded in heaven.*

### Golden Greek Nugget

In verse six, Luke records Stephen's words about Israel sojourning in a "strange" land. The Greek adjective comes from a word which means "another." Thus, it literally means "belonging to another" or, in other words, "not one's own." Were we to speak of Canada, we would not speak of Canada as a "strange" country. Instead, we would speak of Canada as a "foreign" country. Obviously, Stephen's meaning was to suggest Israel did not belong to Egypt; Israel belonged to God.

### Wrap Up

*The marks of a Christian martyr are in. Stephen defines what is to defend the Gospel to a hostile world. For such, it takes courage to speak one's convictions without fear. Only genuine faith can stand in an environment such as this. The question we must ask is, do we have that kind of courage? Most importantly, only men and women with godly character such as Stephen's are apt to possess such courage. How does your character measure up to Stephen's? Indeed, only a character like Stephen's could make such a bold statement and solicit such hostile results from an ungodly world. God give us more Christians like Stephen.*

