

A SPIRIT FILLED DEFENSE

Tonight (Wednesday 09/16, @ 7:00pm) we turn our attention to the book of Acts (7:1-60). It chronicles the first thirty years of the church, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Stephen had been called by God to be one of seven who would serve the church in the ministry to the widows. His daily responsibilities included distributing food to those who were in need.

The Holy Spirit wants us to take note that even though Stephen wasn't an Apostle didn't mean he couldn't be used mightily by God.

He was an ordinary man who was *“full of faith and power, and did great wonders and signs among the people”* (Acts 6:8). He, was able to be used by God, as he faithfully fulfilled his calling in a ministry that took place mostly behind the scenes.

Apparently something else that God had placed on the heart of Stephen, besides helping widows, was evangelizing those Jews who had traveled to Jerusalem for one of the feasts. He would travel throughout the city and visit one of the four hundred plus Synagogues that populated Jerusalem.

During one of his ministry outreaches, he found himself in a debate that had turned hostile. Those who attacked him were

the academic elite. One of their number was a Pharisee from Tarsus named Saul.

Even though Stephen had not been formally trained like those who had attacked him, Luke wrote that, *“they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke”* (Acts 6:10).

When they mob realized they couldn't win their debate with Stephen they turned to character assassination. They had quickly sent word to the High Priest that they *“had heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and God”* (Acts 6:12).

On the surface it seemed that everything was against this humble nobody. Everything pointed to the fact that Stephen was going to lose his life because he had said the wrong thing to the wrong people at the wrong time.

But, everything that was about to happen had been progressing perfectly according to the will of God. And, contrary what anyone thought, Stephen was not alone.

Those who were eyewitnesses of the events noticed that *“his face as the face of an angel”* (Acts 6:15). In other words, Stephen who was about to lose his life was at complete peace, because he knew we were about to step into everlasting life.

The events of chapter seven describe what took place next. When given the opportunity Stephen spent his last moments of

life attempting to see his fellow Jews come to faith in Jesus Christ.

He spoke eloquently and powerfully. His speech convicted everyone who had heard his words. Most rejected what he had to say and participated in his execution, including the young Pharisee Saul.

Years later in recounting that fateful day, Saul who now went by the name Paul said, *“that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in Jesus. And when the blood of His martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him”* (Acts 22:19-20).

So, it was the very first martyr of the church, who was able to sow the seed of the Gospel in the heart of the young radical Saul. And, even though it seemed to have fallen on deaf ears, that seed came to fruition years later.

It all took place because of the grace of God and the faithfulness of Stephen. Saul, who had been a radical against Jesus, was transformed by His unconditional love. He then took the name Paul and ended up being the world’s greatest missionary.

For those who are unable to attend, we will continue to live stream the service (Facebook: *Calvary Inverness*). You may not

be with your church family, in person, but you will still be able to participate in all that God is able and willing to do.

Awaiting His Return,
Pastor