

Acts 6:8-7:2 The Martyr's Cry

The Title of my message today is The Martyr's Cry

A) If you have ever read any of Foxe's book of Martyr's –

I am sure, like me, your Heart has been **Stirred and **Challenged** by the way that some of the saints that have gone before us have faced persecution and impending DEATH**

B) Consider these Examples:

Polycarp was the 90 year old Pastor of the Church in Smyrna, he was martyred for his faith in Christ and his unwillingness to denounce Jesus as Lord.

The Governor begged him to consider himself and have pity on his great age, *reproach Christ and I will release you.*

Polycarp replied, **“Eighty six years I have served Him and He never once wronged me, how can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”**

The Governor – then threatened w/ fire – to which Polycarp answered – **“You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour and after is extinguished – but you will have to face the fires of judgment that will burn for eternity unless you repent .”**

John Huss was a reformer who called England to get back to the Christianity of the Bible was tried and convicted as a heretic. The last words of John Hus were that, *“In 100 years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform will not be suppressed.”*

Almost exactly 100 years later, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famous 95 these to the church door at Wittenberg.

That day the prophecy of Hus had come true!

One more: Hugh Latimer and Nicolas Ridley

Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley were two famous English preachers..

They were martyred for their faith and protest of the corruption in the Roman Catholic Church.

A) They were tied together at the Stake and set on fire. Latimer's last words are famous.

"Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man, for we shall this day light such a candle in England as I trust by God's grace shall never be put out."

B) I don't know about you but I read descriptions like that and wonder – Would I be able to Die for Jesus

B) Today by the Grace of God we are going to look at the First Martyr in the Early Church. Stephen .

C) Although the point of the message is not really about Dying for Jesus but Living for Jesus.

1) There are Many pp today are living by **Default** rather than **Design**.

D) They aim at nothing and that is why what they are hitting is insignificant.

Today in Stephen we have an example of a life well lived.

V.8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

Martyr = Witness

A)The word Witness is the Greek word Martus from which we get our English word Martyr from.

B)We think of a Martyr as someone who was willing to die for what they believe in!

C)But I want you to note this as we consider Stephen this young man who was killed for his faith in Jesus

D)That before Stephen was a Martyr he was a Martus.

1)That is before Stephen died for Jesus – He lived for Jesus.

E)Persecution does not make you a martyr it only proves who is a Martus.

Today I want Consider 4 aspects of Stephen's Life and make some practical application for us our lives

A)Who Desire to live a life by **design rather than **default**.....Live a Life well Lived!**

#1 Stephen's Call

#2 Stephen's Claim.

#3 Stephen's Countenance.

#4 Stephen's Concern.

#1 Stephen's Call

A)Now we first met Stephen two weeks ago in the beginning of Ch. 6

Aa)Problem in the Church – Hellenist widows – neglected -

B) Apostles Priority – “Look we need to keep preaching and keep writing the NT – You Choose seven men from among you ...”

C) V.3 Good reputation, Full of the Holy Spirit, Full of wisdom.

1) You Choose – Our body

Stephen was one of the 7 men Chosen – And he is singled out for us – it seems he is a cut above the rest.

A) V.5 Full of faith – Full of the Holy Spirit and

V. 8 Full of Power – God ends up using him.

B) Full carries the idea of being abundant in measure. 1) Over flowing. Permeating something

C) Full of faith - Romans 10:17 “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

D) His Sermon in Acts 7 Stephen had a good – handle on the word – Faith increased –

1) Full of faith – abundant –

Full of what? Doubt, Pride, self, fear, Worry?

E) Word Full also means controlled by – Motivation – passion – empowerment.

1) Application to the Holy Spirit

Progression: Starts w. Full of Faith – Strong in belief

Big God – Big things – Good Perspective

A) Leads to surrender – controlled by the HS and Open to the Lord {

Results in Power!

B)Mike Mac – opportunities because – Open

**C)But Note this: Stephen starts his ministry in a very simple way –
Waiting tables – faithful to serve the people.**

1)Janitors at CM – now Pastors

**And We don't know how much time lapsed between v. 6 They laid hands
and V.7-8 –we think minutes**

A)Probably Weeks or months –years – Acts 30 yrs

B)Pt Stephen was faithful in waiting tables – serving widows –

1)God blessed him with Greater responsibility.

**C)That is what God does – Jesus taught parable of the talents – Faithful
with much rewarded**

1)Kingdom – ruler over 10 cities.

**So God is moving in the life of Stephen and the Devil doesn't like it so
guess what – Here comes the opposition.**

**A)Don't be surprised when that happens – Living for Jesus – the Devil
starts to get upset.**

**V. 9 Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the
Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia),
disputing with Stephen. 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and
the Spirit by which he spoke.**

V.9 Disputing} sü-z•-te'-• = Examine

**A)Examining testing him but he had the right answer to all of their
Inquiries.**

B)V.10 Not able to resist { The spirit and wisdom

C)So they are going to resort to making things up.

Rd V.11-14

#2 Stephen's Claim.

A)V.12 Tells us that Stephen was brought before the council – this would be the Sanhedrin.

B)Same council that Tried Jesus – Same council that brought in Peter & John – All the Apostles.

C)Recall most of them were Sadducees – they didn't believe in the Rez / the afterlife, miracles or Angels

That is why they were so upset about these accusations about Jesus destroying the temple.

CROWN JEWEL – EDDIFICE

A)On his first trip to Jerusalem after starting his ministry and on his last trip- end of his ministry

B)Jesus did the Same thing – He went to the temple and drove out the money changers

1)Attacking the Racket of the religious leaders

Using the temple – Swindle people.

C)John's gospel records – that the religious leaders questioned Jesus – by who's authority did he do this

John 2:19-22

19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

Now this was the Claim that infuriated the religious leaders – never forgot it!

A)At his crucifixion – the raised up men to give a false report – He said that he would destroy the temple and rebuild it

B)John's gospel adds this insight – about those words

21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

**C)Apparently – Stephen was making this connection
As he spoke to the people.**

But once again the people were not getting it!

**A)Because the Sadducees were materialist – the Temple was their
Crowning Jewel.**

**B)It was their edifice – Like someone saying – Whitehouse be destroyed –
3 days rebuilt**

1)Statue of Liberty.

C)Don't you dare talk about our temple that way!

1)SO focused on the temporal the material

Here is what Stephen's claim was saying to them and us!

**A)God's purposes were greater than any material thing they could ever
have or see.**

**B)The take away : The purposes of God for you and for me are #1
spiritual and #2 Eternal**

C) This material world that we live in just happens to be the medium where God works out his eternal purposes

1) Lord help us to remember that

D) ROCK QUARRY

Stephen's life proved that He was convinced of that!

A) It is about the eternal not the temporal –

The Martyrs Cry - LIVE FOR JESUS!

B) It is worth it – Here and in Eternity!

B) Imaginary tags – temporal vs eternal

C) Many Christians live with this mindset – I hope that Jesus doesn't come back – until close escrow – honeymoon – degree – make my first million

D) That was not the mindset of the early Church!

In the days when Mary was Queen in England – Two Christian men martyred. One was lame.... Blind

Approached the stake.... thru down his cain – “Take courage brother these FLAMES will cure us both.”

So this claim that Jesus was going to destroy the temple was not true. Spiritual not Physical

A) But This claim that Jesus came to change the Customs - Was true!

B) Jesus came to show us that it is about Relationship not religion.

1) Difference – Man reaching God – God reaches man

C) Man reaches – sacrifices and rituals – rules and regulations – Earn God's favor.

Jesus put an end to the temple sacrifices

A) Day of atonement 1 Day 1 man the High Priest

B) Final Sacrifice - Now we can all come boldly!

1) Didn't come to destroy the law but to fulfill it

Final sacrifice

C) Jesus did change everything!

1) Ushered in a New Covenant – Faith in His finished work!

D) Stephen was over Joyed to make that claim.

#3 Stephen's countenance: V.15 His face shone like the Face of an angel –

A) Interesting these guys didn't even believe in Angels but they said he looked like one

Bb) Now we have no idea if Stephen knew that he looked like an Angel – that is what the members of the Sanhedrin saw { I am glowing

B) Pt before giving witness – which he will – he gives a great sermon in Ch.7 – before giving a witness he is being a witness! Acts 1:8 Shall be

.....

B) Same holds true for us “Let your light shine.....

..... Works and glorify

C) Christians are like the moon – reflect the light of the son – Spend time with Jesus!

1) World causes an Eclipse

D) The More time we spend with Jesus – his light shines on us – then shines thru us.

#4 Stephen's Concern: Acts 7:1-3

Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

2 And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3 and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.'

Note Stephen doesn't defend himself – hard not to do – especially when things are not true.

A) Stephen didn't defend himself – all Stephen wanted to do was to tell the story of the God of Glory

His concern was for the Glory of God!

A) He declares to them the work and the plan of God as he sets forth the History of God's relationship with the Pp of Israel

B) History is His –Story – take the God out of human History and you remove the Glory of History.

D) Which is precisely what our schools are trying to do – take God out of our Schools – the Bible – prayer

E) Teach evolution – All happened by Chance!

Teach evolution leads to things like Abortion. Abortion is the logical conclusion of Evolution.

A) If there is not God and everything that happens happens by chance

Aa) then this whatever you want to call it that is growing inside of a woman is there by chance and therefore she can do whatever she wants with it.

B) If there is no God that means I don't answer to anyone and it is up to me to try and figure out – what to do with my life.

1) If I get pregnant by chance there is no reason to not discard of the baby – that is the natural byproduct of the Evolutionary mindset

Take God out of the picture and life becomes worthless and purposeless

A) Take God out of History and life becomes meaningless

B) History is all about this: **The God of glory!**

C) The Bible says that He dwells in Light that is unapproachable

The Bible declares that He is Holy, perfect, all powerful – so incredible – He is beyond our full comprehension.

D) This God of Glory is unknowable by finite man

But this God of Glory has Chosen to make Himself Known God is a Pursuer of Men!

A) That really is the focal pt of Stephen's message is that God pursued Israel desiring to have a relationship with her.

B) Stephen declares to these teachers in Israel that this is where the Glory

of God is clearly seen – In His heart to pursue stiffnecked and rebellious people

C) Stephen shows a pattern with the Pp of Israel using Moses and Joseph as examples – that when 1) God sent a deliverer that the pp of Israel did not recognize them until they came the 2nd time.

D) The Bible is the record of the Persistent purposes of God and His dealings with man

That is History – that is His Story – Pursuing God

A) God sought to lead and to bless Israel – she rebelled and God pursued – over and over again.

Aa) Such a glorious thing – the persistence of God in the face of man’s rebellion – AWESOME

B) God never wavered in his mercy or in his promise to redeem lost man.

C) Paul said Romans 5:20 – “Where sin abounded – God’s Grace Super Abounded!”

1) Your Sin – like a Big day on the North Shore –

D) God’s grace in comparison – is like a Tidal wave

E) Should we continue in Sin – Grace abound – no

1) Don’t use it / Abuse it! Respond to it

F) Your life – He pursued you! – Not here by accident

1) Pursuing you right now

Finish today: You say but as I read the rest of the Story things didn’t pan out to good for old Steve.

A)Died so young – A waste: Not so – Stephen wasn't disappointed one bit. RD V. 54 -60

Aa)V.56 is incredible I see heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of the father

B)This is amazing – Why was Jesus standing? Always sitting

1)Jesus said if you confess me before men I will confess you before my father who is in heaven

C)As Stephen stood for Jesus on earth – Jesus stood for Stephen in heaven

1)Almost as if the Lord of Glory was standing to honor this first Martyr and to welcome him into heaven – well done

D)You stand for Jesus here – Jesus will stand for you there

Also note V. 58 Laid their coats at the feet of young man Saul – Saul of Tarsus – Famed Pharisee

**A)Ch.8:1 Saul consenting – to the death – idea
He might have been the ring leader.**

B)He sought to single handly put an end to Christianity.

C)Significance? Saul Ch.9 gets converted – becomes Paul the Apostle – greatest Christian Martus of all time. – Wrote 2/3 of NT

When He was converted – Jesus met him on the road and said to him – why persecuting me.

A)Hard to kick against the goads – Goad wooden stick prick – donkey

B)GOAD was STEPHEN'S sermon / his face / his words – kept pricking

at him!

C) Stephen's though short was well lived – Lived for Jesus as a Martus – ready to be a Martyr

1) Welcomed into glory by Jesus When Death strikes the believer down they fall right into heaven

D) From heaven – was able to see the impact on Saul

What about your life – Died today!

A) Tomorrow is promised to no man –

B) Are you right with God – are you ready to meet Jesus –

1) Two reactions – remain stiffnecked

C) Or open your heart! – Which will it be!

D) Once you make a decision to live for Jesus – Jesus if need be will help you to die for Him!

What am I full of ?

Who or what I am controlled by?