



PV Household Worship

February 4-9, 2019

❖ **Daily Memory Verse: Acts 6:8**

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.

❖ **Song: *Jesus Is Mine***

Monday, February 4, "Full of grace and power."

Read Acts 6:8-15

It's better to stand for truth or you may fall for anything! Shortly before the American Civil War, Thaddeus Stephens, a young lawyer from Vermont settled in Adams County, Pennsylvania. There he witnessed fugitive slaves escaping from bondage, he was so moved that he devoted himself with all his powers to free those who were in slavery. By the time the war broke out, Stephens was a powerful influence in the US government. But at his death years later, he was virtually alone. Written on his tombstone in an obscure cemetery are these words: *"Finding that other cemeteries were restricted as to race by charter rights, I have chosen to lie in this humble spot, in order that I may testify, even in my death, to those principles which I have advocated through a long life."* Acts 6:8 says, *"And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people."* Stephen was also a man of principle and conviction. He was a godly man, full of grace, faith, power, and integrity. He was brought before the Jewish ruling council on trumped-up charges and allowed to make a statement. In Acts 7 It turned into a powerful indictment of the religious leaders. They despised him and his message, so they dragged him out of Jerusalem to stone him. As followers of Christ, we must be people of conviction. How far are you willing to go for what you believe?

- Read Acts 6:3, 5, 8, 10. Describe Stephen from these verses. How did his opponents view Stephen?
- Which of the character qualities that Stephen had do you most need? How will you go about working on it?
- Memory Verse: Acts 6:8
- Prayer - Father, fill me with Your grace and power. Help me be a person of principle and conviction.

Tuesday, February 5, "Full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit."

Read Acts 6:8-15

Acts 6:9 and 10 says, *"Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking."* You can't beat God in an argument. In Luke 21:12-15 Jesus prophesied, *"They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict."* It seems that Stephen is a fulfillment of these exact words of Jesus. And Stephen indeed was filled with wisdom and the power of the Spirit so that those who opposed him were left without any response, other than to get rid of him. What we say must be linked to a commitment to Jesus as Lord, and we must have a humble attitude, a clear conscience, and good conduct (1 Pet. 3:15-16). As we rely on God, He can

make people receptive to a discussion of why it makes sense to believe in Christ. Some reject with hostility, but others will believe. The strongest witness is used by the Holy Spirit to convince the mind and convict the heart.

- Read Luke 21:12-19. Jesus predicted persecution for His witnesses but what had Jesus commanded these "witnesses" not to do (v. 14)?
- What is wisdom? Can you recall an experience when the Spirit gave you the words you needed?
- Memory Verse: Acts 6:8
- Prayer – Father, fill me with Your wisdom from above. Let Your Holy Spirit give me discernment.

Wednesday, February 6, "We can have our best witness in the worst of times." Read Acts 6:8-15
 Acts 6:12, 13 says, *"And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and they set up false witnesses who said, 'This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law.'" Stephen is being set up and falsely accused. How could he be a witness with the lies spoken about him? We don't need ideal circumstances to be effective witnesses for Christ. Nor are God's purposes hindered by our problems. Stephen was a powerful witness in a situation that was far from ideal. After he had defended his faith in Jesus as Messiah, they rejected his words and took him to be arrested. That was the end of Stephen's witness, right? Wrong! His humble Christ-like actions eventually made a great impact on a powerful religious leader man named Saul. Joseph Aldrich, in his book "Life-Style Evangelism", wrote, "When the non-Christian observes a believer responding to pressure and pain with a Spirit-controlled response, he is seeing God at work in human experience. Stephen's response to hostility caught the attention of a man named Saul!" Instead of praying for fewer difficulties so that we might witness better, let's pray that we might witness better through all our difficulties. Who knows, another "Saul" may be watching. We can have our best witness in the worst of times.*

- Stephen possessed a holy calmness in this life-threatening arrest and trial. Have you ever experienced this kind of peace? Do you know anyone who has? If so, please share.
- What were the accusations made against Stephen (6:13-14)?
- Memory Verse: Acts 6:8
- Prayer: Father, thank You that You do everything decently and in order.

Thursday, February 7, "Spiritual qualifications for serving practical needs." Read Acts 6:8-15
 Years ago the Romanian pastor, Joseph Tson, ran away from his Communist country to study theology in England. In 1972, when he was ready to go back home, he discussed his plans with his fellow students. They pointed out that he would certainly be arrested at the border. One student asked, *"Joseph, what chances do you have of successfully implementing your plans?"* Joseph smiled and said to himself, *"Now this is typically Western thinking. Chances of success? I never thought in those terms. My thinking was in terms of obedience. I knew that the King said, 'Go,' and I had to say, 'Yes, sir,' and go."* Tson turned the question around and asked God, *"What if I ask You about success?"* The Lord led him to a scripture in Matthew 10:16, *"I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves."* The Lord said to him, *"Tell me, what chance does a sheep surrounded by wolves have of surviving five minutes, let alone converting the wolves? Joseph, that's how I send you: totally defenseless and without a reasonable hope of success apart from Me. If you are willing to go like that, go. If you are not willing to be in that position, don't go."* Joseph Tson, like Stephen was filled by the Holy Spirit and used as a courageous, obedient witness for Jesus Christ. Like Stephen we must leave the results to God. Whether you lose your life or God protects you, you will, like Stephen, wear the victor's crown.

- In what ways was the arrest and persecution of Stephen like that of Jesus?
- Who have you seen that is often full of grace, power, wisdom, and the Holy Spirit?
- Memory Verse: Acts 6:8
- Prayer: Father, give me grace to obey You no matter what circumstances surround me.

Friday, February 8, "The face of an angel."

Read Acts 6:8-15

Acts 6:15 says, "*And gazing at him (Stephen), all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.*" I'm not sure what the face of an angel looks like, but Stephen had such a countenance as he stood before the council. Whether it was a radiant glow, like the shining of Moses' face when he came away from the physical glory of God on the mountain, or a serene calmness, we don't really know. But his face did not look normal. Howard Marshall says in his commentary, "*The description is of a person who is close to God and reflects some of His glory as a result of being in His presence.*" One huge concern is the way our culture idolizes these heavenly messengers and staggers in confusion against the biblical view of angels. When the scriptures describe angels they are not sweet, feminized, cherub-like creatures seeking to bring beauty and cuteness to the room. They are messengers of God! They inspire awe and holy fear. Their purpose is to directly deliver a message from the One True God. So when Luke says Stephen had the face of an angel, it was likely to help us see his role as a true messenger of the word of God. Luke uses this expression to describe Stephen's determination to speak God's word boldly, faithfully, and forcefully to the end. May we be the ones with the "*face of an angel*" in our day, holding fast to the truth of scripture!

- During the accusations, the members of the Sanhedrin glared at Stephen. What did they see?
- What did the expression on Stephen's face show about his relationship to God?
- Memory Verse: Acts 6:8
- Prayer: Father, may others see Jesus in me. Help my life and words point to You and Your truth.

Saturday, February 9, Read Acts 7.

Review memory verse.

Prayer: Father, make us ready to hear your Word. Reveal your truth to our hearts. Give us grace to listen and obey. Bind the enemy of our souls and fill us with Your Holy Spirit. Give us joy as we meet with your people for doctrine, prayer, and worship.