



PV Household Worship

February 11-16, 2019

❖ **Daily Memory Verse: Acts 7:2**

And Stephen said: "Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran.

❖ **Song: *Jesus Is Mine***

Monday, February 11, "The sovereign, abundant grace of God."

Read Acts 7:1-7

In 1777, a well known pastor by the name William Dodd was condemned to be hanged for forgery. His last sermon was preached in prison and later published. A friend commented to Samuel Johnson that the effort was far better than he had thought the man capable of. Johnson replied, "*Depend upon it, when a man knows he is to be hanged, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.*" In Acts 7 Stephen likely sensed that he was about to die. During His message before the Sanhedrin, his mind was "*wonderfully concentrated!*" More than just speaking well in the face of death, Stephen spoke powerfully because he was filled with the Holy Spirit. It is the longest sermon in Acts, maybe because Luke wanted his largely Gentile audience to get a brief history of God's dealings with Israel in order to magnify His grace. The sermon serves as a transition to the Gentile mission that follows. It displays Israel's continued stubborn rejection of God's message and messengers. It shows that God had worked in many places and in many ways with His servants down through the centuries. Worship is not limited to the land of Israel or to the temple. Justification before a Holy God does not come by obeying laws, making sacrifices, or keeping traditions. Stephen's sermon points us to the sovereign, abundant grace of God toward rebellious sinners, and also to the danger of hardening our hearts against God's grace found in His Son Jesus Christ the Messiah.

- What stands out most to you from Stephen's words? How well do you know the Old Testament story? Why is understanding the Old Testament important?
- How do Stephen's words prove God's sovereignty?
- Memory Verse: Acts 7:2
- Prayer - Father, You are over all history. Praise You for reconciling people to Yourself through Jesus.

Tuesday, February 12, "Where's Waldo?"

Read Acts 7:2-19

Do you know Waldo? He is the cartoon character dressed in the red and white striped shirt with little round glasses, and a matching beanie cap with a big red pom pom. He's the star of "*Where's Waldo,*" a best-selling children's book series. Waldo hides himself in the crowded scenes on each page, inviting children to find where he's hiding. Parents around the world love the moments of sweet discovery when their children's faces signal they've found Waldo. In Acts 7 Stephen probably did not wear eccentric clothing and he definitely was not trying to hide. He openly confronted the religious leaders of caring more about traditions than about God Himself. He recited Jewish history and proclaimed God's sovereignty over it all. He brought up three sacred cows that the Jewish people mistakenly thought would make them spiritual: The land, the Law of Moses, and the temple. Stephen declared that all of these things were merely pointing to the greatest thing: Jesus! God is making a people for Himself through the work that Jesus has done, not where they live. God gave the law to point us to our need for Jesus the Savior. God gave the temple to show us the holiness God demands and the

proper ways to approach Him through sacrifices. Jesus took away the need for a temple when He became our great High Priest to offer up Himself as the sacrifice for sins once for all. Like a parent witnessing the joy of discovery in their child's eyes when they find Waldo, Stephen took a risk and witnessed for Jesus Christ, even in the face of hostility.

- What do you learn from Stephen's sermon? Why do you think the listeners were so angry?
- What are some possible "sacred cows" (religious ideas that distract us from Jesus) that people struggle with today?
- Memory Verse: Acts 7:2
- Prayer – Father, help me to see that salvation is in Christ alone, not of works, so that I cannot boast.

Wednesday, February 13, "Worth the trouble."

Read Acts 7:20-43

Ramps often grow in our area in the spring. A ramp is a tasty little wild onion that is sought after in our neck of the woods. They usually pop up after generous amounts of spring rain. If you venture out to find some you might want to take your boots and a shovel. You should expect to trudge through briars, bushes, wooded areas and damp conditions. You may get muddy feet, scratches, and even bug bites just to find a treasured handful. But if you're a ramp lover, tasting these pungent little onions with some fried potatoes and ham will make any temporary discomfort of finding them worthwhile. Sometimes life is about "*getting through*" the trials and troubles that are inevitable in our sinful world just to taste the prize at the end. One of these trials is persecution. Stephen certainly found this to be true. He knew the good things that Jesus has ready for those who follow Him, but he met harsh resistance when he tried to tell others. Those of us who have found God's way, and who know from experience that it's "*a more excellent way*", will persevere even when we have to go through danger and difficulty. By doing so, we show others a beautiful picture of God's peace, mercy, and forgiveness. The joy that awaits will make our temporary discomfort worthwhile.

- Why do you think Stephen took such a risk to speak so boldly against the Sanhedrin?
- How can we guard against outward religion and empty rituals? How can we keep our hearts genuinely close to God? How can we know how confrontational to be when we present the gospel to someone?
- Memory Verse: Acts 7:2
- Prayer: Father, give me wisdom and cause Your Spirit to control me as I share the gospel with others.

Thursday, February 14, "God provides for us what he requires from us."

Read Acts 7:20-43

A famous clockmaker took a visitor through his shop and pointed out two ways of regulating the time of his finely crafted instruments. In one method, a master clock sounded a note at set intervals. If the other clocks were wrong, the signal would reveal their error, but it didn't set them right. In the other method, a chronometer was connected electrically to several other clocks. Each beat of these timepieces was controlled by that master chronometer. The first way of regulating time is a picture of God's law. It strikes the signal, pointing us to the Lord's perfect standards, but it cannot help us to correct the wrong. The second method is a picture of God's grace. What the law could not do, Jesus can do. In Acts 7 Stephen points to the lawgiver Moses and declares that Moses points to something greater than the law: Jesus! Verse 37 says, "*This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.'*" Moses was given God's law to reveal sin, but it is powerless to save us from sin. It can show us our failure, but it cannot provide strength. It can

condemn, but it cannot justify. The law commands, but it does not enable. The law kills, but Jesus gives life. Law is outward; grace is inward. God always provides for us what he requires from us.

- Who do you think is the "*prophet like me*" in 7:37? "*The Righteous One*" in 7:52? What do you think is the main point of Stephen's sermon?
- In the time of Moses, what did the Israelites do that angered God? (7:42, 43a) What was their consequence? (7:43b) Do you ever struggle with fashioning God in the way you prefer Him?
- Memory Verse: Acts 7:2
- Prayer: Father, thank You for providing Jesus who has fulfilled the demands of Your law on my behalf.

Friday, February 15, "No Entry: Access for Residents Only."

Read Acts 7:44-50

Last year they built a new bridge locally on Jasper Riley road. This little country lane, is often used by drivers who want to shortcut through Pleasant Valley to Loch Lynn, avoiding U.S. 219 and the traffic lights. When the road crews arrived to rebuild the badly damaged bridge and road surface, they brought with them large barriers and "*No Entry*" signs. If you lived on Jasper Riley road you could be really worried thinking that you would be unable to get your car out until the road work was finished. But if you looked at the signs more closely you realized that they said '*Road Closed: Access for Residents Only.*' The barriers were not for those who lived on the road. They had the right to go in and out whenever because they lived there. In the Old Testament, access to God in the temple was strictly limited. Only the high priest could go in through the curtain and offer sacrifices in the Most Holy Place, and then only once a year (Lev. 16:2-20; Heb. 9:25-26). But when Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, showing that the barrier between man and God was destroyed forever (Mark 15:38). In Acts 7 Stephen proclaims that God meets His people wherever they are. Verses 48-50 say, "*The Most High does not dwell in temples made by hands, as the prophet says, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?"*" Stephen was saying that because of Christ's sacrifice for our sins, all those who love and follow Him can come into God's presence at any time. He has given us the right of access.

- In addition to comparing Joseph and Moses to Jesus, Stephen also spoke about the tabernacle-temple. (7:44-50) After tracing a brief history of the tabernacle-temple in 7:44-47, what did Stephen imply was wrong with the Jews' attitude toward the temple? (7:48)
- Where does God live? (7:49, 50) Do you tend to limit God to earthly buildings?
- Memory Verse: Acts 7:2
- Prayer: Father, thank You that Jesus is our great High Priest and the perfect sacrifice for our sins.



Saturday, February 16, 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.