Sermon Date: October 20, 2013 Acts 6:8-7:60 – Stephen - Part II

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Introduction:

The Witness of Stephen – Sharing the Faith 101

1. What was the format of Stephen's speech/sermon to the Sanhedrin?

"One of the great arts of Christian theology is to know how to tell the story: the story of the Old Testament, the story of Jesus as both the climax of the Old Testament and the foundation of all that was to come, and the story of the church from the first days until now. Sometimes we too have to take a long walk back to make sure we get everything in proper rhythm, and draw out the lessons we need for our own day. *Sometimes a story is the only (best) way of telling the truth.*" (N.T. Wright, Acts for Everyone, p. 110)

Read Acts 7:1-53.

2. If we follow the logic of N.T. Wright stated above, in what ways is Stephen's sharing of his faith a mode
for us as we settle into a rhythm of sharing our faith as individuals?

- 3. Stephen was most definitely filled by the Holy Spirit to speak as he did, but he also had to know his facts in order to engage his audience/accusers. He met the Jewish leaders on their turf with his knowledge of the history of Jewish faith and the Torah, the Jewish Scriptures. He was able to articulate the foundation of the Old Testament beginning with God's original covenant promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 15:5-6), through Abraham's offspring, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, through the Law given to Moses, then through the Temple promised through David and built under David's son, Solomon. Stephen had the right mix of *knowing* the Scriptures as well as being available to God to be used.
  - a. How does this challenge us today in terms of sharing the Christian faith?
  - b. See Romans 10:8-10, 17, 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, Ephesians 6:19, 2 Thessalonians 2:15, and 1 Peter 2:2-9

4. How does Stephen make his point that he was not rejecting Moses, but it was actually the ancestors of the Jews that actually rejected him?

	5. In his sermon, Doug commented that the point of Stephen's story is "God is not confined to the temple, He is not confined to a box. Wherever God is, that place is holy." See Acts 7:48 and 1 Corinthians 3:16 and comment.
	<ul> <li>6. See the transition point of Stephen's speech in Acts 7:48-53.</li> <li>a. Read Exodus 32 as a frame of reference. What does Stephen specifically accuse the Sanhedrin of in Acts 7:51-53?</li> <li>b. See Isaiah 66:1-2 for a frame of reference. What was Stephen's point?</li> </ul>
	7. What do you make of Acts 7:55-56? N.T. Wright states, "The temple was supposed to be a place where heaven and earth meet. Stephen is demonstrating that heaven and earth in fact come together in Jesus and His followers. Explain your thoughts.
	8. Acts 7:59-60 is a stunning conclusion to Stephen's life. In what ways does it mirror Jesus' death? How awesome is it to ask God to forgive those who are about to harm you and quite possibly take your life?
The tree Ste He up wh	the Sanhedrin already had their mind made up before Stephen spoke. They were so intent on their worldview, aditions and beliefs that they could not really hear what Stephen was saying. They actually agreed with ephen on historical point, but their ears were clogged and eyes closed based on what they disagreed with. ow often do we miss out on God inspired, Holy Spirit moments because our minds have already been made of? How often are we so intently focused on that which we disagree that we lose sight of the main thing of hich we do agree? See Galatians 5:13-15. What is the main thing? See John 3:16, Romans 5:1-2, 6-11, hilippians 2:10-11.