

So much is happening from the day of the Pentecost through this chapter (6:1-15). It is now about 4 years forward, and the Spirit is still moving strong. I am compelled to read from chapter 6, 1 through 15, to recap what has happened. I will then focus more on verses 8 – 15.

“Now in those days, when the disciples were growing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebraic Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the twelve called the whole group of the disciples together and said, ‘It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to wait on tables. ³But carefully select from among you, brothers, seven men who are well-attested, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this necessary task. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. ⁵The proposal pleased the entire group, so they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, with Phillip, and Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a Gentile convert to Judaism from Antioch, ⁶They stood these men before the apostles, who prayed and placed their hands on them. ⁷The word of God continued to spread, the number of disciples in Jerusalem was increased greatly, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.” (vs. 1-7)

⁸Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. ⁹But some men from the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, as well as some from Cilicia and the province of Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰Yet they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. ¹¹Then they secretly

instigated some men to say, 'We have heard this man speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God!' ¹²They incited the people, the elders, and the experts in the law; then they approached Stephen, seized him, and brought him before the council. ¹³They brought forward false witnesses who said, 'This man does not stop saying things against his holy place and the law. ¹⁴For we have heard him saying that Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us.' ¹⁵All who were sitting in the council looked intently at Stephen and saw his face was like the face of an angel." Acts 6:8-15
[NET]

Brief recap: The church was growing. People were being filled with faith of the new movement. The faith was orbiting outside of the Palestinian Judaism and into the wider Roman empire and eventually into the entire Gentile world. Since the name Stephen is Greek, he evidently was a Greek-speaking Jew from the Hellenistic side. The other group was distinguished as Aramaic-speaking Palestinians - Jews called Hebrews. Two different cultures.

Conflict between the two sides evolved. The twelve solved it. Get a group of seven, and they will handle this for us. We must continue praying and presenting the Word. Let's remember now; it is very important to note that the church was growing in numbers... GREATLY! One of the seven was Stephen. And, he was performing wonders and miracles, and he was full of the Holy Spirit and great wisdom.

Let's study vs. 8-15:

- *⁸Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and miraculous signs among the people.*

Well, we know he is meeting great needs and also getting a lot of attention.

Envy comes from that. We have been warned:

“Don't envy the evil or desire to be with them, for their hearts plan violence and their words stir up trouble.” Proverbs 24:1-2 [CSB]

- *⁹But some men from the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, as well as some from Cilicia and the province of Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen.*

Some people from the Synagogue of the Freedmen were troubled. Again, they were about to lose the religion they had known for a long time. And they argued with Stephen what they believed. But the Spirit was working very strongly in Stephen. His wisdom, they could not overcome.

“¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekest of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual and demonic. ¹⁶For where envy and self-seeking exist,

confusion and every evil thing are there. ¹⁷But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

James 3: 13 – 18 [NKJV]

- ¹⁰*Yet they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.*

“But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.” James 3:14 [ESV]

- ¹¹*Then they secretly instigated some men to say, ‘We have heard this man speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God!’*

“...You shall not lie...” Leviticus 19:11b [WEB]

“The Lord detests lying lips...” Proverbs 12:22a [NIV]

“...put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth.” Ephesians 4:25 [ESV]

- ¹²*They incited the people, the elders and the experts in the law; then they approached Stephen, seized him, and brought him before the council.*

Volume gets power. It gets attention.

- ¹³*They brought forward false witnesses who said, ‘This man does not stop saying things against this holy place and the law.*

Although false testaments against us are pure troublesome, this is a tool of satan. He seeks people who are willing to do these actions. But that was back then. This is no longer true in our time?! These witnesses had no honor, integrity, and truth to them.

- ¹⁴*For we have heard him saying that Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses handed down to us.*

Twisted truths: The Pharisees’ very essence of what they had believed was now in jeopardy. So, they twisted what Jesus had said to the Jewish leaders.

“Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’” John 2:19 [NIV]

- ¹⁵*All who were sitting in the council looked intently at Stephen, and saw his face was like the face of an angel.*

Stephen was not alone; the Lord was with him.