

# OPEN HEAVEN

Part 3 • July 7, 2024 • Pastor Jason Smotherman

Living in Open heaven - The Specifics.

## **ACTS 6:1-7**

*<sup>1</sup>Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup>Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; <sup>4</sup>but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."*

*<sup>5</sup>And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, <sup>6</sup>whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.*

*<sup>7</sup>Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

The qualification of the Forerunners of the early church:

## **1. GOOD REPUTATION - CHARACTER AND INTEGRITY (VS 3)**

Not the absence of criticism, but good reputation in the face of criticism. Self control in the face of unwarranted criticism. Genuineness and authenticity are the foundation for Godly character. Perfection isn't required for Integrity, honesty is.

The need for integrity is so huge today.

Famous men of the past have bequeathed us statements that have become mottoes. History declares that Henry Clay was about to introduce a certain bill in Congress when a friend said, "If you do, Clay, it will kill your chance for the presidency." "But is the measure right?" Clay asked, and on being assured it was right said, "I would rather be right than be president."

## **2. FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

### **ACTS 19:1-5**

*<sup>1</sup>While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. <sup>2</sup>"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them. "No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." <sup>3</sup>"Then what baptism did you experience?" he asked. And they replied, "The baptism of John." <sup>4</sup>Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the One who would come later, meaning Jesus." <sup>5</sup>As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. <sup>7</sup>There were about twelve men in all.*

## **3. FULL OF THE WORD OF GOD**

How much of the "word" was present in Acts 6?

- Acts 1:20—Psalms 69:26; 109:8
- Acts 2:17-21—Joel 3:1-5
- Acts 2:25-28—Psalm 16:8-11
- Acts 2:30—Psalm 132:11
- Acts 2:31—Psalm 16:10
- Acts 2:34-35—Psalm 110:1
- Acts 3:13—Exod 3:6, 15
- Acts 3:22-23—Deut 13:15-16, 19; Lev 23:29
- Acts 3:25—Gen 22:18; 26:4
- Acts 4:11—Psalm 118:22
- Acts 4:24—Psalm 146:6
- Acts 4:25-26—Psalm 2:1-2
- Acts 7:3, 5—Gen 12:1; 17:8; 48:4
- Acts 7:18—Exod 1:8
- Acts 7:27-28—Exod 2:14
- Acts 7:30-34—Exod 3:2, 5-8, 10
- Acts 7:35—Exod 2:14
- Acts 7:37—Deut 18:15
- Acts 7:40—Exod 32:1, 23
- Acts 7:42-43—Amos 5:25-27
- Acts 7:49-50—Isaiah 66:1-2
- Acts 8:32-33—Isaiah 53:7-8
- Acts 13:22—Psalm 89:21; 1 Sam 13:14
- Acts 13:33—Psalm 2:7
- Acts 13:34-35—Isa 55:3; Psalm 16:10
- Acts 13:41—Hab 1:5
- Acts 13:47—Isaiah 49:6
- Acts 15:16-17—Amos 9:11-12
- Acts 23:5—Exod 22:27
- Acts 28:26-27—Isaiah 6:9-10

They KNEW the word. They were full.

### **ACTS 2:14-21**

*<sup>14</sup>But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. <sup>15</sup>For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. <sup>16</sup>But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. <sup>18</sup>And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they*

*shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup>I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. <sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. <sup>21</sup>And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'*

They understood the Word was connected. This is that. Stephen embodies the word in action.

A common theme or pattern is observed, the servants of the kingdom are the first ones to witness the miracles taking place. Many people don't see the miracles because they are sitting in the wrong seat (John 2 - water into wine). The seat of the observer or critic offers a different viewpoint than that of a servant. Many will consume the miracle but not be able to see it.

Stephens first responsibility was over the business. Yes it is possible to have faith and be over the business of a church. These are not mutually exclusive.

Faithful with the natural opens the door to the supernatural. Many want the stage but can't handle the service. If you can't be trusted with what you can see and understand, how can you be trusted to steward the things you can't see or understand. The church is starved for miracles, because we have created an appetite of consuming rather contributing.

Through faithfulness, advancement escalates quickly. The fastest way to impacting the world around you is through the act of service. He signed up to serve in a widows ministry, and a short time later he is arrested because of his influence.

Stephen was noted to another quality that seemed to be noticed that went above and beyond the requirements. He was a man full of faith. He was faithful.

Story to describe FAITH:

One of the oldest sermon illustrations still provides a powerful illustration of the personal nature of faith. A far-famed tightrope walker came to Niagara Falls and stretched his rope across the thunderous currents from Canada to the United States. Before the breathless multitudes, he walked, then ran, across the falls. He did the same blindfolded, with drums rolling. Then, still blindfolded, he pushed a wheelbarrow across the falls. The crowds went wild, and the aerialist shouted to them, "Who believes I can push a man in this wheelbarrow across these falls?" A gentleman in the front waved his hands, shouting, "I do! I believe!" "Then," said the walker, "come and get in the wheelbarrow." To no surprise, the man's intellectual assent failed to translate into personal belief.

This partnership led to the explosion of the gospel in the area.

I love this note: Even many of the priests were obedient to the FAITH. They were not obedient to religion or tradition but to FAITH.

### **ACTS 6:8-15**

*<sup>8</sup>And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup>Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. <sup>10</sup>And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. <sup>11</sup>Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." <sup>12</sup>And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. <sup>13</sup>They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; <sup>14</sup>for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." <sup>15</sup>And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.*

### **4. FULL OF FAITH AND POWER (VS 8):**

Notice the progression.

- **Good reputation** - Character and Integrity
- **Full of the Holy Spirit** - Fruit and Gifts
- **Full of the Word of God** - grounded in HIM
- **Full of Faith** - action flowing from being
- **Full of Power** - The signs followed his belief.

God's Patterns created power. Our Patterns create pain. Starts with service and ends with signs.

### **JOHN 15:15**

*<sup>15</sup>No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*