

OPEN HEAVEN

Part 8 • August 18, 2024 • Pastor Jason Smotherman

ACTS 6:8-15 (NKJV)

⁸ And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen.

¹⁰ And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.

¹¹ Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹² And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.

¹³ They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." ¹⁵ And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

STEPHEN WAS FED UP.

How can one go back to religion when one has experienced relationship? Revival brings relationship. Religion establishes Rituals. Religion and Revival are opposites! Religion exalts man, revival humbles him. Religion praises the system, revival praises the only Savior. Religion says we have everything under control, revival says God you can have it. Religion makes a schedule, revival destroys it. Religion hopes for the Church's acceptance in the community, revival makes the Church the enemy of the world.

And it's not until you get fed up with religion, will you see Revival. We are to be like Christ, the stumbling block to the world on their road to hell.

Jude was fed up with the stronghold of religion, he put it like this in his letter to us in scripture. The religious are like

JUDE 12-13

¹² ... hidden reefs at your love feast, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds (having the form but no substance), swept along by winds (trends), fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted: ¹³ wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

Verses 17-23: Those in revival will be grounded in the apostles teaching, they are rooted in the word, they will be united (unity) against divisions, building themselves up (encouragers) in holy faith (holiness and action will be seen), praying the Holy Spirit, in the love of God, save others snatching them out of the fire (soul winners).

John the Baptist was fed up with religion. He called religious people of the day, "snakes." Jesus was fed up with religion, he called religious people of that day, "white washed walls." Stephen was fed up with up with religion, not because he was fed up with the religious, but because he was fed up with the enemy holding the religious in the stronghold of religion. Free people want to free people.

A man can be religious and not know Christ, not be born again, and not be moral! People in the upper room could not go back to religion after Calvary. After the Sermon on the Mount they could never go back to a dry lecture in the synagogue, after seeing the glorified Christ.

A return to religion for those that have been born again is not an option. Once you have tasted and seen, you will not be able to exist in the atmosphere or culture of religion. You are ruined, in a good way. **Stephen was fed up.**

When is the last time you have been fed up with what religion has done to the Church. Let me qualify, not fed up to leave, fed up to do something about it. To pray, fast, weep, to get involved, change the atmosphere, to worship, to give, to invite, to be so fed up, you were willing to stand to see people free.

To be clear: I am fed up with religion. Our region is drowning in religion, while people are starving for revival. We have the form, but where is the power? We have the clouds, but where is the rain? We have the lamps, but where is the oil? We see the hunger pains, but where is the spiritual nourishment? We see the thirsty, but where is there to drink?

We are so desperate to see Jesus stand up, but are we willing to get fed up to lay our life down? Stephen became the catalyst for Jesus standing in his world, because he was willing to lay his life down for it. Revival requires catalysts. People who are willing to create the margin to dig a well so that others are able to drink. These catalysts, these forerunners, walk in obedience and their reward is His presence.

His presence is enough. It satisfies the aching heart. It fills the empty soul. It heals the wounded Spirit. It delivers the addict, the bound, the demon possessed, and religious. It revives the dry church. It return people to their first love. It introduces people to a life not previously known. His presence changes everything.

Are you fed up? Fed up with the secret sin? Fed up with bringing reproach on God's house by living a double life? Fed up with taking a break from your sin to cover the altar with your tears? Fed up with losing your reputation, your hopes,

and your communion with God? Fed up with the sleepless nights, unbearable guilt, a devastating physical toll on your body? Are you fed up with hurting God, fed up with being insensitive?

Peter was fed up with his pride. Thomas was fed up with his doubt. James and John were fed up with their ego. And when they got fed up, something incredible happened.

STEPHEN WAS FILLED UP.

ACTS 6:5 (NKJV)

They chose Stephen, a man full of Faith and the Holy Spirit,

ACTS 6:8 (NKJV)

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

Stephen was full. Check that, he was overflowing.

ACTS 1:8 (NKJV)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Power – *Dunamis*: Miraculous power, force, ability, abundance, meaning might, deed worker of miracles, power, strength, violence

The disciples had at this time, information, techniques, memory – Know how, but no power, man intellect is not the revealer of Jesus (the Holy Spirit is)

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

They need an impartation of power to do what? **Witness.**

John was filled & controlled by the Holy Spirit. When you get filled up with Jesus, you don't care what people think. Jesus wants to deliver us from what people think.

LUKE 1:15 (NKJV)

For he will be great and distinguished in the sight of the Lord. And he must drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit even in and from his mother's womb.

EPHESIANS 5:18 (NIV)

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

A lot of people in the church don't believe a Christian can survive in today's world

so we huddle & mass together out of fear that by touching the world we are going to dry up and die. That is not true, there's a portion of our spiritual development that won't come until we're on the cutting edge of human need.

When you get on the edge of human need, the power will be there!

I'll tell you where you'll die, it's in the pew. Pews have become prison cells. Church has become the keeper of the exhibits. We have tamed lions. We have been domesticated. We need our roar back. We need His power again. **When you get fed up, filled up, then you will get fired up.**

STEPHEN WAS FIRED UP.

Stephen was apart of this kind of church. They understood that even their opposition was a part of His will. The things that opposed them were making them stronger and more able to fulfill the task. The resistance was making them the capable carriers of the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 4:27-31 (NKJV)

²⁷ "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. ²⁹ Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, ³⁰ by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Boldness comes through the mighty working of the Holy Spirit. He enables, equips, and fills. He brings forth fruit, life, and gifting.

JEREMIAH 20:9 (NIV)

But if I say, "I will not mention His word or speak anymore in His name," His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

We as Christians have an obligation, and responsibility to people. The estate of your brother is your concern. The estate of your sister is your concern. The moral conditions of this world are our concern. If you claim the name of Christ you are immediately defined by God as a vehicle, a weapon, an outlet, a channel through which healing life can come. You are the sign. You are the vehicle by which God will use to change this world.

But we as Christians have to stop saying, "Let someone else do it!" Let us go to the Lord with an absolute violent statement saying, "I am the one thru who the anointing can come, I am the one that God wants to use to win this land and this city.

Pick me...The next move of God!