

Faith Built on Solid Rock

1. Last week we looked at the differences between...when Moses acted in the flesh...and when Moses submitted to God's Spirit
 - a. Submitting to God Spirit...and coming under God's authority sounds good...but it is a challenging thing for us to do
 - b. What makes it so challenging...is our rebellious nature and sinful nature
 - c. It took Moses 80 years...and he still made mistakes...such as striking the rock a second time
 - d. Stephen's main point of his sermon...is how Israel...God's covenant people...have a habit of rebelling against what God is doing
 - e. When all God desires...all God wants...is to be a husband to them
 - f. God works out His will in our lives...through a series of created opportunities...to come into agreement with God
 - g. Stephen is going to make his point in 2 ways...in this morning's teaching
2. Slide...first...God gives each person the opportunity to escape slavery to sin and the world
 - a. Meaning God has given us every opportunity to choose God
 - b. We Americans have the opportunity to read our Bible...
 - c. Our Bible...is inspired by God...which teaches us **what is truth**
 - d. Our Bible and the Holy Spirit corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right...if we listen

- e. And if we are willing to submit to God...and His word...God is willing to prepare and equip his people to do every good work
 - f. What I have just said...we have already covered well in the last 2 weeks
 - g. Stephen's second point...comes through the prophecy Stephen quotes
 - h. Here is Stephens second point...before we look at the prophecy
3. Slide...Much of Israel and many Christians have built their own gods that work for them
- a. What do I mean by this statement...
 - b. Stephen is pointing out...that much of the religious activity Israel is doing is for appearance only...without ever really knowing the God of the Bible
 - c. I am going to make a general statement...so realize...what I am about to say is not true in all cases
 - d. Much of the American Christian church attendance...is for an appearance of righteousness only...without really knowing God
 - e. They go to church...without knowing the God of the Bible...just like Israel still practices keeping the Law...but miss Jesus as Messiah...still today
 - f. Every day...in almost every circumstance...each Christian...is faced with multitude of choices...about how we conduct our life
 - g. The world is...never ending with its temptations...trying to tempt us to turn away from trusting God and His word
 - h. I am going to attempt to show us...what Stephen is trying to teach these Jews...and then parallel it to the American Christian church

- i. Because Israel had the same opportunities to follow Jesus...as we Christians have today
 - j. Israel had the law...which was perfect...and an opportunity to offer a sacrifice...for forgiveness for their sin...at the tabernacle
 - k. We to have the same perfect law of God...only we have the perfect sacrifice for sin...Jesus
 - l. Although keeping the law is hard...the law doesn't change...for Israel or us
 - m. The group Stephen is speaking to...has the opportunity for the new covenant...the same covenant we are offered...salvation through grace
 - n. The new covenant...is a better covenant...because it includes the Holy Spirit indwelling us...who helps us keep the law
 - o. So at conversion...we are to invite the Holy Spirit in our hearts...who will tell us right from wrong...according to Jerimiah 31
4. Jer 31:31-34, 31 "The day is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. 32 This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the Lord. 33 "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the Lord. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the Lord.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,"

says the Lord. "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins."

- a. In verse 33 it says... I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write these instructions on their hearts
 - b. How God accomplishes this...is by putting the Holy Spirit inside us...to guide us...to correct us...and tell us right from wrong
 - c. Meaning the Holy Spirit reveals the perfect law to us...and even warns us when we are about to break God's law...or sin
 - d. Then the Holy Spirit points us...to the righteous sacrifice of Christ...for the forgiveness of sin...through faith
 - e. Breaking God's law is sin...and sin still requires a sacrifice
 - f. Christ is our sacrifice...which the Father resurrected...so we ask Jesus for forgiveness...as part of our relationship with Christ
 - g. The point Stephen is making...is the law...is life giving...not a hindrance
5. Acts 7:38 Moses was with our ancestors, the assembly of God's people in the wilderness, when the angel spoke to him at Mount Sinai. And there Moses received life-giving words to pass on to us.
6. Slide... Moses received the life-giving words to give freely to Israel
- a. Each person of Israel...had in the wilderness...an opportunity to live according to the life-giving words...that came on 2 stone tablets
7. Acts 7:39 "But our ancestors refused to listen to Moses. They rejected him and wanted to return to Egypt.
8. Slide...Israel rejected the life-giving words of God and wanted the world

- a. Stephen is showing them...again...and again how their ancestors rejected the very opportunity to have life with God
- b. When Moses went up to Mount Sinai...God didn't just give Moses the law
- c. Moses also got a set of blue prints...for portable tent...a place to make sacrifices for sin...called the tabernacle
- d. Keeping the law is hard...and impossible to keep all the laws...But God...in His ultimate wisdom...
- e. Created a way...for His people to get back in right standing...threw the offerings at the tabernacle...in fellowship
- f. Lets compare Israel's deal...to the Christian deal
- g. Israel walked out of the slavery of Egypt...Israel was set free from the slavery to the world...
- h. For the Christian...our faith in Christ....sets us Christians free from the slavery of the sins of the world
- i. Although Israel saw the mighty hand of God rescue them...they still wanted the things of the world...over the things of the Lord God
- j. Although we Christians are saved by the mighty sacrifice on the cross...the Christian still wants the things of the world...over the things of God
- k. The point Stephen makes next...is how quickly Israel...was ready to leave God...for the things of the world
- l. This happened right after God sent 10 plagues against Egypt...God parted the Red Sea...killed the Egyptian Army that wanted to kill Israel

- m. Israel started to complain about God...they didn't trust God...and they quickly wanted the things of the world...back in their life
 - n. To us...this may sound foolish...to read about these miracles...and think Israel wanted the things of the world still...until we look at our own life
 - o. In what area...are we Christians not trusting to God...evidenced by our choosing the things of the world...over the things of God
9. Acts 7:40-41, 40 They told Aaron, 'Make us some god who can lead us, for we don't know what has become of this Moses, who brought us out of Egypt.' 41 So they made an idol shaped like a calf, and they sacrificed to it and celebrated over this thing they had made.
- a. Israel knew God rescued them...but something has happened...they are rejecting the God who saved them...by creating an idol
10. Slide...They chose to worship a golden calf, rather than the God that rescued them
- a. Seems stupid...doesn't it...but if we are not careful...we Christians do the same thing
 - b. We will create our own image of Jesus...that is different than the Jesus of the Bible
 - c. I thought about creating a list of some examples of how we...rebel against the words of God...and Jesus
 - d. But the list is endless...and I would probably only list the things I struggle with...and not list the things I still am in rebellion with
 - e. Stephen adds something next...that reveals how God deals with our rebellion...Stephen uses a prophecy...the word of God...to back it up

- f. Just like a good preacher should do
- g. Don't miss what I just said...Stephen uses word of God...prophecy
- h. To show Israel just how God feels...when His people create idols...instead of worshipping the true God...the I AM

11. Acts 7:42-43, 42 Then God turned away from them and abandoned them to serve the stars of heaven as their gods! In the book of the prophets it is written, 'Was it to me you were bringing sacrifices and offerings during those forty years in the wilderness, Israel? 43 No, you carried your pagan gods—the shrine of Molech, the star of your god Rephan, and the images you made to worship them. So I will send you into exile as far away as Babylon.'

12. Slide...God allows us to follow our rebellion

- a. I will get to the prophecy in a minute...but first...let's soak that thought in
- b. God abandoned God's chosen people...who chose to rebel against Him
- c. God abandoned the rebellious...so they could follow their rebellion
- d. God abandoned them to worship the gods they made for themselves... instead of worshipping the One true God
- e. How many people are fooled today...thinking that because they are not being corrected...by God...for their intentional **habitual** sin
- f. That God is ok with their sin...or ...that God is just being graceful to me because He loves me so much
- g. Speak sarcastically
- h. Just look at the Jesus...that **I made Him myself** ...see how He fits me so well...he is ok with my sin...because that is the way...I made him

- i. With this Jesus I made for me...I don't have to change
- j. Because the Jesus that I made for myself...**he fits me** so well...so I don't mind submitting to this Jesus that I made
- k. What I have so sarcastically just said...is the same thing as Israel making their false gods...and worshiping stars or fallen angels
- l. On mount Sinai...Moses was getting the words of life...from God
- m. While Israel is making their own gods...that they desired to worship
- n. This is the point that Stephen is making...these guys are rejecting Jesus...the true God...the one who can give life
- o. Because Jesus doesn't look like their Messiah...they created in their mind
- p. Because Jesus doesn't fit their idol image...of what they believe the Messiah should look like
- q. They rejected Jesus...and God for the idol image of their religion
- r. Bang drop the mic
- s. Now let's get to the prophecy...so we can understand...the way God sees it
- t. Here is what Stephen quoted

13. Amos 5:25-27, 25 "Was it to me you were bringing sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, Israel? 26 No, you served your pagan gods—Sakkuth your king god and Kaiwan your star god—the images you made for yourselves. 27 So I will send you into exile, to a land east of Damascus," says the Lord, whose name is the God of Heaven's Armies.

- a. Their hearts didn't want to serve the Lord God...even though they went through the motions of bringing sacrifices to the Tabernacle

- b. When God looked at their hearts...He saw how they wanted to worship the god they created...rather than Him

14. Slide...The Israelites rejected the Lord God, for gods that they made for themselves

- a. I am going to speak sarcastically here...
- b. Hey God...thanks for rescuing me from the slavery from the world
- c. That's great...But I don't want to worship you...the way You want me to...because your rules are hard...and it is about me right now
- d. Although I know you are the real God...because I have experienced you
- e. I am only going to go through the motions...of attending church...so it looks like I am a good person...but my heart isn't changed
- f. I look like I am trying...but really I don't want to submit...my heart isn't in it...I don't agree with you God...or your rules
- g. So...I am going to form my own God...one that works for me...it may be only a hunk of wood...but I don't care...because it's really all about me
- h. When we read the whole prophecy of Amos...is where we find the deeper truth that Stephen is pointing out
- i. Stephen doesn't quote the whole prophecy of Amos...because his audience has scripture memorized
- j. We don't...so lets back up a few verses in Amos...to see why Stephen is quoting Amos

15. Amos 5:21-24, 21 "I hate all your show and pretense—the hypocrisy of your religious festivals and solemn assemblies. 22 I will not accept your burnt

offerings and grain offerings. I won't even notice all your choice peace offerings.

23 Away with your noisy hymns of praise! I will not listen to the music of your harps. 24 Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, an endless river of righteous living.

- a. God tell us how you really feel
- b. God says he hates...the false show...and pretense...the hypocrisy of their religious gatherings
- c. God says He hates the sacrifices that are not heart felt
- d. Singing and praising...in an un-heart felt manor...He refuses to listen to
- e. What does God want...according to verse 24...justice...and righteous living
- f. What Stephen says next is...they were continually given the opportunity to live righteously...through the law and the Tabernacle

16. Acts 7:44-50, 44 "Our ancestors carried the Tabernacle with them through the wilderness. It was constructed according to the plan God had shown to Moses. 45 Years later, when Joshua led our ancestors in battle against the nations that God drove out of this land, the Tabernacle was taken with them into their new territory. And it stayed there until the time of King David. 46 "David found favor with God and asked for the privilege of building a permanent Temple for the God of Jacob. 47 But it was Solomon who actually built it. 48 However, the Most High doesn't live in temples made by human hands. As the prophet says, 49 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that? 'asks the Lord.' Could you build me such a resting place? 50 Didn't my hands make both heaven and earth?'

- a. Verse 49 is quoted out of Isaiah 66...which we will read in a moment
- b. The point Stephen is making...is the tabernacle...
- c. The place of proper sacrifice...which provides the ability...to return...man back into fellowship with God...
- d. Because the Tabernacle was always available to Israel...that's the point
- e. Israel always had a true and right way back to God...any time they wanted
- f. They had the ability...the opportunity...to use the Tabernacle that God created...so they get right with God
- g. Building the temple was man's idea...and not a good one...because it became a den of thieves...a source of pride...and place of religion
- h. A church without the truth of God's word...is a temple of thieves...a source of religious pride...and a place of idol worship
- i. Man has a habit...of changing the God of the Bible...into something more palatable...by making Jesus into something he is not
- j. Let's look a little farther in what Stephen quoted in Isaiah 66

17. Isa 66:1-4, This is what the Lord says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that? Could you build me such a resting place? 2 My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are mine. I, the Lord, have spoken! "I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word. 3 But those who choose their own ways—delighting in their detestable sins—will not have their offerings accepted. When such people sacrifice a bull, it is no more acceptable than a human sacrifice. When they sacrifice a lamb, it's as though they had

sacrificed a dog! When they bring an offering of grain, they might as well offer the blood of a pig. When they burn frankincense, it's as if they had blessed an idol. 4 I will send them great trouble—all the things they feared. For when I called, they did not answer. When I spoke, they did not listen. They deliberately sinned before my very eyes and chose to do what they know I despise."

- a. Look again at verse 2 and 3
- b. God will bless those who have humble...and contrite hearts...who tremble at God Word
- c. Verse 4 says God called...and they did not answer
- d. When we Christians ignore the prompting of the Holy Spirit speaking in our hearts...we are just as guilty
- e. In the book of revelation...the church of Laodicea...is where Jesus is outside the church knocking...but they are not listening
- f. Meaning Jesus was not in that church
- g. Instead...the church of Laodicea...has created a church...that worships a self-crafted idol of Jesus...and not the true Jesus
- h. The church of idol Jesus...allows them to do things their own way...make up their own rules
- i. Soon the gospel that says it is ok to sin...is being preached at church pulpits
- j. A church that allows gay people to pastor...for gay people to be married in the church

- k. Please don't think I am saying that...God's grace can't cover all sin...because God's grace does cover all sin
- l. But if your heart is not changed...then God will abandoned us...so we can chase our rebellion
- m. If our heart is not changed...he don't hear our songs...our praise...our peace offerings...because God said...He wants our righteous living...
- n. In Hosea...God says...I want people to know Me...more than sacrifices...that lack heart felt worship
- o. The word of God is heavy...this is why most churches don't teach prophecy...why most people don't read prophecy
- p. I want my faith to be built on solid rock...I want to know the truth...for my eternity depends on it
- q. God wants Bible teachers to teach the Jesus of the Bible...and not the idol of the self-made Jesus...that many churches are preaching
- r. According to Amos...and Isaiah...if our offering is not heartfelt...it won't be accepted by God

18. Discussion

- a. What does getting right with Jesus look like
- b. Does our difficulty with the law...allow us to change who Jesus is
- c. Has our own definition of the grace of Jesus caused to not want to change
- d. And is this man's idea of God's grace...to be used as justification of unwillingness to strive for righteousness