

Stubbornness is Futile

1. Last week Stephen used prophecy to reveal how God feels about idol worship
 - a. Stephen is using prophecy in a unique manor... not point to the Messiah...because Stephen has already done that...
 - b. But rather...Stephen used prophecy to reveal how their religion is a form of idol worship
 - c. This week Stephen quotes another prophecy...showing them how hard their hearts have become
 - d. When we actually looked at the prophecy Stephen selected last week
 - e. I was surprised at Stephen's boldness...which is exactly what the first church was praying for...if we remember
 - f. Stephen's sermon began with the history of Israel...showing how Israel's "lack of faith" caused them to miss what God was doing...in the past
 - g. This is not the case with this group...rather they are missing what God is doing...because they refuse to surrender to Jesus...they are stubborn
 - h. They would rather worship their religion...the temple...the law...that they can twist in their favor...as a means of getting rich
 - i. What Stephen is saying is...they are missing Jesus...the Messiah on purpose...because they are stubborn and hard hearted
 - j. This week...I want to encourage us...with another truth of God
 - k. How God never gives up on Israel...or us...no matter how stubborn we are

1. According to Romans chapter 1 and 2...God patiently waits for us to come into agreement with Him
 - m. Because God is kind...long suffering...and faithful...even we are not
 - n. God continues pursuing us...even when we are not listening
 - o. God is patiently waiting for mankind to come into agreement with Him
 - p. So...like every good preacher...Stephen makes his sermon personal
 - q. Let's read the first 3 words of verse 51
2. Acts 7:51 "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you!
3. Slide...When Stephen calls them a stubborn people, he is quoting Moses again
 - a. When we read verse 51...we might think that Stephen is losing his cool by starting to call them names
 - b. I don't think so...because of what Moses wrote in
4. Deut 10:12-16, 12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? He requires only that you fear the Lord your God, and live in a way that pleases him, and love him and serve him with all your heart and soul. 13 And you must always obey the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good. 14 "Look, the highest heavens and the earth and everything in it all belong to the Lord your God. 15 Yet the Lord chose your ancestors as the objects of his love. And he chose you, their descendants, above all other nations, as is evident today. 16 Therefore, change your hearts and stop being stubborn.
 - a. Moses says change your hearts and stop being stubborn

b. Paul later writes in Romans the same thing Stephen is preaching

5. Rom 2:17-24, 17 You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him. 18 You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law. 19 You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. 20 You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth. 21 Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? 22 You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? 23 You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. 24 No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."

a. They are living as hypocrites...I am going to say this slowly for affect...
they know the law...but don't themselves follow the law

6. Romans 2:25-29, 25 The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. 26 And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God declare them to be his own people? 27 In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God's law but don't obey it. 28 For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. 29 No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely

obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.

7. Slide...A true Jew is one whose heart is right with God
8. Slide...True circumcision is not obeying the law perfectly, but rather a changed heart produced by God's Spirit
9. Acts 7:51 "You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you!
10. Slide...Resisting the Holy Spirit is what is meant by blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
 - a. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is the only sin that can't be forgiven...according to Jesus
11. Matt 12:31-32, 31 "Every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven—except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which will never be forgiven. 32 Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, either in this world or in the world to come.
 - a. How do we speak blasphemies against the Holy Spirit
 - b. Paul just said in Romans...that a true Jew depends not on circumcision
 - c. But rather on a changed heart...produced by God's Spirit...and a person with a changed heart...is one who seeks praise from God
 - d. One who seeks approval of God and the approval of men
 - e. Here is the simple answer to the meaning blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
 - f. Rejecting or refusing to listen to the workings of the Holy Spirit in your heart...who shows us we are guilty of sin

- g. And how we need forgiveness of our sin...which was paid for...by the sacrifice of the life of Jesus...the Messiah...or Savior
- h. Jesus said...you must be born again...or born of the Spirit to see the kingdom of God
- i. Last week we read the new covenant in Jerimiah...how God is going to write God's law in our hearts
- j. This is accomplished by the working of the Holy Spirit working in our heart...that working...that working..is not to be blasphemed
- k. Jesus says this about the workings of the Holy Spirit

12. John 14:15-17, 15 "If you love me, obey my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. 17 He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.

- a. The Holy Spirit is **inside** Stephen...telling Stephen the words to say
- b. While at the same time...the Holy Spirit is **along side** the people listening
- c. Prompting them to receive the truth of what Stephen is saying
- d. The Holy Spirit is in Stephen...because we know Stephen is filled with the Holy Spirit
- e. The men Stephen is talking to...have not responded to the workings of the Holy Spirit who is with them...along side of them
- f. While God is patiently hoping they will choose to open their hearts to the truth that is being said by Stephen...so they will obey the Holy Spirit

- g. If they don't receive the truth of what Stephen is saying...or really...what the Holy Spirit is speaking to them
- h. It is because their hearts are hard...because of their stubbornness...refusing to open their hearts to receive the truth of the Holy Spirit
- i. That is what blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is...the refusal to listen to the Holy Spirit who is attempting to open our hearts...revealing who Jesus is
- j. The evidence of salvation...is a new heart...which includes...the indwelling of the Holy Spirit living inside us...in our hearts

13. Eph 1:12-14, 12 God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. 13 And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

- a. The Holy Spirit teaches all truth...and when we accept the Holy Spirit in our hearts...we are changed...which is the evidence of our salvation
- b. Here is what the Holy Spirit is saying to the men listening to Stephen
- c. You are sinners...you come from a long line of sinners
- d. But you don't have to stay that way...Because of the great workings of the Father...who sent His Son Jesus....to be the perfect sacrifice for sin
- e. Revealing Jesus as Messiah is only a part of the working of the Holy Spirit

- f. The heart needs to be circumcised yet...because we all are a hard hearted bunch of people...so God sent His Holy Spirit to work on our hearts
- g. And here is the key...you have to let Him in
- h. A carpenter cannot remodel a home from the street...you have to let him in the house
- i. A farmer cannot plant a field without the tractor entering into the field
- j. A cake will not bake unless you put it in the oven
- k. So you must allow the Holy Spirit to Indwell your heart...in order for change to occur...so that you can receive the inheritance God promised
- l. When we refuse to open our hearts...to the working of the Holy Spirit ...you are blaspheming the working of the Holy Spirit
- m. And just as the tabernacle was always with Israel...so they could get right with God...
- n. So we too have the same opportunity to get right with God ...because the Holy Spirit is always available for us
- o. This is why Stephen says...You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth.
- p. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you!
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