

Acts 7

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“There are many of us that are willing to do great things for the Lord, but few of us are willing to do little things.” – D L Moody

Stephen was one of those guys who was willing to do the little things. And what did Jesus say about those who are faithful in little things?

Luke 16:10 (NKJV) He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.

I.	7:1-8	Abraham
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- The Facts: God had to uproot Abraham. God moved his descendants to Egypt and back.
- Application: Sometimes God has to uproot us and move us around in order to get us to the place in which He desires to use us. Very important: Always let God choose the place.
- Illustration: Paul thought he might be used by God in Jerusalem among the Jews – where he got his education – but God sent him far away to the Gentiles.

Acts 22:18-21 (NKJV) ¹⁸[I] saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.’ ¹⁹So I said, ‘Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. ²⁰And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ ²¹Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’”

II.	7:9-16	Joseph
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A. Joseph bears some remarkable similarities to Jesus:

- i. Each was his father's beloved son, yet hated and envied by his brethren.
- ii. Each was sold for the price of a slave.
- iii. Each was falsely accused, humbled as a servant, yet later exalted to honor.
- iv. Each was not recognized by his brethren at their first meeting.
- v. Each revealed himself to his brethren at the second meeting. (Jesus will do that.)
- vi. Each, during the time of rejection, took a Gentile bride. (Church = Bride of Christ)

(See Wiersbe)

- The Facts: Joseph's brothers did him harm, but God used it for good in his life – and in theirs. Joseph was later able to point this out to them, saying:

Genesis 50:20 (NKJV) But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

- Application: God also intends to use everything bad that happens to us for good in the end.

Romans 8:28-29 (NKJV) ²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- Explanation: God used the events of Joseph's life to give him a remarkable similarity to Jesus. That's what He's intends to do with all your trials and difficulties. He's "predestined you to be conformed to the image of His Son" – and that conforming takes a little work.

III. 7:17-36 Moses

- 7:23, 30, 36 40 years learning to be a Pharaoh, 40 as a shepherd, 40 leading God's people.
- The Facts: 7:25 Before Moses ever spent his 40 years in the desert, God had already put it into his heart that he would be used to deliver his people from bondage. But Moses wasn't yet ready to be used. He lived in Pharaoh's court for 40 years. He then spent another 40 years in the wilderness tending sheep. Only then was he ready.
- A Principle: God didn't want a Pharaoh ruling His people, He wanted a shepherd.
- Application: God may put things on your heart long before He accomplishes them. Right now He may be trying you, testing you, humbling you, preparing you. And then He's going to take that tried and tested, humble, prepared person – you – and use you for His glory.

IV. 7:37-43 Israel Rejects Moses

- The Facts: The Israelites should have known better, but they still rebelled against God.
- Application: People who should know better rebel against God. That's sad but we have to live with it. If we ourselves are rebellious: **We don't have to live with that.**

V. 7:44-50 Tabernacle and Temple

- The Facts: God gave Israel the Tabernacle and the Temple, but the Lord never needed those things. Eventually, the Israelites began to look at the Temple – and believe that God needed to bless them because of it. What God wanted was a people with a heart for Him.
- Application: We can't rely upon outward forms of godliness and expect God to bless us. God doesn't need temples and sacrifices and religiosity. Forms of godliness will be useless on the day of judgment if our hearts and lives are not right with Him. Simple faith, simple repentance, that is what He wants. You know that. So don't ever try to cover it up with a bunch of fake religion.

VI. 7:51-53 Confronting the Council

A. 7:51 This sentence sums up Stephen's whole case against the council: "You always resist the Holy Spirit!"

- That pretty much sums up the history of Israel.
- That also sums up the lives of many people today.

- Don't resist the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said:

John 16:8 (NKJV) And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

- Let Him speak to your heart concerning those things.

VII. 7:54-60 The Council Kills Stephen

A. 7:57 *stopped their ears* This wasn't the first time.

Zechariah 7:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. ¹²Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the Lord of hosts.

B. 7:58 *Saul* We'll see more of him.

C. 7:60 *He fell asleep* Like Jesus, Stephen prayed for his murderers before he died:

Luke 23:34 (NKJV) Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Conclusion:

The name Stephen – *stephanos* – means "crown", not of royalty, but of victory, like the laurel leaf wreathes that athletes received in the Olympic Games. Jesus once said:

Revelation 2:10 (NKJV) Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. ... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown [stephanos] of life.

Stephen, *stephanos*, no doubt owns that *stephanos*, crown of life right now.

Finally, look at the powerful witness Stephen was. He was a deacon, a servant, one chosen to wait the tables – not a preacher or apostle.

1 Peter 3:15-17 (NKJV) ¹⁵But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. ¹⁷For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.