

August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Pinecrest Baptist Church  
p.m.

Sermon Series: Acts Men  
Sermon #14 Title: The Conflict We Cause  
Sermon #14 Text: (Acts 6:8-15)

Jesus said in Matthew 5:13 – “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”

- We are the Salt of the Earth
- Salt does three things:
  - 1.) It Seasons – it makes things flavorful
  - 2.) It Saves – it makes things last
  - 3.) It Stings – when it cleans out wounds

It is wonderful when we realize the Seasoning from the Saints.  
It is a glory to see the Saving work of the Saints  
It is a reality when we see the Stinging of the truth in a sinful world.

Which is what we see in Acts 6:8-15, during one of the greatest revivals, and most forceful movements of the gospel the world has ever seen.

Read the story and tell the background.

I. The Danger to Opposing Forces –

Vs 8 – “Stephen full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.”

- The greatest threat to the devil and his children is the gospel. The greatest weapon that the gospel has is the saved, spirit filled man who is sold out to serve the Lord.

- A great revival was taking place – vs 7

- “And the Word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

- Write it down big plain and straight, every time the Lord’s work is increased, Satan’s heart is enraged. –

- In these two verses, there two great things that increases the intensity of the hostility toward the church, and the movement of the Lord.

A. People being Converted.

Two things stand out to us that would have been burs under the saddle of those unwilling to believe.

1.) ***the Magnitude of Conversion***

“the number of disciples multiplied”

- Men were doing all the things, and the only things that men could do: the preachers were preaching, the teachers were teaching, the listeners were listening, the servants were serving. God was doing only what God could do – the Spirit was moving, and the number of disciples were “multiplied.”

\*Note – Someone rather quick wittedly pointed out that in Acts 2 that about 3000 were “added” to the church. Here the Lord has quit adding and started multiplying!

## 2.) *the specific men of conversion*

“a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

- Now that was a problem for the “anti-Christians”. Not only were they gaining ground, they were converting their own leaders.

- It's almost as though in the eyes, and mind of the lost world, we can have their outcasts, and rejects. But . . . when those outcasts, and those rejects start gaining ground in their Universities, and in their Organizations, and in their Governments, and in their Institutions . . . something must be done!

- without question, this was becoming a crisis for the anti-christians, and a threat to the Jewish powers that be . . .

### B. The Converted Filled with Power

1.) “Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.”

Not only were people being converted, but the converted were exhibiting great power and doing great wonders.

(some of your translations say, “grace and power”)

The Person of Stephen - - Stephen was the first man on the list of those chosen to serve tables.

- obviously he was known among the people
- obviously (according to verse 3) he appeared to the people to be “of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit, and wisdom.”
- obviously he was willing to serve tables  
(Stephen was a man who had given himself to the ministry of the Lord through the church . .

- this was the center and circumference of his life.

- Life revolved around the church, the church didn't revolve around his life.

- he was full of faith, or full of grace

- the emphasis here is not necessarily on the fact of “faith” or “grace” but on his “fullness” of it.

- full – means “completely” and/or “covered”

- he was an exact example of a man uninhibited by the flesh, and living totally under the control of faith, grace, and the Spirit of God.

### The Power of Stephen

- he did great wonders and miracles among the people.

- he and a man named Philip were the only men in the New Testament where a man was not an apostle, but he was a miracle worker, he was not a pastor, but he preached one of the greatest sermons ever preached.

- not only did he serve tables, he healed hurts. – he did mighty deeds, (that are not delineated for us) that caused people to know they were being ministered to by the power of the Lord.

(Now note this . . . As powerful and wonderful as Stephen was, he was a sinner, who was saved by the grace of God, who gave himself to serve the God who saved him. – That is a formula for powerful people.)

- nonetheless – these things were a direct threat to the stronghold of those who wanted no part of the things the Lord.

## II. The Design of Opposing Forces

Now we note how these forces responded to the growth of the gospel.

### A. By Confronting Debate

1.) vs 9 – “there arose certain of the synagogues . . . disputing with Stephen.”

a.) Now the first thing to get out of your head is the idea that this started as a heated debate. – This word doesn’t necessarily imply open hostility.

- There was first an “intellectual” confrontation –
  - they tried reason
  - they tried interpretation
  - they tried “in our vernacular” a Homiletical assertions.
- their first attempts here were to attack the gospel with their intellectual dispositions.

(Furthermore, we cannot overlook the fact that their debate was no doubt a “biblical debate.”

- they would be arguing from the scriptures
- Stephen would be explaining from the scriptures . . . as we see he did in chapter 7.
- Now this sounds like a reasonable, honorable, and genuine debate! – The problem is that it wasn’t.
- They were not there for honest inquiry – they were there to “stop them, and shut them up.”

- vs 10 – “they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.”

- If intellectual argument “works” then that should have been the moment of their conversion.

- here is one example of the fact that “argument alone” is not enough to convert the lost.

- but now note this . . . “argument and intimidation and intellectualism can never overcome the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.”

- The battle is not an intellectual battle, it is a spiritual battle.

Stephen being full of the Holy Spirit, was full, not necessarily just knowledge, but also full of Spiritual wisdom.

Listen to what Jesus said in Luke 21:12-15 – “But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”

Now that being said, “we are to always be ready to give reason of the hope that dwelleth in us” – yes – but it is not our arguments that win souls – it is His Spirit.

- it is not our power, cleverness, and wisdom that helps to win debates . . . it is the Holy Spirit that enabled Stephen to be unmoveable and undefeatable in this debate.

### B. By Calculated Devices

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:11 – that we are “not ignorant of (the devil’s) devices.

- Ephesians 6:11 – “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

- the word for “wiles” used there, is the word “methodias” where we get our word “method” or “methodology” from.

- He is a cold, calculating, scheming, and maneuvering maniac and he manifests these actions in the behavior of the people yielded to his influences.

- the Bible speaks of the “wiles” of the devil

- the Bible speaks of the “snares” of the devil

- There is no one more subtle than Satan, and therefore there is no one more like Satan than when men use subtlety against the people of God.

- Note the devices that Satan uses against the gospel work:

#### *1.) He approaches Perceived Weaknesses*

- a.) he came at Stephen

- (1.) they had already, (and would continue to try) to overcome the apostles, and lost
    - but here these people, the people of these synagogues did not go to battle with Peter, and John, and James, and the original apostles.

Never get the idea that Satan and his minions are going to take their formal aim at the pastors and the pulpits alone – he takes aim at people in the pews who are attempting to serve.

- they couldn’t overcome the leaders, so they rose up against this follower who was gaining ground among the people.

#### *2.) He uses Perverted Weaponry*

- vs 11 – “Then they suborned men which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.”

He pulls out the oldest and one of the most effective weapons that he has ever unleashed on humanity – that is the weapon of “deception”. – The Lie. The “False Accusation.”

(He is the Father of lies - He has plunged the world into deception - He will be credited for deceiving all of humanity in the face of truth)

- Here he uses against the man of God what he has often used against the men of God, and precisely what he used against the Son of God.

- Listen to the list of False Accusations leveled against the people of God.

- Joseph was Falsely Accused of Rape

- Naboth was Falsely Accused of Blaspheming God and speaking against the King.

- Nehemiah was Falsely Accused of Treason against the kingdom.

- Daniel and the Hebrew children were falsely accused of Disloyalty to the king.

- Jeremiah was Accused of being a Lying Prophet

- Jesus was Falsely Accused of being the Devil, Blasphemy, and High Treason against the nation of Israel.

- Paul was Falsely Accused of Blasphemy

- and on and on . . .
- He makes good use of people with no integrity, no honesty, and no ethics, and are perfectly happy to be so.

- Now we need to note, “how” they testified.
- Albert Barnes said it best, by saying it this way – “This was done not by declaring a palpable and open falsehood, but by perverting his doctrines, and by stating their own inferences as what he had actually maintained.....”

- They did use Stephen’s words, but attached their own meaning to them.

- vs 14 – “For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.”

- Stephen never said that . . . because Jesus never said that. Jesus said the “Gentiles” would come and destroy the temple . . . which they did.

- Jesus never said He would change the “customs” of Moses . he said He “fulfilled the law”

- The effects of the ministry of Jesus would be a glory to God, but a detriment to men.

- these men took the detriments to men and labeled them “blasphemous”

They used their own dictionaries . . .

- they called the Good of God evil

- they called the Effects of Christ’s ministry - Blasphemous

- they came and perverted the words of the Lord, the testimony of Stephen and the works

of the church, to use their Truths in a Deceptive way.

### III. The Dilemma for Opposing Forces

#### ***A. To deal with what they could not deny***

- 1.) “they could not resist his wisdom and spirit”

- 2.) vs 15 – “And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

The language people tell us that this is the same picture that we saw when the glory of God was on the face of Moses.

Now this was God’s testimony of Stephen saying, “he is not against Moses, he is LIKE Moses.”

- Now that being said . . .

When all arguments, all evidence, all light, all revelation, and all truth is known, clearly known, and before them . . . they knew it was true . . . they did not want it to be true!

It is not that they just “hate truth” they hate that what’s true IS true.

- Men have no power over the truth – and it is that, that reminds man of his helplessness, of his powerlessness, of his own slavery to reality . . . men are not God, and have no truth creating power, and it is maddening to them.

- It is this that condemns them.

It is beyond reason, and it is a mystery as to why when someone sees the truth rather than submit to it, become enraged by it.

Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10 – “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

