

Acts of the Holy Spirit  
“God of the Impossible” – Series

~LET'S PRAY~

NOTE TAKERS...

- I've titled todays message: **A Perfect Plan.**

~INTRO~

NOW...

- As we remember the big picture in (Acts)...
  - We've previously talked about the four big movements:
    - 1) Birth of the Church (Acts 1 – 7)
    - 2) Evangelism birthed after persecution (Acts 8 – 12)
    - 3) The beginning of global missions (Acts 13 – 20:2)
    - 4) Challenges of Church leadership (Acts 20:3 – 28)

OK...

- Let's back up to (Acts 1:8) where Jesus tells His disciples...
  - The scope of the mission – *they're to be witnesses.*

CHURCH THIS IS KEY...

- For understanding Stephen's life in this chapter.

THE GREEK WORD FOR *witnesses* = *martus* (mar-toos) [G-3144].

- **Defined as:**

*“One who believes so strongly in his faith, that he would give his life for what he believed.”*<sup>1</sup>

THIS CHAPTER... IS THE **TRANSITION**...

- Between the birth of the church...
  - AND the second phase of God's plan for the church – *evangelism.*

**HERE'S THE OPENING VERSES:**

- (Acts 7:1-6) NKJV.

STEPHEN'S... MENTION IN SCRIPTURE...

- Starts at (Acts 6:5) & quickly ends in (Acts 8:2).

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Smith. Acts Commentary (p.103), © 2013 by The Word for Today.

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BUT IT GIVES US A GLIMPS OF...

- The man he was – Stephen was:

- (Acts 6:3) “*full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom...*”<sup>2</sup>
- (Acts 6:5) “*full of faith and the Holy Spirit...*”
- (Acts 6:8) “*full of faith and power...*”

AND... THIS BECOMES IMPORTANT TO US...

- Because we learn from the impact of the early church.

EVERYDAY PEOPLE...

- Who were relying on the abilities of God over self.

~AS A CHURCH~

- We're approaching a new season.

- An opportunity for all of us to exercise faith...
  - In *a fresh way* is before us.

WE'VE HAD A LINGERING PROBLEM...

- With keeping a robust Children's Ministry / Youth Program...
  - And supporting a Nursing Mom's area.
    - All because of spacing needs.

IN FACT...

- Over the last year the evidence shows...
  - Young families coming in... they can't find a comfortable space...
    - And they go right back out.

SO...

- We're at the door... of a new step of faith.
  - To trust God for what we need OR remain unchanged!?!?

STEPHEN...

- Spoke to the community in Jerusalem about trusting God.

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<sup>2</sup> John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck © 1983. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament, (p.368). Published by David C. Cook.

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- He reminded them of God’s love in their past.
  - Along with, their *failures of faith*.

**IDEA #1 – FAITH REMINDERS FROM HISTORY:**

STEPHEN...

- Sets the stage by addressing the **big picture of FAITH**...
  - As he walked them thru their past:

- 1) The promise to Abraham
  - a. God appeared (v.2)
  - b. God spoke (v.3) & (v.6)
  - c. God gave a promise (v.5)
  - d. God initiated a covenant w/ Abraham (v.8)

SO... AS THE PLAN OF GOD UNFOLDS (v.8)...

- We get a glimpse of history:

- 2) Joseph & oppression in Egypt following his death (vv.9-16)
  - a. Famine Canaan & Egypt (v.11)
  - b. God’s promise drew near (v.17)
  - c. Oppression surfaced (v.19)

NEXT...

- 3) Deliverance under Moses (vv.20-43)
  - a. Tabernacle represented God’s presence (v.44)
    - i. Which stayed with Joshua (v.45)
    - ii. Which stayed with David (v.45)
- 4) Solomon built the 1<sup>st</sup> Temple (vv.48-50)
  - a. Which reflected God’s permanence with His people.
    - i. (2 Chronicles 7:1) NKJV

OK...

- The point of all these details from the past...
  - Brought the people right to “*Immanuel*” – God with us (Isa. 7:14).

YET... (vv.51-53)

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**IDEA #2 – REASON FOR THE HISTORY LESSON:**

STEPHEN...

- Gave the history of faith to confront their hardness of heart – (v.51).

NOW... LETS GO BACK AND NOTICE...

- That the *key points of rejection*...
  - All happened at intersections of change.
    - With Joseph @ (v.9)
    - With Moses @ (v.39)
    - With Jesus @ (vv.51-52)

**IDEA #3 – LEARNING FROM THE PAST:**

OK...

- Let's take a moment and digest what Stephen laid out.

GOD WAS ON THE MOVE...

- Lives were being changed...
  - People were being added to the church...
    - AND Israel's leaders still rejected the promise – Jesus!

Stephen became the first martyr of the church (vv.54-60).

- He was a true witness that went *All-In*.
  - AND his death fueled evangelism in the early church.

**~IN CLOSING~**

JESUS...

- Said it this way (John 8:31-41) NLT.