

Get Your Fingers Out of Your Ears

by Greg Locke

Greg Locke's sermon emphasizes the importance of removing spiritual barriers to fully hear and accept God's truth as exemplified by Stephen's bold preaching in Acts.

Duration: 48:18

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, 1 Samuel 16:7, 1 Kings 3:12, Acts 7:51, Acts 7:54

Topics: "Spiritual Deafness", "Biblical Preaching"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses why people, both physically and spiritually, stick their fingers in their ears and refuse to listen to the message of God. He believes there are three reasons for this behavior, which can be seen in the context of Scripture. The first reason is that people cannot handle the truth of the Scriptures and choose to ignore it. The second reason is that they cannot resist the spirit by which the message is delivered, as it is not just a memorized or academic presentation, but a passionate and convicting proclamation. The preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching the Bible within its context and prays to be true to the Word of God.

Transcript

The Bible says, When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked upstead fastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. He said, Behold, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord and cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes and a young man's feet whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Go back to verse 57 if you would please.

It will be our text tonight. Acts 7, 57. Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord.

Tonight, we begin our series of meetings with this simple message. Get your fingers out of your ears. Like everyone, you may be seated.

Let's bow our heads and hearts and let's pray and ask the Lord to bless our time together tonight. Get your fingers out of your ears. Now, Father, please help me as I preach tonight and throughout the week.

And Lord, I pray that you would help me as they listen to the Bible. And Lord, I have one heart's desire tonight, and that's not to be eloquent or necessarily to be a blessing, but to be emptied of self and filled with the blessed spirit of God that I might have your power upon me for the next few moments as I preach. And Lord, I'd be a very foolish and very haughty man, very haughty preacher to get in this pulpit and just try to preach some memorized sermon.

Father, tonight I need and I plead for the power of God and I pray that you would help me. Use the Word of God. We realize, according to Isaiah 55, that the Word of God will not return into your void, but it will accomplish that which you sinned against So Father, tonight, would you convict, would you convince, and would you comfort as only you can.

And we'll thank you, dear God, for everything that you'll say and do for it's in Jesus' name that we ask it and pray. Amen. You know your Bible well enough to know that the book of the Acts is the founding, the establishment, and basically the propagation of the early New Testament church.

From Acts 2 all the way through Revelation 22, verse 21, we have one great main New Testament emphasis. And that New Testament emphasis is the founding, the establishment, and the continuation of local New Testament Bible believing and Bible preaching churches. So in Acts 1, we see that Jesus Christ ascends up into glory as clouds receive Him out of their sight.

The disciples get all downcast and discouraged, but yet in verse 11, the Bible says that two men in white apparel stood standing there and said, You men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven? This same Jesus which ye see rising into heaven shall so come again in like manners ye have seen Him go. And then in Acts 2, when those men waited in the upper room upon God, we see that the rushing mighty Spirit of God came through that room and they all began to speak with other tongues. That was languages, not some kind of discombobulated mess that we hear in the charismatic movement today.

But yet the Bible says that God came down, that some man stood up to preach the Word of God named Peter, and thousands of people were converted by the grace of God. In chapter number 3 and chapter number 4, we see the ministry of the Apostle Peter and John. They're walking along.

One day they see a beggar. They said, Listen, we don't have any money, but we got one thing. Rise up and walk in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Bible said he got up and he began to go. He skipped him all the way back to the house and he was an excited man. Yet in Acts chapter number 5, we have a turn of events.

We have problems. Now here we have the very beginning of the church and you know the devil is just going to try to get up to bat and try to knock a home run for the devil's crowd. And he steps up and there's a man by the name of Ananias with his wife by the name of Sapphira.

I hear a lot as an evangelist in this movement that I referred to, the Pentecostal movement, the charismatic movement. They're always talking about being slain in the Spirit. Did you know that is a

biblical phenomenon? Acts chapter number 5, Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost and the Bible said they were slain by the fire of God.

So that's about the only time you'll ever see slaying in the Spirit in the Bible. But in Acts chapter number 6, we have a problem. You see, he could not wreck the church in Acts chapter 5, so he again steps up to bat in Acts chapter number 6. In Acts chapter number 6, the Bible says that the widows, these ladies whose husbands had passed away, they were arguing and bickering because during the daily ministrations they were not receiving the bread and the water that they were supposed to be getting as the widows of the church.

So the devil caused some contention. He caused some immaturity to rise up on the part of these elder ladies, if you will. And so these preachers got together and had themselves a little head-knocking conference and they said, now wait a minute, we've not been called to serve tables.

They were not saying we are too good to serve tables. They're just saying, listen, we're too busy. We need to give ourselves to the ministry of prayer and to the Word of God.

And so they appointed, as you know well, in Acts chapter number 6, deacons. Now these deacons had to have certain qualifications. The Bible said they had to be, if you read 1 and 2 Timothy and read the book of Titus, they had to be grave and sober and temperate and things like this.

But yet they have some very interesting applications, if you will, to go into the deacon body in Acts chapter number 6. The Bible says these men were full of the Holy Ghost. It says they were full of faith. It says they were full of wisdom, not worldly wisdom.

So the Bible says, be simple concerning that which is evil and wise concerning that which is good. But yet there was one young man who was appointed as a deacon in that first early local church who I would like to preach on tonight and that is the man Stephen. Look in your Bibles if you would please, back in Acts chapter number 6 where we began just a moment ago.

Acts chapter number 6 as we study his life and please look at verse number 8. And then we'll go to Acts chapter 7 and that's what will remain for the message tonight. Acts 6.8 The Bible says, and Stephen, full of faith and power, obviously the power of God, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Verse 15 please.

And all that sat in the council looking steadfastly on him saw his, that's Stephen's face, as it had been the face of an angel. Now go back in your Bibles to Acts chapter 7. I give you the thought we have our points and we'll be through. Acts chapter 7 verse 57 again.

Acts 7.57 Then they, that's these magistrates, that's these people who were listening to the preached word of God. Verse 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon him with one accord. In the past five years that my wife and I have traveled in evangelism, it's interesting, you hardly ever, if ever, there's maybe been an occasion or two when I've not paid much attention, but you hardly ever see people actually physically sticking their fingers in their ears and hollering out with a loud voice, Hush him up! Hush him up! I don't want to hear what he's got to say.

Now a lot of people have that idea. A lot of people no doubt have that cold, stony type of a heart and you don't see them sitting there in the pew in the back row, front row of the choir physically with their ears plugged up, but yet I believe a lot of people have their ears plugged up and they're just about as hard as

this pulpit right here and you can preach and preach and preach and pray and pray and pray and teach and teach and teach. You can kick off your shoes, loosen your tie, get red, white and blue all in the face and I mean you can holler and reek and rave and you can beat them over the head with the Bible but it's just about like speaking to that wall right there.

They just have their fingers in their ears and they're not going to listen to what you, they're not going to listen to what God, they're not going to listen to what anybody says. Why is it that people do that? How is it that some people can just kind of turn the Word of God on and turn the Word of God off? They can turn the preacher on, they can turn the preacher off. Why does the Bible say that these men cried with a loud voice, obviously they didn't want to hear the message, but why is it that all of a sudden these grown adults, these grown men who I'm sure were rather husky, busky fellas because they just stoned this fella to death in Acts chapter 7. Why is it that these grown men, these magistrates, these rulers in town act like a bunch of thumb sucking babies and stick their fingers in their ears and begin to whine and they will not listen to the message that Stephen brings them? Why is it that people physically or spiritually stick their fingers in their ears? I believe there's three reasons.

In the context of Scripture, they'll be very easy to see. I believe in preaching the Bible within its context, within the pages of the Word of God and I always pray that God will help me to be true to the Bible. I think we've got too much cheap preaching in America, we've got too much storytelling, too much Time Magazine, USA Today, and Reader's Digest preaching and we need to get back to the unadulterated, straightforward preaching of the Word of God.

So right out of the text, I give you three reasons that no doubt, according to the Holy Spirit right here in your Bible, why these men plugged up their ears and would not listen to the Word of God. Look in your Bibles please if you read at verse number 54. Verse number 54, Acts chapter number 7. Notice the phrase, when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart.

Now, number one, I believe the reason these fellows physically put their fingers in their ears and why spiritually many people do that is first and foremost, remember it or mark her down because of the truth of the Scriptures. Because of the truth of the Scriptures. I want to remind you what Stephen is doing.

He has just been appointed a deacon and in just a couple of short days as a young deacon, he stirred up so much controversy in this town that they even got false witnesses. I mean, they got NBC, ABC, Health Box Office, and Fox, and the rest of those crowds to come out with their little pens and paper in hand and they came out with the 5 o'clock and 10 o'clock nightly news and I mean, they lied about this fellow and they began to set up false accusations and they began to say that this guy was crooked and he was teaching customs which were contrary to the Bible. What they meant was he's teaching customs that are contrary to our tradition because they were more interested in their traditions than they were in the doctrines of the Word of God.

So he begins to preach boldly to them but yet the Bible says they could not resist the spirit by which he spake. That reminds me of 1 Corinthians 1. Here was a group of people that were always bickering and arguing. Here's grown ups who Paul said when you should be eating T-bone steaks for the glory of God, you're planting a sandbox.

He said, you're a bunch of immature babies. He said, some sound of Paul. They said, well, that ain't nothing.

I signed the card and I joined the church of Apollo. He said, hey, that ain't nothing, pal. I was saved and Osephus put me under and Paul said, listen, are you not carnal in your thinking? He said, some plant, some sow, some water, but it is God that giveth the increase.

He said, when I came to you, I came not to you with excellency of speech, but in the power and the demonstration of the Spirit of God. And I believe that is the preaching that Stephen had. What was he preaching about? Well, we don't have time to go back in our Bibles and study all of Acts chapter 7. But you study it sometime did you know for 52 verses in the Word of God, 52 consecutive verses, he preached basically all the way from Abraham all the way up until their present situation and called them murderers, called them blasphemers, called them ungodly and what a way to end your sermon and we'll see that in just a moment.

But he begins with Abraham. You remember Genesis chapter number 12, God comes down to a man who didn't even know who God was. He had a pagan father and the Bible says he came down there and God said, Abraham, I want you to get up and I want you to go to a land which I shall shortly tell thee of.

And by the way, he never got there according to the book of Hebrews. But nonetheless, he was looking for a city whose builder and maker was God. Now just put yourself just for a moment not in Abraham's position but ladies, why don't you put yourself in Sarah's position just for a minute.

Here's a man that is out one day chopping wood, whatever he's doing. God comes down and says, son, I want you to go to a land which I will tell thee of. So Abraham says, okay, how much clothes do I take? God says, take them all.

You're going on a long trip, son. Well, where exactly am I going? Well, I'll tell you when you get there but I'm not going to tell you until you do. Well, I need a compass? No, no, I'll guide you.

Do I need a map? No, no, I'll guide you. So can you imagine him ladies going into his wife? Can you imagine what he must have thought was going through the back of his head? Oh, she's going to hit the roof on this one. And so he comes walking in and he says, baby, get your clothes together.

We're going on a trip. Oh, wonderful, wonderful. Are we going on a cruise? Where are we going? We're going a long way from here so you might as well get your summer clothes and get your winter clothes and just get all your clothes.

And if you're anything like my wife who'd take 15 chariots just for the shoes in the closet, amen. And so she said, just get all the clothes and we're going to take them all. So she said, well, honey, I'll get all the clothes together.

I want to be submissive and obedient but where are we going? He says, well, that's just the whole fun of it, baby. We don't know where we're going. We're going to trust God.

She said, you're nuts what you're going to do. And he said, no, no, just come on, get the chariot and we're going to trust the Lord. So they're traveling around, don't have any idea where they're going but yet the Bible says because of his faith, God blessed him, the father of the Jews gave him more children than the stars in the sky and the sands of the seashore.

And so he begins with Abraham then he begins to preach on Isaac. You remember Isaac? Sometimes we think of him in Genesis chapter number 22 as a wee little kid that was being offered upon the altar. But no,

no, you study the Bible and you will find out that he was a full grown adult.

I'm sure he was in his twenties. And the Bible says that he was being offered up. You know the angel of God stopped him and said, Abraham, because of your love for me, I'll not cause you to do this thing.

So he preaches on Abraham's faith and obedience. He preaches on Isaac. He preaches on Jacob which was there one night, L-U-Z, a little place called Luz.

But when God was done with him, he said, this is Bethel. This is where I met with God. This is the house of bread.

This is the place of blessing. This is God's house. And he said, God's Spirit was here and I knew it not.

And that night he broke some oil, he put it upon a rock and the Bible says he put that rock up for a pillar or for an altar and his life was changed, his character was changed, his name was changed and a nation was changed. Then he begins to preach for a little while on Joseph. You talk about a scriptural, I mean in-depth Bible study, I mean Stephen was preaching the Word of God just point after point after point.

He begins to preach on Joseph there as he's thrown into the pit. And then he goes to the palace and then he goes down to Potiphar's house and then they throw him in the prison. And then he goes and he's Pharaoh.

He's Pharaoh's right-hand man. And he preaches about that and then he leads right into the fact that there arose a Pharaoh who was a man of God and for 400 years the children of Israel were in depraved bondage. I mean you talk about deplorable conditions, they were whipped, they had to make their own brick, their own mortar, all of that out of the slime pits of Egypt.

And then he begins to talk about the exodus. He begins to preach about Moses who was that great picture of Jesus Christ taking his children out of the bondage of sin, out of the bondage of Satan, out of the bondage of the world. And he preached how Moses went in there with a rod of God in his hand.

And he said, let my people go, let my people go. And 18 times the Bible says that Pharaoh's heart was hardened towards the things of God. But yet finally after the firstborn of every household was dead, and by the way, sometimes we read that and we think that just kind of entailed the little bitty children, but I will remind you that entailed some grown adults as well.

Just a while back, I don't know how long ago, maybe three or four weeks, I was reading that portion of Scripture of my devotions and something caught me that I'd never seen before. The Bible says, for there was not a house where there was not one dead in every single house in Egypt. Not the houses of the children of Israel.

Every single house in Egypt, the Bible says, there was not one dead. Finally, that was the last straw pulled out of the hat. He said, get them out of here, let them worship their God.

Then we find out they're backed up against the Red Sea. He said, stand still and see the salvation of God. And Almighty God used the faith of Moses and that rod of God, that rod of miracles to split the waters of the Red Sea like two elevator doors in a hospital building and they walked through on dry ground.

And he preached basically through the whole book of Exodus. The word Exodus means to exit or to come out of. That's what the book of Exodus is all about.

He then begins to preach after Moses, he begins to preach about David. King David, the man after God's own heart, the little shepherd boy who was anointed king. They looked at his brothers and said, oh, they would make good kings.

And Samuel said, no, sirree, Bob, that's the one that God had his hands on right there. So he preached through the reign of David. And then after David, he preached on Solomon for a little while, the wisest and richest man that ever walked upon the face of God's vineyard.

After he preached on Solomon, he then began to talk about the great Messiah that would come. He began to talk about the great handiwork of God. He preached on creation.

And I mean, you talk about a scriptural sermon this man preached from A to Z in 52 short verses in the Word of God. But I want to show you the conclusion of his sermon. Look in your Bibles, please.

Acts 7, verse 51. All right, preachers, don't ever try to close your message like this because it won't work. Verse 51.

He stiff-necked. And uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? He said, listen, fellas.

He said every prophet of God that came out with a message for your people, for your fathers, for all those wicked generations, he said, which one of them have they not persecuted? He said, man, listen, they put Isaiah in a log and chopped him in half. They tried to get rid of Jeremiah and Hosea and the rest of that crap. He said, you tell me right now, which one of the prophets have not you and your fathers tried to slay, tried to push away? He said, you resist the Holy Ghost just like your fathers did.

I'm sure that didn't sit well with him. Let me share what I mean. Look in verse 52.

Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the just one. You notice the capitalization there. We're talking about the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Of whom ye have now been the betrayers and murderers. These people are looking for the coming of the Messiah. We know they believe that Jesus was not the Messiah for John 1.11 tells us they came unto His home, but His home received Him not.

Thank God for verse 12. But as many as received Him, it then gave Him the power to become the sons of God. So they resisted Him.

They said, listen, you're not the Son of God. You're not God. You're not the prophet.

You're not the one the prophets were speaking of. For no good thing shall come out of Nazareth. Who are you? Who do you think you are to do all of these miracles? You're killing our Sunday school numbers.

And they rejected Him. And now Stephen gets up just a few short weeks after that whole incident had taken place, still fresh in their hearts, and he said, you know what? He said, you people are stiff-necked. He said, you are uncircumcised in ears and in heart.

He said, spiritually and physically you're lost as a ball in high weed. He said, and now you're a bunch of blasphemers. And you even murdered the just one whom your fathers persecuted the prophets for talking

about.

He said, you talk about this just one. You talk about the Messiah. And you talk about ending a message, friend.

I mean, he just about got to the place. I'm surprised they didn't jump on him right then. They gave a little bit more time in a couple of verses here.

But I mean, like a pack of hungry dogs, they jumped all over this. Man, you talk about a mean, scathing Bible sermon. He preached the Word of God to these people.

Then look what the Bible says in verse 53. Who have received the law by the disposition of angels. Now, the word angels there, we're not talking about little haloed animals or little haloed creatures and these little flappy wings and these little naked cherubims that you see all over Walmart and stuff like that.

That's not what we're talking about. The word angel here is a reference to messenger. It's the same word, a matter of fact, the word prophet is just a verse or so before.

He's dealing with the prophets of God. He's calling them angels, messengers of God. He said, listen, you bunch of rebels have received the law of God from prophets.

Then look what he said about the law of God. And have not guessed it. He said, you people are disobedient as the day is long.

He said, you are wicked and the most crooked, perverse generation that has ever walked the face of God. What a way to preach a Bible sermon. I mean, he gave it to them both barrels.

I mean, just a blazing. And then look what the Bible says in verse 54. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart.

So why did they plug up their ears? Number one, because of the truth of the Scriptures. They could not handle the truth of the Word of God. But you know why they could not resist the Spirit by which He spake? Because He didn't get up with a little five-point alliterated outline, three points in a form, whatever you want to call it.

He didn't get up with all the great hermeneutics and all the great homiletics. He didn't get up with his memorized message and just get up and say, okay, I'm going to tell you what I learned in Bible college. I'm going to tell you what I learned here and what I'm going to learn there.

He got up and boldly preached and proclaimed the Word of God and they could not say anything about it for they knew what this man was speaking was the truth. You know what? We're living in a day when people, no matter how old they are, no matter what their background is, no matter what their social or their marital status is, some people just do not want to hear the truth of the Scripture. They do not want to hear the truth of the Word of God.

For example, many people that I preach to do not want to hear the truth when it comes to the issue of salvation. You know, it's a pretty dead issue with me. The Bible says in John 14, 6, Jesus said unto them, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man cometh unto the Father but by me. I don't know about you, but I'm from Tennessee and that's pretty bold, down to the earth, logical, Cuban in language, don't you think? I mean, right there, black and white in your Bible. Matter of fact, in verse 6, I mean black, it's red because it's the words of Jesus Christ.

I mean, right there in the Bible, He said, listen, that's the only way you're going to go. You will go to the Father because I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. But some people don't want to hear that.

Some people enjoy their Buddha and some people enjoy their Muhammad and Confucius and the rest of that confused crowd around the world. Some people enjoy their way rather than God's way. And so here's a man that preaches the straight truth of the Word of God and the people do not want to hear it.

Some people don't want to hear the message or the truth of the Scripture when it comes to living in a sanctified or separated life. And so they have basically the same type of reaction. They have basically the same type of blistering up or bolstering up and getting mad because they're just not able to handle, they're just not able to digest the truth of the Scripture.

So this man did not come to them and say, let me tell you what I think. He said, let me tell you what God says. And the reason they could not resist His message is because He didn't preach on His doctrine.

He didn't preach on the traditions of the Baptist church that He grew up in. He didn't preach on the creed. He preached the Word of God and they stood there dumbfounded.

They were spellbound. They plugged their ears with their fingers and said, whoa, whoa, mister. We don't want to hear that and we're living in a day when people do not want to hear the truth of the Scripture.

I'm trying to get to my third point, so let's get to the second one. Look in your Bibles please now for the second reason that they would not listen to His message. Verse 54, it's right there in the same verse.

When they heard these things, what things? Fifty-two verses of the Word of God. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart. Number one, they plugged their ears because of the truth of the Scriptures.

Number two, for sake of an outline or for sake of alliteration, they plugged their ears because of the touch of the Spirit. They were cut to the heart by the continual convicting of the Holy Spirit of Almighty God. These men listened to what this man just said.

They heard about Moses and they heard about Abraham and they heard about Jacob and Joseph and Isaac. And they heard about Solomon. They heard about the Messiah.

And they just were come face to face like a man would look in a mirror with the fact that they're murderers, with the fact that they are blasphemers, with the fact that they crucified the Messiah, their only hope, mankind, humanity's only hope for the world. And they were just confronted with that. And the Bible says because of the truth of the Scriptures, what they heard, and because of the fact they were cut to the heart, they were not willing to repent, they were not willing to get right with God.

Now, there's always two responses that you can have to conviction. Lost people and saved people both need conviction and both of them can respond to conviction in one of two ways. They can either receive the conviction.

For a lost person, that means that God will bring them to a place of being saved. But they can also reject conviction. They do that long enough, what Jesus called Matthew 12, 32, the unpardonable sin.

But for a saved person, they can receive the conviction, can get right with God, or they can reject the conviction and they can be of all men most miserable as the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15. Obviously, by way of context, these men were lost. The Spirit of God showed him, hey, what this man is preaching is the Word of God.

What this man is preaching is his truth. Hey, this wasn't birthed out of Nashville, this wasn't birthed out of Ambassador, this wasn't birthed out of Greenville, this wasn't birthed out of Pensacola, this wasn't birthed out of Shittex. He said, listen here, this was birthed from the Word of God.

He said, what I just preached to you was God, holy, inerrant, without error, perfect Word of God. And these men heard that, they knew it was the truth, but they were not willing to listen to the truth of the Word of God. They were not willing to respond to that conviction.

And I think that some people are like preaching to a brick wall. I mean, you can tell some people the same thing over and over and over and over and over again, but if the Spirit of God does not first reveal to that person either their need for salvation or number two, their need to get right with God, get out of a hog pen, quit living a backslidden life, we can talk, preach, pray, yell, holler and scream all we good and jolly will please, but the fact is they have to do business with the Spirit of God themselves. And these people were no doubt under conviction.

They were cut as a knife would cut. They were cut deeply to the heart. What happened when they were cut to the heart? Keep reading your Bibles.

Let's see. Let's see what their response was. They were cut to the heart and gnashed on Him with their teeth.

I heard a man one time preaching Bible college. It doesn't make any difference to me. This is basically no doctrine to this, but I heard a man say what that means is that they just began to grit their teeth.

They were mad at the message that he was saying, but yet I have fun with that because the Bible boldly says they gnashed on Him with their teeth. It doesn't say they gnashed around Him. It doesn't say they gnashed because of Him.

It says they gnashed on Him with their teeth. So here are these people like a bunch of little babies. You know, you keep the nursery and all.

God bless nursery workers. I mean, we preachers think we've got problems. I'm telling you what's the truth.

I mean, nursery workers, they get it bad for Him. I mean, they've got to change diapers and they've got to fix this and they've got to do this and do this. And I'm telling you what's the gospel truth.

These people were a bunch of little babies in the nursery. I mean, gnashing on Him. I mean, biting this guy, sticking their fingers in their ears.

They were not going to listen to the message. They didn't care what He said. They didn't care what He did.

They didn't care how much conviction they were under. The Bible says they gnashed on Him with their teeth. Hey, look at this, verse 55.

But He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God and said, Behold, I see the heavens open, the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Look at the reaction when He said that. Then they cried out with a loud voice.

Boy, they didn't want to hear that. They tried to muffle out that noise. Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon Him with one accord, verse 58.

And cast Him out of the city. You see, it was kind of a thing of ill repute if you study Bible history. You'll find it wasn't a very nice thing to stone somebody in town.

So they'd take them to the next town and stone them over there. They didn't want blood all over their streets and they didn't want to break the law, if you will. They didn't want to be known as a violent society.

So they'd go to the next society and then just kind of crucify them out there and then stone them out there. We have this idea that they get up this little piece of granite or this little pea gravel out of the thing and they say, oh, bad boy, bad preacher. And they kind of throw a little thing and kind of hit him in the head and kind of flicks off.

He's like, stop it, guys. Let me preach a while. Hitting him with this little piece.

No, no. You study Bible history, you study the Word of God, I mean, they were for the good. I mean, these were papadogs.

I mean, a bunch of vicious people. They drug him out of the city, probably put him in some kind of potato sack or something like that. I mean, they tied him up real good, threw him out there in a ditch, picked him a big old stone and dropped it on his leg.

Then they picked up a stone and dropped it on his head. Then they picked up one and dropped it on his back and they dropped it all over his body. I mean, they were going after this man to the death.

They did not want to hear the message of the Word of God. So they drug him outside of the city to kill him. Now look what your Bible says, please, in verse number 58.

Cast him out of the city and stone him. And the witnesses, these false ones, by the way, is what your Bible says. These witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul.

I was reading that not long ago and I thought to myself, you know, Brother Duffy, this is probably the first time when Saul, who we reverently know in the Bible as the Apostle Paul, the greatest writer, the greatest evangelist, the greatest pastor, the greatest missionary outside of John the Baptist that ever lived. Yet the Bible says that right here, specifically, the Holy Spirit of God put words in the Bible because we believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Every word of God is perfect.

Every word of God is preserved for us. It's right there playing right in the Word of God. The reason it says that is because I believe this is the first time when the heart of Saul was really beginning to get stirred up.

God was preparing for what was about to happen two chapters later. And he was working in his heart. You know, man, wouldn't you have liked to have been Stephen? Think about something for a moment.

Here's a man that because of his death, he is used to convict the heart of a man named Saul who eventually becomes the Apostle Paul and at the judgment seat of Christ, Stephen will reap the dividends of the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Whoo! That's pretty good receipts from the grocery store, don't you think? I'm telling you what's the truth. Here's a man that laid down his life and through his death, another man learned how to live for the glory of God.

Look in your Bibles, if you would, please, now at verse 59. And they stoned Stephen calling upon God. Now, that doesn't mean while they were stoning him, they were calling on the Lord.

They were not saying, whoo! Praise be the Lord. No, no. Don't read it wrong.

Read it right. Stephen was calling upon the Lord. Alright? And they stoned Stephen calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, get this, he fell asleep. It doesn't even say he died.

It doesn't say anything about the brutality that was coming against him. As a matter of fact, if you study the Bible, you'll find that in verse 55 that his eyes were not fixed on the rocks. His eyes were not fixed on the fact that they were fixing to drag him out of the city and stone him dead.

His eyes were not fixed on the fact that these men were cursing him and that these false witnesses had brought these lying, wicked accusations against him. His eyes were not fixed on that, but the Bible says he looked steadfastly into heaven and he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Now, I'm going to be honest with you.

My Bible tells me in Hebrews 1, verse number 1, God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets. After these last days spoken to us by His Son by whom He hath appointed heir of all things and by whom also He made the world. You study that.

The Bible says He put all of His enemies under His foot like a footstool. He ascended and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This is the only time in my Bible I can ever find Jesus standing.

I'm going to be honest with you. My head is not theologically deep enough to understand all the ramifications of why Jesus was standing for Stephen, but I will say this. He's not going to stand for you then if you don't take a stand for Him now.

And here's a man that knelt down. He looked up. His eyes were not set on the lying tabloids.

His eyes were set on the glory of God, on the goodness of God. And the Bible says that he just physically fell asleep. And while he was dying, he said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and lay not this sin to their charge.

Doesn't that sound like somebody else you heard in your Bible? It sounds like Jesus Christ. Here's a man that walked with God and spoke with God and loved God so much that he even had the same response to his accusers as the loving Lord Jesus Christ did. But here's my main emphasis tonight.

I want you to look in your Bibles if you would. I want to show you the biggest reason why I believe these people plugged up their ears and would not listen to the message nor watch and heed to the ministry of Stephen. Verse 54, please.

When they heard these things... What's that? The truth of the Scriptures. They were cut to the heart. What's that? And they gnashed on him with their teeth.

But he... Who's that? That's Stephen. Verse 55. But he being full of the Holy Ghost looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

I believe the last reason that they plugged up their ears was because of the testimonies of Stephen. Even more than the truth of the Scriptures which they did not want. Even more than the touch of the Spirit which they desperately did not want to heed to.

But I believe even more than those God did not want God used the testimony of Stephen to convict these men of their dastardly, horrible deed which they were doing to convict them of their life to convict them and strip them of their self-righteousness and show them that they needed the lovely Lord Jesus Christ without a shadow of a doubt. What was his testimony? The Bible tells us. But he being full of the Holy Ghost.

I devil don't dare you go through your Bible sometime with a high letter in the New Testament. Twenty-seven books in your New Testament Bible. And you highlight how many times God said somebody was filled with the Spirit.

You highlight every single time God said in His Bible that somebody was filled with the Spirit and you'll come out of the book of Revelation and you'll be able to count them on one hand. One hand you'll be able to count all the people that God said were filled with the Spirit. You know what? Two times on that one hand we're talking about the same man.

The Bible says that his testimony was one of being filled with the Holy Ghost. Here's a man that knew what Ephesians 5, 18 and 19 was all about. And be not drunk with wine were in his excess but be filled.

You see what I mean? Be being filled. Now if God's gotta tell me to be filled obviously there's times in my life when I'm not filled. My wife by the way knows when those times are.

My Lord no doubt knows when those times are. My friends and closest associates and those who I go with they know when those times are. But the Bible says be not drunk with wine were in his excess but be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What happens when a person is filled with the Spirit? You will notice sometimes if you read Ephesians 5, 18 there's no period after that word Spirit. That means the thought continues into the next verse. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord. And I'm telling you ladies and gentlemen here is a man whose heart was fixed on the glory of God. His heart was not fixed on all the circumstances.

Why could this man endure something so grueling? Why could he go through all of this punishment? Why could he go through all of this torture and turmoil? Why is it that he did not respond viciously to his critics? I'll tell you why because here was a man that two times your Bible in two different chapters said without a shadow of a doubt in black and white he was filled with God's Spirit. Now I want to make a statement tonight and I classify myself as a statement along with everybody else. I do not know very many Christians who are really striving to be filled on a daily basis with His Spirit.

And I please furthermore say this. In the past five years we've been to this camp many times and I praise the Lord for it. We've been in many other camps around the country.

We've been in hundreds of meetings. We've been in all types of different Baptist churches. We've been in several Bible colleges and hundreds of Christian schools.

And I'm going to be honest with you I know very few preachers that are really filled. You know, if we use Acts chapter number 6 for the real qualifications for deacons most of our Baptist churches wouldn't have any deacons. If we use these qualifications for pastors for missionaries for evangelists for camp workers we wouldn't have very many of them running around the country either.

And I know very few people that have really been filled or at least want to be filled on a continual daily basis with the Holy Ghost of Almighty God. And you will know. Now you won't walk around gleaming like a flashlight and bragging about it.

You know, kind of like Nebuchadnezzar. You know, humility and how to obtain it. You can sign your book for it if you bought the back table type of deal.

No, no. You won't walk around and say look here I've been filled with God's Spirit. You're not going to walk around bragging about being filled with the Spirit of God.

It will be a humbling experience. It'll not be something you walk around and say, well look at me, fancy free. I've been filled with the Spirit of God.

And if you don't like it, well Tommy Rod, I've got it and you don't. Glory to God. You won't walk around like that for you.

Matter of fact, it will humble you when you're filled with God's Spirit. And you won't walk around with a proud, arrogant, cocky, self-righteous attitude. But you'll be a Stephen full of the Holy Ghost and you'll see what his attitude is like, don't you? And I'm telling you, we ought to daily, every single day of our life, strive to be filled with God's Holy Spirit.

We've let the charismatic so scare us about the Holy Spirit that we don't even want Him anymore. And I'm telling you, we need the Holy Spirit of God to fill us. He didn't come to thrill you and to chill you and to kill you and to kill you.

Bless God, He came to fill you. Jesus said, if I leave, I will not leave you comfortless. I will send another.

Why is that another supposed to come? To fill us. To fill us to overflowing fill my cup, Lord. Fill it up, Lord.

And I'm telling you, we need some people in this room who have a passion, who have a goal and have a desire to have said from God about them what God said about Stephen, He was full of the Holy Ghost. You know, we can get set off real quick. You know, people say, and I believe it, I preach it, sometimes we carry things over from our former life.

2 Corinthians 5, 17, old things were passed away, no doubt. But Paul did not say in Romans chapter 7, when I want to do good, I find in a law in my members. And I would do good, evil is present with me.

He furthermore went on to say, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. He said, in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing. Now you're always going to have a great, big, huge warfare between your flesh and

the Spirit of God.

Because our flesh no doubt wants to dictate, it wants to dominate, it wants to override with the Spirit of God. It says, no, no, give it up. Look yourself square dabbing the eyeballs in the mirror every morning and say, drop dead.

You're not going to be in control. The Holy Spirit is. And we're in desperate need of people who desire passionately to really be filled with God's Spirit.

Now I'm not talking about falling to the ground, barking like a dog, having your eyes roll back in your head and going with a worm all over the floor. I'm not talking about being silly. I'm talking about living a life that when people look at you, they can see exemplified in you that there is a person who has examined themselves, they have heeded to what the Scriptures say, they talk right, they act right, they live right, they walk right.

There is a person who is desiring to fear God, to be a Bible believer, not a hearer of the Word, but also a doer, James 1.22. And there's a person who wants to be filled with the Spirit of God. And people will know if you've been filled or not. It'll come out by the way that you talk.

It'll come out many times in our reactions. And as I was saying to you earlier, sometimes we carry things over. And before, say, on April the 17th of 1992, you talk about a hothead.

I mean, I could, pooh! I mean, I could fly off real quick. I mean, I was like a stick of dynamite with a very, very, very short fuse. Matter of fact, I didn't have a fuse.

Pooh! I just had a detonator stick, buddy. I'd just go out. And sometimes that detonator feeling gets to come back to me.

I'll tell you one of those times. I was driving back from Maine. Oh, I don't know.

It was the end of March, I guess, because the Robertsons were going to be meeting at our home church, Franklin Road Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. And March the 25th or the 30th, we were doing their spring revival campaign. And my wife, my wife and I had been in New England in the snowy weather for about a month and a half or two months.

And everybody always tells me, especially Brother Robertson, he gets up and says, look Greg, this is how you do this thing. He said, in January and February and the first part of March, you go to Florida. And he said, the rest of the time when it's sunny and it's nice, you go up there.

Well, that's fine, but that's when they want the meetings. And I'll be honest with you, I didn't have any other evangelist to contend with. I was the only one up there because everybody came to my meetings.

But anyhow, I was up there for about two months. And my wife said, listen, he said, I'm getting snow fever or sun fever. She said, it's about time that I go visit my grandmother.

And I said, you're right. I said, listen, I've got to go to Maine for another week and a half, two weeks. And I said, they tell me that it's about eight and a half feet of snow up there.

I know we came up here and we about drove the track wheels, whatever you call them things, off the snowmobiles. I mean, we tore Brother Don's all to pieces. But nonetheless, me and Brother Doe had a

good time when we came up here for the weekend, for the winter youth retreat.

So I said, okay. Well, I flew into Texas and me and the poodle dog, Shepard, amen. And we got in the truck and I left the trailer in Rhode Island.

Make a very, very, very long story, very short. But I got up there and I freaked two weeks in Maine. I left on a Friday night at about, oh, I don't know, maybe 9.05, 9.15 from the New Hope Baptist Church of Farmington, Maine.

And on Friday night, we started a revival meeting that Sunday morning at Franklin Road. It was about 28 hours. And so, man, I got down there as quick as I could.

I was driving. I went and picked up my trailer. It was about two o'clock in the morning.

I hooked that thing up. Drove 28 and a half straight hours. I mean, I didn't sleep a lick.

I ate a little here and there. I mean, just drinking and driving. And I'd stop and get fuel and move on.

Stop and get fuel and move on. Stop and get fuel and move on. I was driving through Virginia on Interstate 81.

If you've ever done any driving, I want you to know that Interstate 81 is the loneliest, most wicked, vile section of Interstate in all of America. I mean, there is nothing there. I mean, it's just lonely.

So, I'm driving down the road and I hop on the cell phone and I call a good friend of mine, Pastor Eddie Hawks, outside of Royal Oak, Virginia. And I said, I said, I said, why don't you meet me at a show and so and so at this exit? He said, okay, I'll be there. So, I pulled up.

He pulled up. At the same time, we had ourselves a nice bite to eat. I checked the trailer out to make sure everything's all right.

I said, I've got a long way to go down 81. Hop over on 40 and get down to Tennessee. And I was excited about preaching in the home church and all, but I'll be honest, I was getting tired.

I mean, I was getting weary and well done. So, I'm driving down the road. I don't know, I'd been just kind of quiet for a little bit and I'd been listening to a preaching tape and I turned it off and I just began to talk to the Lord.

I believe that's all right. I think you can have revival anywhere. Hey, Jonah had one in the middle of a fence so I believe I can have one in the front seat of a truck.

Amen. So, I was driving down the road and I went on a praise campaign. I mean, I just began to praise God for everything I could think of.

Praising for this and praising for that. But I got excited and got to preaching that place, got to shouting, swerving all over the road with that big old rig. You know, I got to hollering.

Oh, I mean, just getting into having a good old time. I thought I was going to have to have windshield wipers on the inside of the truck. Man, I was just sitting happy.

And I'll be honest, the people who drive by look at me like I'm a nut. You know what I mean? They're looking at me like I'm crazy. You know, I didn't care.

Hey, man, I was waving at them while holding up my Bible. Oh, I was just having a glory fit. So, I'm driving down the road and I'm praising God.

I'm praying. Men, the tears are just a-flowing. I mean, the snot's just a-rolling out of my face.

I mean, I'm just weeping. I mean, I'm praying for the power of God and I'm praying for this upcoming meeting. I mean, I'm having a spell just enjoying God.

Really. Well, I stopped after, I don't know, about 15, 20, 30 minutes. I don't know.

I talked to the Lord, you know, I kept going down the road and honestly, here's what I thought to myself. I thought, you know what? I feel like I'm on cloud nine. I don't think I'll ever get mad again for the rest of my life.

Man, I made sure I was going the speed limit. I was so spirit-filled I could taste it. I mean, I knew I'd been with God.

You know, I don't believe in all this audible voice business, but honestly, it was almost like He just moved right in the truck and just sat right down beside me. I'm telling you, it was sick. I was excited.

So, I'm driving down the road and man, I'm so spirit-filled I can't even hardly stand it and this nut comes flying up behind me. I mean, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, I have a compassion for 18-wheel truck drivers nowadays when I pull that big 40-foot travel trailer. I mean, end-to-end truck, in front of the truck end of the trailer, I guess, you're probably about 53, 54 feet long.

My trailer empty is 18,000 pounds with all by wife's boy's bears it must weigh 25,000. I've got a 1-tone diesel truck and so I've got all this stuff in here so I'm guaranteeing I'm going 24-25,000 pounds down the road and this guy pulls up behind me And so, honest, I'm in the left lane, and I want to be cordial, so I'm trying to get over, but there's a truck beside me, and he won't let me. And so, I'm slowing down a little bit, and this guy's behind me.

Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep. I mean, he's just honking that horn, and I'm mousing up, and so I'm thinking to myself, I just spent time with God. I'm going to be Spirit-filled about this.

And so, I put my blinker on, and I pulled over to the side of the road, and I waved there in my mirror, and I was just as cordial, just as nice as you've ever seen your life. Boom! This guy come flying up by me, and I thought to myself, now look at that. Boy, is that that bad? Boy, he flips his dome light on, and he starts giving me all kinds of sign language and hand gestures and things, and I'm thinking to myself, whoa, okay, is that right? And so, he pulls over in front of me, and I'm thinking to myself, that's all right.

I'm going to be Spirit-filled about this, man. I mean, I was juicing it for all this work. This guy pulls over in front of me, and over the door, he pulls this trailer.

What do you say, about 60 miles an hour, kid, something like that. Hey, 57 miles an hour. I called him about five and a half hours one time.

We left Mankato, Minnesota. We was going to do a meeting at Rockford, Illinois, at North Slovakia's church, and I never got out of fourth gear in my truck. But, nonetheless, he's going about, he likes to go about 50 miles an hour, about 60 miles an hour, about 58, 60 miles an hour.

But, I like to just put the thing on cruise control, and I figure, hey, I got this big old fire stroke diesel. I just let the thing go. So, I go down the road about 70, 75 miles an hour.

I'm just whipping and zipping, you know. This guy whips over in front of me, and locks up his brakes in front of me. Yeah, that's right.

I mean, he locks them up right in front of me. He locks them up. I thought to myself, this guy is a blooming idiot.

He's a moron, if I've ever seen it. And, so, all of a sudden, I mean, I'm coming right to the back of this guy. I lock her down, buddy.

I put in the clutch. I throw that thing down in low gear. All the way down the interstate.

And, this whole time, I was thinking to myself, yeah, hallelujah, I've been spending time with God. I'm pretty good about that. So, he set up, and I set up.

He got to the top of the hill. I got to the top of the hill. Now, getting up a hill is a little difficult.

It's like, going down a hill, buddy, you can get all the speed you want. He's in the right lane. That's my lane.

And, so, I put that thing in high gear. I'm going down that hill just as fast as you can get around. I put that thing in fifth gear.

I get right up on him about three or four feet from him. I turn my lights on high. I start tooting the horn and blinking the lights back and forth.

I thought I'd give him a taste of his own medicine. If I've ever told the truth, I'm telling right now in this pulpit. It was almost like the Spirit of God grabbed a hold of me and said, Son, I thought you were so Spirit-filled you wasn't going to get mad anymore.

I thought you were so Spirit-filled you wasn't going to get upset. And, out loud, God is my witness. Here's what I said.

I said, Dear God, You let this man pull off the side of the road. I will pull off behind him and beat him to death in the name of God and be filled with the Spirit the whole time. I'm telling you what's the truth.

You've never seen some preacher so mad. I mean, I believe I can spit nails into a two-by-four. I mean, I went from praising God to shouting and praising the devil.

I was like, I can't believe this nut. I'm blinking my lights and honking my horn. He just moved on down the road, just kind of got on his way.

And, I got to thinking about that and I thought to myself, Here I was just a few minutes earlier, begging for the power of God, and look how quickly He set the fuse off. Now, let me ask you a question. Do you really want to be filled with God's Spirit? We're going to have to get our flesh under control if we are.

Two weeks ago, the Robertsons were with us at the White House Baptist Church. And, I preached Wednesday night, excuse me, Monday night. I preached on what does it really mean to be saved.

I preached at this camp two or three times. What does it really mean to be saved? Preached on conviction, preached on making a choice, and preached on God making a change. Simple message.

Man, we had a good time that night. We had some other people there, had another pastor from the Revival Baptist Church across town. And, I mean, it was a good spirit.

People were saying amen. Amen's aren't everything, but I mean, they help every now and then. And, I mean, it was just a good spirit.

I mean, the people were singing. I mean, the pastor was encouraged because Brother Robertson, I mean, he was just pulling out the people. They sang loud already, but I mean, he was just pulling them out.

And, it just sounded pretty, you know, and everything was going well. I mean, a lot of people were coming out of this little old church. But, I mean, for them, I mean, they were just bringing them out.

And, I mean, it was great. Man, I got through just preaching and ripping and snorting and sweating and having my supper time. I mean, things were happening, you know, and this little girl got saved that night.

And, I mean, this other guy raised his hand, and I knew the Spirit of God was working on him, but he wouldn't come. And, other people came, young people, older people came. They were playing and weeping on the altar.

I mean, it was just a good meeting. It really was. I went back to the tape table, and I was selling some tapes on my table as soon as the meeting was over.

I hadn't even been out of the pulpit eight minutes. They closed and prayed. I took my water bottle back there.

I hadn't even been out of the pulpit eight minutes. My wife had an ear infection. It messed her ears up.

It messed her teeth up. I mean, it was bothering her. It was hurting her.

She came back there. She said something to me. And, I don't remember everything it was now, honey, but I mean, it was just something about the fact that when I was talking in the back, that it was loud.

When everybody was coming by, shaking hands, and everybody was kind of loud, and she said, because everything's been amplified. When she said that, I thought she was referring to everything that had happened in the service. I thought she was referring that the preaching was too loud.

I thought she was referring that the music was too loud, and that everything was too loud. And, so, when she came back there, I just sat on the pulpit. I mean, I just stepped out.

And, I'm back there shaking hands. God bless you. God bless you.

Come again. Here's a special on the tapes. Amen.

Don't miss that. God bless you. God bless you.

Shaking hands. And, she came back there and said something to me. Boom.

There it goes. And, I had got out of the pulpit from preaching the Bible message. I'm going to tell you something, friends.

How bad do you really want to be filled with God's Spirit? You're going to have to get that attitude under control. You're going to have to get that tongue under control. You're going to have to get rid of that bitterness, that anger, that gossip, that clamor, and that evil speaking.

My Bible tells me two times. But, he being full of the Holy Ghost. And, these men saw somebody, no doubt, for the first time in their lives, who was really filled with God's Spirit.

And, it bothered them so much, they could not listen to the message that he preached. They could not look at him without being angered and bitter. And, they stoned him to death because of his testimony.

Because of the fact that here was a real man that proved it can be done. He was full of God's Spirit. What's your passion like in life? Do you plug your ears against the truth of the Scriptures? What about the touch of the Spirit of God? Are you willing to do what God tells you tonight and throughout the week? Do you have the testimony of Stephen that he was filled with the Holy Ghost? And, I say to you tonight on the authority of the Word of God, get your fingers out of your ears.

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