

Striking Forgiveness

August 23, 2015

Vol. 5 Num. 34

Acts 7

By Kirk Gambrell

Using This Study

① EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Open your time with prayer. The words God uses to communicate matters, so go back and pay close attention to the details that are emphasized or repeated in the passage.

② EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN? Asking questions of the text helps surface how the details relate to the message God wants to communicate.

③ EMBRACE His Word

Why does it MATTER to me? Embrace God by responding to what you discover in His word in faith and obedience.



In chapter 7 of Acts, we see Stephen giving his defense before the Council. He is very careful to say that he is not introducing anything new. He still believes in all of the Old Testament. The Old Testament has always pointed to a Messiah to come. When Stephen gets through confirming his belief in the history of the Jewish people and how God has worked through them, he points out where the Jewish people have rebelled. Hearing about their rebellion is difficult, but when Stephen claims that Jesus is the awaited Messiah and that He is alive today and at the right hand of God, they could not take it. Stephen then full of the Holy Spirit proclaims Christ only to become the first martyr .



EXAMINE His Word (Observation)

What does God SAY? Prayerfully note significant details and terms emphasized in the passage.

Read Acts 7 (NET)

¹Then the high priest said, "Are these things true?" ² So he replied, "Brothers and fathers, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our forefather Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he settled in Haran, ³ and said to him, '*Go out from your country and from your relatives, and come to the land I will show you.*' ⁴ Then he went out from the country of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God made him move to this country where you now live. ⁵ He did not give any of it to him for an inheritance, not even a foot of ground, yet God promised to give it to him as his possession, and to his descendants after him, even though Abraham as yet had no child. ⁶ But God spoke as follows: '*Your descendants will be foreigners in a foreign country, whose citizens will enslave them and mistreat them for four hundred years. ⁷ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,'* said God, '*and after these things they will come out of there and worship me in this place.*' ⁸ Then God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision, and so he became the father of Isaac and circumcised him when he was eight days old, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs. ⁹ The patriarchs, because they were jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt. But God was with him, ¹⁰ and rescued him from all his troubles, and granted him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. ¹¹ Then a famine occurred throughout Egypt and Canaan, causing great suffering, and our ancestors could not find food. ¹² So when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there the first time. ¹³ On their second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers again, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. ¹⁴ So Joseph sent a message and invited his father Jacob and all his relatives to come, seventy-five people in all. ¹⁵ So Jacob went down to Egypt and died there, along with our

ancestors, ¹⁶ and their bones were later moved to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a certain sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem. ¹⁷ But as the time drew near for God to fulfill the promise he had declared to Abraham, the people increased greatly in number in Egypt, ¹⁸ until another king who did not know about Joseph ruled over Egypt. ¹⁹ This was the one who exploited our people and was cruel to our ancestors, forcing them to abandon their infants so they would die. ²⁰ At that time Moses was born, and he was beautiful to God. For three months he was brought up in his father's house, ²¹ and when he had been abandoned, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. ²² So Moses was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds. ²³ But when he was about forty years old, it entered his mind to visit his fellow countrymen the Israelites. ²⁴ When he saw one of them being hurt unfairly, Moses came to his defense and avenged the person who was mistreated by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵ He thought his own people would understand that God was delivering them through him, but they did not understand. ²⁶ The next day Moses saw two men fighting, and tried to make peace between them, saying, '*Men, you are brothers; why are you hurting one another?*' ²⁷ But the man who was unfairly hurting his neighbor pushed Moses aside, saying, '*Who made you a ruler and judge over us?*' ²⁸ *You don't want to kill me the way you killed the Egyptian yesterday, do you?'* ²⁹ When the man said this, Moses fled and became a foreigner in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons. ³⁰ "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the desert of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush. ³¹ When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and when he approached to investigate, there came the voice of the Lord, ³² '*I am the God of your*

forefathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Moses began to tremble and did not dare to look more closely.³³ But the Lord said to him, *‘Take the sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’*³⁴ *‘I have certainly seen the suffering of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to rescue them. Now come, I will send you to Egypt.’*³⁵ This same Moses they had rejected, saying, *‘Who made you a ruler and judge?’* God sent as both ruler and deliverer through the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush.³⁶ This man led them out, performing wonders and miraculous signs in the land of Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.³⁷ This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, *‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brothers.’*³⁸ This is the man who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors, and he received living oracles to give to you.³⁹ Our ancestors were unwilling to obey him, but pushed him aside and turned back to Egypt in their hearts,⁴⁰ saying to Aaron, *‘Make us gods who will go in front of us, for this Moses, who led us out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what has happened to him!’*⁴¹ At that time they made an idol in the form of a calf, brought a sacrifice to the idol, and began rejoicing in the works of their hands.⁴² But God turned away from them and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets: *‘It was not to me that you offered slain animals and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, house of Israel?’*⁴³ *‘But you took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Rephan, the images you made to worship, but I will deport you beyond Babylon.’*⁴⁴ Our ancestors had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as God who spoke to Moses ordered him to make it according to the design he had seen.⁴⁵ Our ancestors received possession of it and brought

it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our ancestors, until the time of David.⁴⁶ He found favor with God and asked that he could find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob.⁴⁷ But Solomon built a house for him.⁴⁸ Yet the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands, as the prophet says,

⁴⁹ *‘Heaven is my throne,
and earth is the footstool for my feet.
What kind of house will you build for me,
says the Lord,
or what is my resting place?’*
⁵⁰ *‘Did my hand not make all these things?’*

⁵¹ “You stubborn people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit, like your ancestors did!⁵² Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold long ago the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become!⁵³ You received the law by decrees given by angels, but you did not obey it.”
⁵⁴ When they heard these things, they became furious and ground their teeth at him.⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently toward heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
⁵⁶ “Look!” he said. “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”⁵⁷ But they covered their ears, shouting out with a loud voice, and rushed at him with one intent.⁵⁸ When they had driven him out of the city, they began to stone him, and the witnesses laid their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul.⁵⁹ They continued to stone Stephen while he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”⁶⁰ Then he fell to his knees and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” When he had said this, he died.

1. Who is involved in the text? Author, audience, main characters.
2. Where and when is this taking place? Geography and timeline.
3. What actions are carried out or commanded? Look for the verbs.
4. Is there anything repeated?
5. What is emphasized?
6. Is there anything in this passage that is related to other areas of scripture?
7. Are there things to be noted that are alike or unlike such as similes and metaphors?

🕒 EXPLORE His Word (Interpretation)

What does God MEAN?

8. Why did Stephen share so much Jewish history when he was before the High Priest?

9. Did Stephen believe anything different about Jewish history than the High Priest did?

10. What did Stephen eventually say that caused the people to stone him?

11. Why do you think God allowed Stephen to be stoned to death?

12. Where else have we heard words similar to what we see in verse 60?

③ **EMBRACE His Word (Application)**

Why does this MATTER to me?

13. Just like Jesus, Stephen never stopped loving the people even when they were killing him.
When is it hard to love the people around you?

14. What would it take for us to show the same radical love that Stephen had?

15.a. What was Stephen's motivation for having such a radical love?

b. What is our personal motivation to love as Christ loved?

Summarize your thoughts on the passage:

Write about what God wants you to KNOW, to FEEL, and to DO...

SERMON NOTES