

Full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2)

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Acts chapter 2, we'll read the first four verses.

The first verse of the second chapter of the Acts. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. There appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Then would you turn over to the sixth chapter. Naturally, I would like to read much more than this, but our time is so limited, I feel [00:01:01] you'll excuse me in reading extracts of the matter I wish to bring before you. The sixth chapter of the Acts, verse 1.

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith [00:02:01] and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon of Palmyras, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch, whom they set before the apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and the great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines and Cyrenians and the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake.

Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against [00:03:01] Moses and against God.

And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and came upon him and caught him and brought him to the council, and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against the holy place and the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

And all that sat in council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken.

The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charon, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred [00:04:07] and come into the land which I will show thee.

And coming down this same chapter to the 51st verse, we've read the opening remarks of Stephen's speech.

I haven't time to read it all. I'd like to, but I beg you to do so at your liberty after this meeting. Verse 51, here comes this great orator to the end of what he had to say.

Verse 51, Ye 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?

And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the just one of whom ye have [00:05:06] been now the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the disposition of angels and have not kept it.

When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

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 opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. 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 at a young man's feet whose name was Saul. They stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

[00:06:05] And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. When he had said this, he fell asleep, and Saul was consenting unto his death. At that time there was a great persecution against the church, which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church.

May God bless the reading of his word.

The brother who spoke this afternoon raised a minor objection to being announced. I want to say how glad I am he was announced, because I came in here today quite sure I [00:07:02] knew who was going to speak, and I found I'd named the wrong man.

Strangely enough, though I've known his name for years, I don't think we've ever met. I haven't spoken to him directly yet.

But I am encouraged, because I thought for one horrible moment he was going to open up exactly the subject that has exercised me for the last few weeks in respect to this very night.

You may feel as we go along that somehow, and I'm encouraged in this, that we've been very closely on the same lines of our thoughts, though we live so far away, and as far as I know, have never seen each other, nor yet spoken to each other face to face. [00:08:04] Full of the Holy Spirit.

That is what concerns me tonight.

And in the third chapter, I beg your pardon, in the third verse of the sixth chapter of the Acts, this was one of the conditions, or one of the requirements, that the apostles made that men should be found, seven of them, full of the Holy Spirit.

These men were to attend to the work of distributing things to these early believers who were in need. A little before this history begins, as you know, there'd been the most wonderful event in the whole of, oh history is too small a word, the most wonderful event, the crucifixion [00:09:09] of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Jerusalem, at least at the side of its wall, they put the Prince of Life to death. And God's answer to that was a succession of staggering events.

Because though the enemy may have thought he'd triumphed in bringing this one down to death, he made a very grave mistake if he thought he could claim such an honor in victory. Because this one who died, as you know, was raised by the glory of the Father. His resurrection had followed within three days.

[00:10:01] And his ascension had followed, and the Lord was now in heaven.

And consequent upon that, the Holy Spirit had been sent down.

This was in fulfillment of the promise that the Lord Jesus Christ had made to his disciples in that 14th chapter of John, he said, if I go, I send you a comforter.

This was in fulfillment of the promise made that they would be endued with power from on high.

This was in fulfillment of a promise that the Father would give the Holy Spirit. And in those verses, in

the second chapter of Acts, which we've read, was the event of the giving of the Holy Spirit of God.

[00:11:01] We'll come back to that a little.

Now in this sixth chapter, because this is really where I want to start, there had been some strife in the church.

How deep? I don't know.

But there had been trouble.

This was due to the fact that they'd got a racial difficulty on their hands.

And we in England are beginning to learn what a terrible thing this is. Though they were all Jews at this moment, there was a company that had been overseas at the dispersal and had drifted back into Jerusalem and possibly lived in their various colonies round the place.

And it was on the preaching of Peter that they were converted and brought into the church. [00:12:04] That strife showed that from the beginning, this church had something of imperfection in it as long as it was down here.

When the Holy Spirit came, on that one occasion, when there were 120 disciples gathered together with one accord in the upper room in Jerusalem, when there was that rushing wind, that token of fire, that gift of the Holy Spirit, that Peter said, this is what God promised, a pouring out of the Holy Spirit, it was once and it was once for all, something new had happened. There was now a man in the glory, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there was God on earth amongst men.

[00:13:05] In his disciples, the Holy Spirit took his abode.

It happened on the very day of Pentecost.

When is the high priest that attended to his business, and one thinks of the high priest as recorded in the scripture of almost doing anything but attending to his business. If he'd attended to his business on that first day of the week, 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he would have been engaged in the feast of the first fruits offering with his two loaves and all that went with it of offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings. He would have been busy waving before God the two loaves.

[00:14:01] And if you go back to the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, you will find that these loaves had been baked with leaven.

Now it's often said, I've heard it myself, that there's never leaven in any sacrifice or offering made to God. Here is the exception. Those loaves were baked with leaven. Those loaves, figuratively, speak to you and me of the church.

I believe of Christ and the church, but of the church. And as that comes before God in remembrance, we've got to admit that there was some degree of error and impurity, call it sin.

But here it was, the leaven had bubbled up in the sixth chapter, and there was dissent and dispute.

But God had his means and God had his men to deal with that.

And if we only obey him, God has his means as well as his men to deal with every difficulty [00:15:08] that can arise in our companies in the church.

So the disciples said, those 12, well we don't intend to leave our prayers and our ministry of the word.

I think we ought to note that in that verse 4, they put prayers before ministry. And may I say, as an aside, is not this the secret of effective ministry?

That there's that session of prayer, there's that life of prayer, that makes a ministry effective by the grace of God. So they said, this prayer and ministry that is ours, we must call in help.

And as I've said, God had his men.

[00:16:02] They said, choose, and note this well, choose seven men with three qualifications, honest report, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of wisdom.

I wonder if we could find seven men like that amongst us tonight.

This shakes me very considerably, of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit, and wisdom.

And there was a man who stood head and shoulders above everyone else, his name, Stephen.

Look at him.

There seems to have been common consent as well as common assent on the part of the apostles that here was a man who registered up to these three requirements. [00:17:05] He was a man of honest report.

Now the Bible always answers its own questions.

It tells us in the 11th chapter of Hebrews that it was by faith that the elders got a good report, and that puts the pointer onto the secret of Stephen.

He was a man of faith.

I'm swayed towards the idea that he'd been a man of faith before the Holy Spirit had descended, probably before the Lord himself had died.

He was a man from overseas, so we believe because of his name.

He was a man who was a Jew, but he was a man of faith.

And it was that faith, like the elders, they got a good report through faith. [00:18:03] And I would say it's

the only way.

I see in our audience there's some boys and girls here at school. So what they want at the end of the term is a good report. That's what I worked for. I once got one.

It was towards the end of my school days. Let me put it on record.

By that time I'd found that the more time I spent day by day in private prayer, the more time I devoted to the study of the scripture, the better was my school report on general subjects.

God is faithful, and this is how to get a good report. It is done by faith.

But a good report is a man of good, solid character that when folk mention his name, they say, the ideal man for the job, he was Stephen. [00:19:02] He was full of the Holy Spirit.

Let me leave that without comment at the moment, because I want to enlarge upon it later. He was full of wisdom.

All great men are not wise, there is a saying, and how true it is. He was full of wisdom.

Well, the fear of the Lord is a beginning of wisdom.

There's something else that emerges here. In verse 5, Stephen and seven others, they're given their names.

Those names are all Greek names, or Grecian names, which makes one, or all, agree that it is most likely that these were seven of these foreign-born Jews, the very people of [00:20:01] Israel. People who'd been complaining had been elected, their representatives had been elected to straighten out the difficulty, and I think that was a marvellous act of grace and kindness on the part of those who were Palestinian-born and felt themselves perhaps one degree higher than their overseas brethren, some of whom, remember, couldn't even speak Hebrew. Now we come to verse 5.

The fifth verse says that this man, Stephen, was a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. He was a man who was characterised by these two things.

It meant this, that when he acted, people obeyed. [00:21:02] When he spoke, people listened, because God was working through him all the time, and he was given the work of distribution, of heading that team.

But if you come to verse 8, you'll find that these two inner qualities, that he was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, distill down to this.

When I say down, I don't mean in lower category, but they distill to this, that the best translators say that in verse 8 you find Stephen full of grace, not faith, grace and power. And so it seems, as we read these two verses together, that this man, who could be identified as a man who was full of faith and the Holy Spirit, when he came to act, he was full of [00:22:09] grace and of power.

These things, if you think of them, are conflicting.

You find a man who's very, very gracious, and the world push him at one side. But not so in divine things.

Grace goes with power.

The faith that he had was distilled in him into that grace, an attribute of grace. To God himself, grace and the Holy Spirit was the power that enabled him to do whatever came to his hand, whether it were menially, to serve at the tables in distribution, or [00:23:02] he'd excelled now, hadn't he?

Although he'd been appointed to do some certain work, he was now working under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit himself. It wasn't the meeting, the gathering, the apostles who commissioned Stephen to go and do these mighty wonders and miracles that we see him doing in verse 9.

This was the outflowing of the power and the wisdom resident in him, the direct result of faith and the presence of the Holy Spirit. This man is a remarkable man, and I think we would do well to look at him in some detail. Well, there is a principle, you know, and I speak to my younger brethren for a moment. [00:24:06] In 1 Timothy 3.11, it says, for they who abuse the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, etc.

Now what everybody wants in this life is a degree. I work amongst people who unless you've got a degree, well, you aren't worth talking to or asking anything of. But as an undergraduate, the servant of God, in the lowly work that has to be done, that your brothers and sisters may well say, we'd like you to do this, you've got the ability to do it, it's your responsibility from now on.

Those who work like that are going to be honoured later, and I venture to say, there's not a [00:25:01] servant who's done a brilliant outside job of work that people can admire, whether it is preaching or teaching, but has known what it is to do the rubber-dub work when given the job by their brethren.

But that's a vastly different thing from where Stephen is working in this ninth verse. He was a man whose power and wisdom was going to display itself. It was explosive. It had to go, because God was behind it. And so the miracles and the great signs, and then something else, the reasoning. What was he reasoning about? He was reasoning about the scripture. Look, this man knew his Bible. What was written up to then had been committed to memory by [00:26:03] Stephen. Hours he'd spent with the midnight oil, studying the characters of the scripture, comparing one with another, turning to God and saying, what does it mean? What does it mean for me?

May I say, very humbly, that there's none fit to go forward unless they know what it is to study the Word of God. Some of the most exquisite hours that I can remember were spent in what I would call the spare room of my father's home where nobody ever went in. And that became heaven on earth as one read the scripture and as one prayed. Stephen had done just that at some time in his life, so that when the day came and God put him forward [00:27:06] as a labourer, he showed that he had the excellence that God needed for a servant at that time. Who was he disputing with? He was disputing with the doctors of the day. He was disputing with those who knew what they were talking about when it came to pharisaical tradition and what the Sadducees taught and what the scripture said. But if you read down your Bible here, you'll find that in dispute or reasoning on the scripture, he was irresistible. It wasn't the arguments of men. It wasn't theology. It wasn't rhetoric, though he may have used those things. But what it was, was a display of the power of the Holy Spirit [00:28:01] taking up

this man and what he had and using him as he would according to the dictate of the Holy Spirit of God without the intervention of any other man, prophet or priest or apostle. Now, what gave Stephen this supremacy? You don't find him mentioned in the four Gospels. He's not mentioned by name in the first chapter of the Acts, nor yet in the second. Was he in that company of 120 in the upper room who received the fall of the Holy Spirit? I don't know. He was probably amongst those many devout men who were in Jerusalem who stood and listened to Peter and he was convicted because Peter said, repent and be baptized in the name of [00:29:03] the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the Holy Spirit. I venture to suggest that Stephen was one of the first who heard those words, who felt the power of them, who acted upon them and reaped the blessing. Though we must not overlook the fact he may have been amongst the 120. But whatever it was, Stephen had gone through that particular exercise. He'd heard God's word. He'd repented. He'd believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and now he was filled with the Holy Spirit of God. I commend this to anyone who stands in any doubt as to their salvation, to any doubt as to where their [00:30:01] eternal destiny lies. Why can't you do as Stephen did? Look at the results. Stephen, he received the Holy Spirit. Now the Holy Spirit is spoken of very much in the New Testament. In fact you see him moving through the whole of the scripture. But as was mentioned this afternoon, and I am not discouraged by the fact that it was mentioned this afternoon, Stephen was sealed by the Holy Spirit. If you turn to Ephesians chapter 1 verse 13, we read there that Christ in whom he trusted after he heard the word of truth of the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after you believed you were sealed with that Holy Spirit [00:31:01] of promise. Now Stephen was sealed. And the sealing of the Holy Spirit is a mark that God makes on a man to show that he's taken possession of him. Somebody gives you a book and you write your name in it. When God has a man who comes in simple faith and belief in Jesus Christ under the terms of the gospel as presented in the scripture, God puts his mark on that man. The sealing of the Holy Spirit and it shows first of all ownership and secondly to the man himself. It is a token of assurance. If you are saved and you know it, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God. Stephen was saved and he knew it. He was a [00:32:02] man who was in the first of the queue, that great stretch of folk who down the many centuries that have passed right down to this present moment have believed in the gospel, have confessed Jesus Christ as their Lord and received the badge of ownership that God gives, the gift of the Holy Spirit personally. It comes quickly. There are certain ones in the New Testament who were men who had been converted but were not sealed by the Holy Spirit of God. I cannot dwell on this except to say that the fact that there are examples shows it can happen. [00:33:03] But it seems as I read the scripture, as I listen to those who know what they are talking about on this subject, that where there is a complete trust in Jesus Christ and his finished work there is a sealing of the Holy Spirit following very quickly. But if I am trying to be good, if I am trying to merit this second blessing, there is possibly going to be some lapse of time before God either gives me the assurance of my salvation because I can't earn it, or marks me as his own. And then Stephen had something else that was mentioned this afternoon. Not only was he sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, but he had the earnest, [00:34:01] which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. It has been said that the giving of the Holy Spirit to the believer is the sealing of the and becomes the earnest. The Holy Spirit in us is God's immediate gift to assure us of our inheritance. Now you folk live in the metropolis. I live in a little town right out in the provinces where we don't speak Queen's English. And there is a little shop in my town. It's a furniture shop. I think I once bought something there just once. But they've always had two signs over their shop. They say, we sell everything but the girl. And secondly, they've had a girl looking through an engagement ring to a beautiful house and [00:35:03] it says every girl sees a home through her engagement ring. Now if you've got a picture like that, that engagement ring is the earnest. It's something tangible. It's something she possesses now day by day to admire, day by day to be reminded, day by day to live for the honor of the person who gave it to her and a promise attached to it.

A wonderful promise, a home. Well, isn't that a simple if incomplete picture of what we're talking about when we talk about the Holy Spirit of God given to a person becoming the earnest of their inheritance. You cannot shake a man who has the earnest of the Holy Spirit [00:36:08] in his heart. You cannot shake from him the sheer confidence that he knows that reserved for him in heaven there is an inheritance undefiled, incorruptible that fadeth not away. So we've looked at Stephen as possessor of these two things. Now comes number three. He was also indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If you turn at your leisure to the first book of Corinthians chapter 3 verse 16, the apostle says, know ye not that ye are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you. He wasn't saying to them because of their bad conduct, and there was bad conduct there, he wasn't saying to them, if only you would [00:37:07] change your ways, if only you would live like the Ephesians live, then you may have this blessing of the Spirit of God dwelling in you. He does say, you people in Corinth, you're highly educated, you boast of your knowledge on every subject, don't you know, don't you really know that the Holy Spirit of God does live in you, does indwell you, and you ought to act in the power of that blessing. But the fact is that it has been said, no matter what we do, we can't drive him away, but we can grieve him. And there is a warning not to grieve that Holy Spirit by which you were sealed. We can silence him in our lives, why? [00:38:08] Because of unjudged sin, because of a continuation in sin. There's a warning on this, but we must, here are three things that should be the portion of everyone in their real fullness, everyone who's put their trust in Jesus Christ. Now, I must speak for a moment on the action of the Spirit in the assembly. Again, our brother this afternoon spoke of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We are baptized by one Spirit into one body. It has been carefully pointed out that this word is in a perfect past. We'll leave it at that. Once forever there was a baptism by the Holy Spirit of people into one body. When you come to the [00:39:11] Lord Jesus Christ, it doesn't mean you are baptized into that body. You are in the baptized body. You are brought into that company that once was baptized by the Holy Spirit and you've got all the blessings of it and personally you will receive the Holy Spirit in the three characters that I've spoken of. This doctrine of the one body was that by which moved men over a hundred years ago to sort out the things which were not according to God's word. They were men like Stephen. They were men who acted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit [00:40:02] that they'd got because they were filled with the Holy Spirit and under his direct power they saw that the Lord made us a promise in Matthew 18.20 that where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst. And when they came like that without a leader, without a visible priest, the Holy Spirit was present. He was present in the members present. He was capable of touching the heart and mind of everyone individually and bringing like the great controller of a choir the sound of praise from any member he wished. And this has marked Brethren's meetings. A man came into our gospel meeting [00:41:03] some weeks ago. He was passing through the town, a seasoned believer, and he was saying well, he was going back up to Scotland and he came in and afterwards said, you don't know me. I came here tonight because where I went this morning, and I mention no names at all, where I went this morning I came out broken hearted. Are we losing the sense of the Holy Spirit in our assemblies? Why have we got these arrangements? You know, that's just what started soon after the apostles died. Men put in a leader and they went back to all the trappings of vestments and buildings that they could rake up from the pagan world and a bit from the Old Testament as well to make good measure. And so you got your establishments. [00:42:10] So you got your great so-called churches. But here I put you back, if I may, onto the very simple ground that believers met on a hundred and something years ago. And I tell you, these were men who had the courage to burn out the wood, to destroy the trappings and to find their feet on the simple ground of New Testament truth. Isn't this something that you and I are in danger of letting the dirt drift in and hide the pattern? Oh I beg, I'm speaking with a heart full to those who may have grown up in years when they're wondering [00:43:02] if we were right after all. Of course, of course there is no doubt. And all I can say is, my dear young brother, if you have any doubts, try it. Take God at his word. Know

what it is to grow to the stature of a man like Stephen and know that God can work through you according to your abilities. He's got a job for you to do. And the call today is for men of the very stature that the apostles were looking for.

It was mentioned this afternoon that being baptised by one spirit, into one body, every believer is in that company. This drops the walls, it drops the plaques outside the churches, it does mean nothing at all, at all, to the one body. And if you read carefully of the [00:44:05] epistle to the Colossians, you'll find that this body has a head. The Lord himself in heaven, in living control. Let's not forget, he has not lost control, he is the head. And the body functions on us. We ought to be. And I borrow a phrase of Mr Hadley when last I met him in London, an effectual working member of the body of Christ. And that is done by personal submission to his will. Then, if you read the Ephesians, much of it was commented on this afternoon, you'll find that whilst Colossians speaks of the head in heaven, Ephesians speaks of the body on earth. Christ and his church. What a privilege, what a privilege offered to men and women like you and me have been a member of the body of Christ and of [00:45:07] nothing else. Well Stephen, I'm going to steal a moment or two, Stephen showed his metal didn't he? I must pass very quickly and almost comment on this verse by verse because of my time. The time at Catford always goes quicker than it does in Yorkshire, I've said this before. Now Stephen, not because he'd swatted up the night before, but because when the pressures came on him like a sponge, if you squeeze a sponge you get out of it exactly what's in it, don't you? Warm water, cold water, clean or dirty, what's in it comes out. And when they squeezed Stephen, he turned round and said, look, go back to your old [00:46:02] scriptures, you boast yourself as a nation and what happened? He says, well there was Abraham and you read that beautiful sermon that he preached. I go through it ever so quickly, he said, look at Abraham. When God called him, he first showed a willingness to go, but he dragged his feet didn't he? He stayed a long time before he got into the promised land. What about Joseph? Well he was presented as a beloved son of a father and what did they do with him? They sold him down into Egypt like a slave. And Moses, a deliverer, they refused Moses. And what about the law he gave? He said, you received the law and you didn't keep it as a nation. What happened then? Well, there was Joshua who presented them with a land under God's hand and they never occupied it. There was David [00:47:06] and God presented them with a kingdom under him and they neglected it and let it go to pieces. And what then Solomon? What did Solomon give them? He gave them the temple. And what did they do? They defiled the temple and they treated it with utmost indifference. They built an idol in it, didn't they? And then the prophets, what did you do to the prophets? Which of the prophets did your fathers not kill? And he said, it sums up to this, you always resist the Holy Spirit. And when the just one came, you became the betrayers and the murderers. And he lifted his eyes at them to such an extent that they really spat on the ground, threw him out of the city and stoned him. You've seen the effect of his work and his preaching. Filled with the Holy Spirit as he was, his words cut them to the [00:48:04] quick. They stopped their ears and they went forward savagely towards him. But look at the man. Did he lose? It says, being full of the Spirit, he looked up steadfastly into heaven. I see this man as a lonely man, like Paul was when he said, no one stood by me but the Lord. Stephen looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God. I'd like to comment on that. Have you ever had your eyes lifted by faith? You've looked right into that bright light where God is. And Jesus was standing and said, I see heaven opened, the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. That's what his faith gave him, a vision of the eternal God with the Son of Man. Ah yes, the Holy Spirit was only on earth [00:49:08] because he was the Son of Man in heaven. Victorious. What a picture it is, what a vision. They stoned him and what did he do? He called on God. He said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit and if you want to know what happens to the spirit of a believer, here's a verse that indicates it as clearly as anything that Stephen, he handed everything to his Lord. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And then

mark the grace. He was full of grace, wasn't he? He demonstrated his power. Look at the grace. In that 60th verse, kneeling down, he was not standing defiantly, kneeling down he prayed, lay not this sin to their charge. Was that an effective [00:50:05] prayer? It certainly was. Because there was young Saul there, the man who had confessed he was a mad, exceeding mad. He stood there. He wouldn't touch this kind of dirty work in any case at all, but he consented. He consented to the death of Stephen. That sin laid heavily upon Saul. He had to confess to the Lord in Damascus. Lord, don't you remember I was there consenting to the death of Stephen, your martyr. That sin was blotted out, as all sins can be. Here's a picture I say, a profile of a man who gave his life for his faith and for his Lord. He didn't lose it. He handed it into the hands of the Lord who loved him. [00:51:07] Strangely enough, knowing I was expecting to speak on this subject, someone in my office, rather in laughter, picked up a schoolboy howler that was actually written on the schoolboy paper. This wasn't anything from comic cuts, and said, what do you think of this? Stephen was the only martyr who ever lived, the first martyr who ever lived. And they laughed. I walked out saying, but he did live. He did live. The lad knew more about what he was talking about than you give him credit for. Wasn't there a recent martyr in South America who said, before he died, a man is no fool for giving what he cannot keep to obtain what he cannot lose. And of course it is said, the blood of the martyrs is a sin.

[00:52:03] He is then a challenging character in the scripture of a man who was full of the Holy Spirit, befilled with the Holy Spirit. It comes by neglecting Satan's things. It comes by neglecting the world's interests in favour of those things that belong to Jesus Christ. May God help us to do just that.