

A CONSPIRACY IS UNMASKED (5:3-11)

5:3 Satan has so filled your heart.

- Just as one can be filled with the Spirit, there exists the possibility that Satan (or his demonic agents) can also fill or influence one's heart (cf. Luke 22:3; 31).

5:3, 9 you have lied to the Holy Spirit ...

- you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord. To sin against the work and mission of God is to sin against and test the Holy Spirit.

5:11 Great fear seized ... all who heard about these events.

- As with previous Spirit-directed acts, this one resulted in witness. In Acts the manifestation of God's power results in various reactions, including:
 - utter amazement (2:7; 3:10)
 - being filled with awe (2:43)
 - perplexity (2:12)
 - hearts filled with praise to God (4:21)
 - great fear (5:5, 11)
 - great joy (8:8)
 - astonishment (8:13)
 - saving faith (9:42, cf., 1 Cor. 2:4-5)

5:12 many miraculous signs and wonders among the people.

- According to Paul, the gospel has not been fully proclaimed until it has been clearly presented and powerfully demonstrated (cf. Rom. 15:18-19).

5:14 more and more men and women believed in the Lord.

- Again, the result of Spirit-induced signs and wonders was witness, resulting in saving faith.

5:15 Peter's shadow.

IMPRISONMENT, RELEASE AND WITNESS - Acts 5:17-42

5:20 Go, stand ... and tell.

- The command of the angel to "Go" reminds us of Jesus' Great Commission where He instructs His disciples to go to all nations and preach the gospel (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8).

5:32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit.

- It is the Spirit who empowers us to witness for Christ (1:8). The Spirit Himself also bears witness to Christ.

the Holy Spirit ... whom God has given to those who obey him.

- In context, the obedience spoken of here is not a general obedience to the commands of God (though that application may be made), but specific obedience to the command to be Christ's witnesses (cf. vv. 28-29).

5:40 They ... had them flogged ... and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus.

- The persecution is escalating. This time, however, the authorities had them flogged to emphasize their seriousness.

5:42 they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news.

- Before, Peter was afraid to witness for Christ (Luke 22:54-62); now he preaches boldly, even in the face of persecution and death. What made the difference? He had been empowered by the Holy Spirit (2:4), and he continued to walk in the Spirit. With this empowering came great zeal and boldness to preach the gospel (Acts 4:20; 30-31).

A SPIRIT-GUIDED DECISION - Acts 6:1-7

6:2 not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God.

- The apostles take steps to delegate the work to others so that he can remain focused on preaching and teaching the word of God and prayer.

6:3 seven men ... full of the Spirit and wisdom.

- Those chosen for leadership in the church should be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

6:7 the word of God spread.

- As a result of the apostles' Spirit directed decision to appoint seven "deacons" to help them in the work, the word of the Lord continued to spread in Jerusalem. "The number of disciples ... increased rapidly" in Jerusalem and a "large number of priests became obedient to the faith."

STEPHEN'S SPIRIT-EMPOWERED WITNESS - Acts 6:8-15

6:8 Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power.

- Being full of God’s grace and power are the result of one’s being filled with the Spirit (cf. 4:31-33). Before Luke describes Stephen’s ministry, he wants his readers to know that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit (see also v. 3).
- This is a consistent pattern in Acts. Luke always prefaces the description of one’s ministry by showing that he was first filled with the Spirit. This includes
 - Peter (2:4; 4:8)
 - Stephen (6:3, 5)
 - Philip (6:3)
 - Paul (9:17-18)
 - Barnabas (11:22-24)
 - Silas (15:32, implied)

6:10 his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

Life Application

Spirit-empowered ministry is not for apostles only; it is for all of God’s people. Stephen was not an apostle, but God used him mightily. We have all been called to be His witnesses, and we have all been promised His power (1:8; 2:4, 38). God can use anyone who will open his or her life to Him, be filled with the Spirit, and obey His command to share the gospel with others.

STEPHEN’S SPEECH AND MARTYRDOM - Acts 7:1–8:1

Stephen’s speech is not so much a sermon as the inspired words of a prophet. The violent response Stephen received from the crowd was not unanticipated. After all, these were the same people who had condemned Christ to death. In fact, they leveled the same accusation against Stephen as they had against Jesus—blaspheming the temple.

7:37 God will send you a prophet like me.

- This is a reference to Moses’ prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15. Peter identified the “prophet like Moses” as Jesus, the Messiah (Acts 3:19-22).
- Both Jesus and Moses were Spirit-anointed charismatic prophets, for the Spirit of God rested upon both of them (Num. 11:16-29; Luke 4:18-19), and by the Spirit both performed miraculous signs and wonders (Acts 7:36; 10:38).
- Unlike Moses, however, the Spirit rested upon Jesus’ ministry in full measure (Luke 4:18-19; John 1:32; 3:34, KJV).

7:51 You always resist the Holy Spirit!

7:52 the Righteous One ... you have betrayed and murdered him.

7:55 Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit.

- Stephen is described as being “filled with” or “full of” the Spirit on this and two other occasions in Acts (6:3, 5). “Filled” indicates the process, “full,” the resulting state.

Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

- As he was dying, Stephen had a vision of the ascended Christ. When Jesus ascended, He sat down at the right hand of the Father (Luke 22:69; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Rev. 3:21).
- It is from this exalted position that He received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, whom He poured out at Pentecost (Acts 2:33).

7:59-60 Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ... Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

- Stephen died as Jesus died: both were full of the Spirit (cf. Heb. 9:14), both prayed for their executors (cf. Luke 23:34), and both offered up their spirits to God (cf. Luke 23:46).

**8:1 Saul was there, giving approval to his death. **

- In 7:58 Luke said that “the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.” This young man would later, after he encountered the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus, become Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

Life Application - There are times when God calls upon us to preach the word, even in uncomfortable and dangerous situations.

Another lesson: we should realize that the Holy Spirit will never abandon us in our times of great trial. And neither will Jesus!

CONCLUSION

So far we have looked at two powerful outpourings of the Holy Spirit that took place in Jerusalem: Pentecost (i.e., the First Jerusalem Outpouring, 2:1-4) and the Second Jerusalem Outpouring (4:31).

Both outpourings resulted in immediate Spirit-empowered witness in the city, and both demonstrate Luke’s empowerment-witness motif introduced in 1:8: “You will receive power ... and you will be my witnesses.”

The powerful witness resulting from these two outpourings also began the fulfillment of the second part of Jesus’ evangelistic agenda revealed in the second part of the verse: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea...”

The outpourings of the Spirit in Jerusalem served a second purpose. They prepared the church for the great persecution that was to come.