

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 22 September 2024

Sermon Title : Faith Fully

Speaker : Rev John Foo

Text : Acts 6:8-15

INTRODUCTION

A vibrant faith is a faith that is strongly anchored in God that helps us to cope and withstand trials and challenges in our lives. Such faith enables us to live out our lives boldly with joy and courage and it goes beyond just hearing and talking about it but actually living it out in ways dependent on and connected to God. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God. Hence all believers should seek a vibrant faith that has utter confidence in God; in His faithfulness to us, in His promises, and in His power and wisdom.

STEPHEN – A MODEL OF FAITH

Stephen was a New Testament character briefly mentioned in the Book of Acts, but his Christian legacy left a lasting impact on the early church and he is also known to be the first martyr of the early church. His martyrdom did not come as a surprise because as the church grew, so did the opposition to it, and many suffered for their faith, even by death.

Who was Stephen

Stephen was one of seven men chosen to serve in the daily distribution of food to the widows. (Acts 6:2-5) Although this seemed like a lowly task with no spiritual impact, Stephen was no ordinary 'waiter', for he was a man who was right for the job and had the divine gift to perform the task well. Stephen was a person:

- (i) full of the Spirit and of wisdom. (Acts 6:3)
- (ii) full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 6:5)
- (iii) full of grace and power. (Acts 6:8)

Three times in Scripture, Stephen was described as being filled with the fullness of God in the Holy Spirit, wisdom, grace, power and faith. Let us focus on the fullness of Stephen to learn from his vibrant faith.

1. WE NEED TO SEEK A FULLNESS THAT COMES FROM GOD

Being full of something could mean:

- We are so completely filled with a particular thing, in abundance of it, that there is not any more room left to be filled with anything else. For example, if you eat

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till you are full to the brim and thus have no more room for anything else besides what has been eaten.

- The thing that is in abundance in us is so much that it is literally bursting out from us. It is a state that we are unable to hide our fullness and we must let it out. For example, when we are full of joy, that joy cannot be contained and it overflows. Such was the case with Stephen. He was full of God's grace and power and that was because he was so fully yielded to God's transforming grace in his life that he was allowing God to have unhindered access into every part of his life, to perfect him to holiness and good works. His entire being was being changed by God so that every word and action of his spoke of God's grace and love.

Stephen also reflects the fullness of God's power. This comes as he was fully devoted to God and is completely surrendered to Him. Jesus says we shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us and the Holy Spirit will work His power in and through us only when we are filled with the fullness of the Spirit. Stephen shows us how the fullness of the Holy Spirit (v.3, 5) enabled him to do great signs and wonders among the people. (v.8)

Clearly, Stephen was so full of God's grace and power that he could not conceal it, accomplishing God's work through it. This legacy of Stephen illustrates that although he was mentioned briefly in Scripture, his impact speaks volume of his faith. Likewise, as we play different roles in our lives, we can make a lasting impact when we live out our faith. What is important is that we seek the fullness of God.

- There is no way a half-hearted and double-minded Christian can be filled with such fullness. We need to fully trust God and believe in Him; to be truly dependent and reliant on God if we want to be like Stephen.

While Stephen served tables daily to 'fill' the widows with physical food, he was continually being served with the "food of God", that filled him to fullness.

What are you being filled with (what is your life filled with; what is your mind full of; what is your heart filled with) – is it the things of the world, or the personal desires of your heart, or the things of God?

If we fill ourselves with the things of God, we will experience the fullness of God, but how do we do that?

- By spending more and more time on the things of God.
- By willingly let the Word and teachings of Jesus change us.
- By intentionally allowing the experience of seeking God mould us to be closer to Him.

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2. THE FULLNESS OF GOD WILL GIVE US CONFIDENCE TO FACE CHALLENGES IN OUR LIVES.

The Bible tells us that Stephen encountered opposition from certain people. Despite such a situation, Stephen was able to respond by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to counter those accusations. None of them could stand against the wisdom and Spirit with which Stephen spoke. (v.10) His accusers had to resort to falsely testifying against him because he drew completely from the divine source His confidence to confront opposition.

- It was only because Stephen yielded to the power and divine guidance of the Holy Spirit that he was able to hold his ground despite the life and death situation he was in.
- He exuded an air of quiet confidence, and his face became like that of an angel's. (Acts 6:15) Such an angelic look likely indicates God's presence and pleasure was with Stephen; Stephen was with God, in God and of God. Moses was the other Bible character who came back with a face that shone with God's glory after he met with God. (Exodus 34) When we are in the presence of God, our face will show, because we will be filled with the fullness of God.

When we are full of faith, like Stephen, the Spirit of God, His grace, wisdom and power will fill us to face the trials set before us. That will give us the confidence to face oppositions and challenges ahead.

CONCLUSION

God has saved us because of our covenantal relationship with Him and that means God will never abandon us. It is we who must seek God and live out a vibrant faith for His glory. We must truly believe:

- a. That Christ died on the cross to save us,
- b. That Jesus taught us by His Word; the Living Word of truth which brings us life,
- c. That God has delivered on His promise to send the gift of His Holy Spirit to fill us, to work in us and through us, to help us and guide us in our lives.

Let us yield ourselves fully to God so we may be filled with that newness of life in the fullness of His Spirit, His wisdom and grace and be empowered by His Spirit. When we draw on God's divine providence, we can then face the challenges on our life journey. By our vibrant faith we can then collectively become a grace community of true disciples that allows God to transform us by His grace to declare He is our God, and we are His people.

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A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. How would you describe:
 - (i) A person with "vibrant faith"?
 - (ii) A community with "vibrant faith"?
- a. Why do we need to seek the fullness that comes from God to have a vibrant faith?
- b. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least vibrant, how would you rate:
 - (i) your faith at this moment?
 - (ii) the faith of your Life Group?
 - (iii) the faith of our church?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. Read Acts 6:8-15 aloud. Stephen was described as “a man full of God’s grace and power“. (v.8)
 - a. How do you think Stephen could have become a man full of God’s grace and power?
 - b. Are you able to model after him in this area? If not, what hinders you from doing so?
 - 4a. What are you being filled with? (Is it the things of the world, the personal desires of your heart, or the things of God?)
 - 4b. What is one thing you need to change to be filled with the fullness that comes from God?
 - (i) List three steps you can take daily, weekly or immediately to make this change.
 - (ii) How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 4b(i) above?
- 5a. What is one challenge you are facing in your personal life, family, Life Group, ministry, church, school or work?
- 5b. How can you draw from the divine source of God to face it confidently?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Have you ever experienced or witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit at work? Share about it and the state of your faith at that point and after.

OR

Give thanks to God that when we yield ourselves fully to God we will be filled with that newness of life in the fullness of His Spirit, His wisdom and grace and be empowered by His Spirit.

6. With a partner, humble yourselves before God to surrender and yield to Him completely. Make a commitment to remove other things that are “filling” you and to persevere in fulfilling 4b. above so you may be filled with the fullness that comes from God and truly believe that:
 - Christ died on the cross to save us
 - Jesus taught us by His Word; the Living Word of truth which brings us life
 - God has delivered on His promise to send the gift of His Holy Spirit to fill us, to work in us and through us, to help us and guide us in our lives.

Pray also for our church to be yielded as a community of faith so we may allow God’s grace to transform us to grow closer to Him, to be filled with His Spirit, wisdom, grace and power to declare to all that He is our God and we are His people.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Great Things – Phil Wickham
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4CY3nf1Mvw&ab_channel=PhilWickhamVEVO
2. Beautiful Saviour – Planetshakers
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kP6vK1H4Iq&ab_channel=Arielle
3. Resurrender – Hillsong
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=deH_PPqgX38&ab_channel=musicmeetsheaven

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