

## Do You Want To Get Yourself Killed?

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by Wayne Goff

If a gospel preacher wanted to get himself killed, then I would suggest he go to a hostile audience of people and (1) condemn their ancestors as religious hypocrites, idolaters, and murderers; and (2) accuse the present audience of being *“Stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears ... always resist(ing) the Holy Spirit”!*

Well, that’s what Stephen did in Acts 7 and the enraged mob of Jews took him out of the city of Jerusalem and stoned him to death. Today, people would condemn that kind of preaching as insensitive, politically incorrect, and maybe even hateful. But the truth of the matter is that Stephen was speaking by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and every word that he spoke on that occasion was given to him by God! It was not that God did not love these Jews, or that He did not want them to be saved. In fact, the exact opposite was true. God tried everything to wake them up spiritually speaking, and to show them how far removed from the true Jewish religion they had gotten. But it was all to no avail.

Keep in mind also that this was **not** the first word of warning God had given them. Jesus spent three years of His earthly ministry pointing out that their religion was *“vain”* because they taught as doctrine the commandments of men (Matt. 15:7-9). The apostles pointed out on the day of Pentecost that their very actions had crucified the Son of God, and that they needed to repent of their murderous deeds and obey the Gospel (Acts 2). Three thousand people got the message, repented and obeyed the Gospel to their own salvation. But now the remaining Jewish people were getting tired of the message — they viewed it as narrow-minded, conceited, arrogant and hurtful. So they were determined to put an end to this doctrine of a resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ.

Stephen began his lesson by pointing out that they were **all** descendants of their father Abraham, a man who obeyed God the Father in all of his life. He left a comfortable home and lifestyle in Ur of the Chaldees and traveled to an unknown land, living in tents rather than in houses, and was waiting to receive an inheritance of the very land on which he walked. He did all of this **by faith** (Heb. 11:8-10), trusting in God for an entire lifetime without seeing any real results until the very end of his life. In his old age, the promised son, Isaac, was born. In his old age, he believed that God would give his descendants the land of promise. In his old age, he believed that One would come to save the world from their sins and thus be a *“blessing”* (Gal. 3:8-9). But God kept His promises faithfully, and today we are the beneficiaries of it. The Jews of Stephen’s day could have had the same benefits if only they had (1) searched the Scriptures; (2) trusted in God rather than in *status quo*; and (3) cast off human tradition with its emptiness. Apparently they thought this was asking too much. In their religious hypocrisy and indifference they decided to stone Stephen to death (Acts 7:54-58), as though that would solve **their** problems!

Today there are many sermons preached in the world that require sincere soul-searching, Bible reading, personal application and change — but the hearers remain unmoved because of their own slothfulness, intellectual laziness, and apathy. The only good thing you can say about these listeners is that **at least they didn’t stone the preacher!** But all is not well with their souls just the same.

Dear reader, have you ever blamed the preacher when his message got a little too close to home and made you feel uncomfortable, or even guilty? If so, did you search the Scriptures to see if this message was the truth, or did you shrug your shoulders, shake your head, and say, “Well, that guy is just too hard!”? It makes a difference.

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