

The effects of sovereign grace in a Gospel Day

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Preacher: Broome, Leonard Robert James (1905-1986)

- [0 : 00] We will speak again from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 7, and the last two verses.
- The Acts of the Apostles, chapter 7, and the last two verses. And I stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.
- He kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their child.
- When he had said this, he fell asleep. The two things here, first is the spirit, the immortal soul.
- Second is the description given to death, he fell asleep. He fell asleep.
- [1 : 16] Another description given of it by the Apostle is that it is a departure, having a desire to depart, to be with Christ, which is far better.
- And although death is a subject human nature wants to know it long, it must ever be confessed that it is one of the most stupendous subjects that ever a sinful man could be faced with, that there is that which is the work of the Holy Spirit.
- the safe conduct of the believer, as was said to Jesus today, or to the dying thief by Jesus, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.
- So that we are faced this evening with this blessed scene of God's first martyr standing on the borders of eternity.
- happy, happy, without any fear, as we spoke some length this morning, fully convinced of the whole truth of the Old Testament, relating in simple form the various outstanding events which have happened to the Lord's people, and at the same time setting forth how God led his people down into Egypt and brought them out.
- [3 : 30] how at last Christ the just one came of David, the royal seed, and how he was rejected, and how the heavens were opened at this scene of aggression, and he saw this same Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
- how he was rejected, and how he was rejected, and how he was rejected. Only faith can possibly draw any real sweetness from such a scene as this.
- Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. That's for not an. That means we accepted Jesus Lord, and how the Lord said, It adjoys status of anything.
- It is so that God does not value, the chronogness, that guides us our souls for Mak sir.
- So prze Wo Boys Rcheck this. We reachuli Mrs. when you receiveümü through orden number, And only in those favored occasions the Lord grants his people grace so to do.
- [5 : 05] Otherwise, we read of them who all their lifetime through fear of death were subject to bondage. But not so here.
- And not so in the believer when God carries his spirit safely from that inanimate body to the eternal resting place.

Spoken of again by Paul, the spirit of just men made perfect. And we're dealing with divine theology here.

Nothing else. This isn't what I was saying this morning historical. There are many that passed from time into eternity and there are thousands previous to this.

Both good and bad. Old Jacob gathered up his feet into his bed and gave up the ghost.

[6 : 24] Same thing. The solemn passage is to be trodden.

And it is a blessed scene here as we view God's persecuted faithful servant Stephen, the first martyr.

There hadn't been one before him after this fashion. Jesus Christ, of course, would be put among the category of those who gave their life for the faith.

But Jesus Christ gave his life a ransom for sinners. And there is a big difference.

So that we are assured here that in seeing Jesus, the right hand of God, his prayer was a wonderful prayer.

[7 : 39] He knew that Jesus, he knew that Jesus could receive his spirit. He knew that he had a spirit. He knew that he was about to take a tremendous step.

Not a leap in the dark. Not a leap in the darkness of condemnation and eternity.

No. Far, far from it. The Lord Jesus here is enjoying what the 16th Psalm said he would, that thy right hand the pleasures forevermore.

And undoubtedly this was one of the greatest pleasures that the Lord Jesus did ever receive and enjoy the right hand of his Father when his first martyr was received into glory.

So that any denial of the immortality of the soul, which is one of Satan's great temptations, may have played some of you all your life, is as far back as Joe referred to.

[9 : 20] Get in my flesh shall I see God, says Joe. Thou wilt call, he says in the 14th chapter, and I will answer.

It must be then, and have been, undoubtedly there was, Spirit revealed truth, all the way through from Adam's day onward, of this great truth, of the immortality of the soul.

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? The open question that Jesus asked.

Yet how little do we realize it? And how much teaching we need? And indeed what Stephen had to be brought to in order to come to this place where it was a parting with everything here below.

What his circumstances were, we have no idea. We do know that he was filled with the Spirit.

[10 : 52] We do know that he accepted and believed and preached the whole history from Abraham and onwards for the utmost certainty.

And now he saw with clearness that it was this just one whom they had, according to the purposes of God, the people who had been the betrayers and the murderers, in spite of the fact that they had received the law by the hand or disposition of men of God, angels.

And the very best had been the very best had been sent to them. They have not kept it. We spoke of the solemnity of this occasion when none was saved.

Not any. There was no spirit of repentance. No godly sorrow.

None think that they can take advantage. They were saved as I think it's Bishop Ryle says of the two malefactors.

[12 : 29] Only one was saved that none might despair and one was lost that none might presume.

So it is the solemn division between man and man in the purposes of God as he divided between the twin Jacob and Esau.

So grace is not hereditary. The teaching of the good spirit is utterly sovereign.

To come to such an end as this, bearing such pain as this, to have his thoughts continued, lifted up to one thing, the reception of his spirit by the Lord Jesus.

What's safe keeping? There it is, safely preserved in Christ, preserved from before the foundation of the world, and now preserved eternally.

[14 : 00] At the same time, we find that his mind was not wholly centered upon himself.

This amazing love of a dying saint for the spiritual welfare and forgiveness of others is without controversy.

One of the greatest evidences of God's work in the heart. Whatever men may say about the selfishness and the self-centeredness of certain people who make a profession, their heart is not very sensitive, but they are not very sensitive.

There can be no denying the fact that their heart longs for the salvation of others. And this great example set by the Lord Jesus is followed by Stephen very remarkably.

That only does he seek the security of his own soul and spirit, that he also turns his eyes to those who, whom I said this morning, that were stripped to the waste, no doubt.

[15 : 24] Casting these huge stones and boulders to crush the life out of the martyr. And here his prayer is, Lord lay not this into their charge.

Again, Stephen's faith embraced the holy office of the great judge, as well as that of the advocate.

He fully implies that the Lord Jesus could, and would be just if he did, lay this sin to their charge.

And when we think of this reaching his holy ear in heaven, and his own dying words on the cross, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.

How remarkable it is, that these two should run exactly parallel, and that the Lord Jesus should pray for his greatest enemies, and that the sins should not be laid to their charge, and that they should be forgiven.

[17 : 13] And yet we have such narrow views of God's ability to forgive sin, that we're apt to treasure such constricted views, that there's certain limitations, certain sins that he can't forgive, won't forgive.

It may be your temptation that there's a limit to the sin that God, the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, can handle and forgive.

And yet this is not so. He's able to save to the uttermost, the outermost, the extreme. And here are the extremes.

All those who come unto God by him. So if you look at the historical setting again, of which I spoke this morning, and also in the previous chapter, chapter 6, of how these men were chosen and sent out, and how they were soon met with opposition, and the elders and the scribes turned up the people against them.

And remember what I said also about those who were cut to the heart and they stopped their ears. The bitter enmity of the human heart against Jehovah, which is felt.

[19 : 15] It's not something imaginary. I know the people I dislike. So do you. Whether that is sin or not, is another matter.

There can be no doubt that each of us have in our hearts that enmity to God.

And apart from God's of doing it, we shall die with it. And their actions will prove it through life.

- And do prove it. And there the ungodly go. Their hearts full of enmity.
- And they stop their ears. Couldn't bear to hear Paul, Stephen rather, say what he did say.
- [20 : 20] I see the heavens open, the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Are these to be forgiven then?
- Surely, Stephen, God won't forgive these men, will he? He can't, can he? Stephen, do you really mean what you're praying?
- Do you really feel your heart going out in love to these men who are hurling these stones at you?
- That shortly you will be crushed to death? Stephen, do you really mean what you say? We might ask him. Surely the answer must be, Yes, he did.
- Surely there can be no other answer. This isn't some fantasy, some coverage over a dark scene to give it a smooth surface.
- [21 : 26] No. It's the love of God the same sinner, a dying saint to his very enemies. He might, and had it been in the Old Testament before the Gospel was ushered in, we might well have heard him say, Do not I hate them that hate thee.
- I hate them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies. Under the law such language as that was justified.
- But I say unto you, said Jesus, love your enemies. Do good to those that hate you.
- Pray for those that despitefully use you. the whole scene is altered, isn't it? And here lies the need for a gracious balance in our minds, judgment between law and Gospel.
- And it is this law of love and liberty, that is the believer's joy. It governs his life.
- [22 : 54] Why? To go bow with enmity in your breast against anyone. The treasurer, Samuel, Peeling against anyone.
- The treasurer, Samuel, Peeling against anyone. Is surely against the spirit of the Gospel. Lord lay not this sin.
- What sort of a sin was it? Murder. Sin of murder. And that the heat and height of passion. Murder. They are brought here to that point where they did not care at all.
- Dying martyrs death. There. Made no difference to them. Here he had charged them. Here they were cut to the heart.
- [24 : 02] Here the very work of the devil had been disseminated and discovered. And laid bare. And yet here is one praying for them.
- With all the warmth of affection. Reality. To one he saw in heaven. The Lord Jesus. As the judge.
- Because only the judge of all the earth. The Lord Jesus. Could possibly. Not. Lay this sin. To their charge.
- And Stephen knew this. He was. Filled with the Holy Ghost.
- This is Holy Ghost teaching. This is the glory of the Gospel. Through the Holy Ghost manifestation.
- [25 : 09] And so. At this stage. In this chapter. We have.
- The scene before us. Of the. Divine authority. Of the word of God. Of the.
- Of the. Enmity of the human heart. Of the. Of the. Perfect face. Of a dying saint.
- In the ability. Of the Lord Jesus. To receive his spirit. And finally. The overflowing love. Of such a man.

To pray for those. Is very murderous. This is the Gospel. So totally contrary.

[26 : 09] To everything that man understands. In his fallen state. Offense not yourselves. Vengeance is mine. I will repay. Sath the Lord.

Don't carry about. The. Spirit of revenge. With you. I will repay. Sath the Lord. It's in my hands. From here therefore. We go. To the. Chapter that we read.

The burial of Stephen. To a solemn scene. In. The. In. The burial of Stephen. In. The solemn scene. The. Devout men.

Carried Stephen. To his burial. In. To his burial. And. Have. The solemn. The solemn. In. The solemn. The.

And. The. Devout men. Carried Stephen. To his burial. The devout men carried Stephen to his burial.

[27 : 07] The spirit was saved in the hand of the Lord Jesus. He joined the spirits of Abraham and Jacob and those he had been speaking of, Moses and the like.

He was now one with them in eternal blessedness and glory. Now his frame, all that remained, was carried honorably to his burial.

Who by? Who by? Devout men. Oh, how their very hearts must have gone out in warm affection to their noble companion who had stood alone and defended the truth fearless and suffered as none had ever been seen to suffer before for such a cause.

And now these devout men carry him to his not his cremation not his cremation but his burial.

even the remains the body of a dying saint is precious precious dust though it may well be and indeed and indeed not only the believer but all humanity look at it today.

[29 : 11] These specious thoughts that are so fully in the minds of untold numbers indeed the majority of the people are far more hygienic and healthy far better disposal than the scripture suggests always without exception Abraham sought a place to bury his beloved Sarah and paid for the two and so here the Lord Jesus was buried so Stephen was carried to his burial and they made great lamentation over him now this is the time after the death of a saint when things come out but so in the home isn't it in the family there's remarkable change after death you who have lost a parent you appreciate very quickly after their death more than you ever appreciated in their life you see them with different eyes you understand them the different understanding and though the pathway of bereavement is the pathway of sorrow but when one's partner in life is taken from them you see them with different eyes and there is a remarkable coverage over all their faults and mistakes assuming they had them and all that they did and meant to you over so many years swell out in their magnitude beauty beauty what of the godly what of the sights of god when they are carried to their last resting place what memory what affection people how things stand out so differently and in what a different life they may have left behind them some dying words or testimony as it is called or they might not but as these men carried

Stephen to his burial they could not but fail to know the happy end that he died and the glorious vision that he had as the heavens were open and he saw Jesus standing there nor could they fail to remember his last words both as regards his own spirit and as regards his enemies how this would hallow the sea and they were devout men mind you they were not men who were not interested so often at our funerals the bearers as they're called were not the slightest interested not the slightest but I rather devout men carry me to my grave than there

I rather it's scriptural devout men men who understood and who would lay in their hell with a great lamentation great lamentation those sacred tears tears of love affection all to glory of God all be speaking the wonder working hand of God in the life of Stephen so that in this scene we are given great instruction the tender spirit in that early day of persecution when those men stood fast upon the scripture that all the subject is vast as

Samaria I've spoken of the divine sovereignty of Jehovah already Samaria do you remember what the woman said to Jesus at the well she said the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans they're completely separate so they were the dividing of the kingdoms Samaria was the capital of the ten tribes as you know Judah and Benjamin remained at Jerusalem that was their capital but the poor woman at the well she said our fathers worshipped in this mountain I'm going to stop here as much as to say I'm not going to Jerusalem I'm not going to have anything to do with you

Philip went down to the city of Samaria what did he do he preached Christ and what happened the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake hearing and seeing the miracles which he did and many were taken with pulses and they that were lame were healed what happened in Samaria when this gospel reached them did not God sovereignly bless Samaria I believe and they were baptized quietly baptized some make much ado about baptism in an outward show personally my own belief about the ordinances the quieter the more unassuming the better it is called believers baptism and therefore the emphasis rests upon the word believer and although such are manifested to a certain degree there can be as there was here one who was baptized with the others

[37 : 30] Simon the sorcerer who proved to be out of it had neither part nor lot in the matter and Philip was deceived in it Philip had a spirit Philip was probably one of these devout men that carried Stephen to his grave Philip was well aware of the circumstances at any rate of the death of the martyr but Philip suffered to be deceived and Philip was to learn a lesson John and Peter go down to see them and they find things are not all together as the report said look at the searching influence of the spirit of God like the candle searching out truth from the error yet

Sir Mary is blessed the old wall is broken down that separation so long established for centuries no longer in beings not only is Jerusalem blessed but Samaria also and yet even in Samaria there's this one character sign now how this strikes the exercise to heart doesn't it it's just like Judas how many fear in spite of the scripture saying I have lost none save Judas so many have to contradict the scripture and say I feel

I'm a Judas and they can't be there's only one traitor I know and we know what they mean that their spirit isn't whole and sound they may have a traitorous heart yes indeed so but there is only one loss then again there is this character of Simon the sorcerer and it was not until John and Peter came down that he was disclosed you you might feel just the same that this is what happened to you that you venture upon such a step as this what a remarkable thing that you and all who are thus exercised should be so stirred up to the plain facts and possibilities and see how you can be deceived that to return to the text

Lord Jesus receive my spirit this spirit of Stephen was a spirit of love forgiveness fortitude resolution grace call it what we may he was given strength for his day grace for the hour he could never have foreseen the outcome of this hailing before the elders and the brethren no but when it came to the test as his day so was his strength so that when we go on to read which there isn't time to do this evening we see the history being made as I said this morning

Stephen relates it with brevity and accuracy we are now looking at history being made here look at the details of it you can't skip down these pages without some reaction surely history is being made it's written up it's preserved history is being made today in our lives I know it's being made in mine I can feel it and as one gets older they can feel it more and more that history the history of their life is being written up your history is you can't go back over it you can't alter the false step you can't blot out the right action but history is being made

[43 : 23] God is dealing with his church with his individuals with his phillips with his Simon the sorcerer it's being written up Lord Jesus receive my spirit is this spirit therefore of yours presentable to the light of God's old piercing gaze that he knows your heart not what you think but what is actual God looketh at the heart said Samuel it is this that really matters I've wandered from the subject I don't know why Lord lay not this into their charge have you got an enemy you would like to damn to all eternity have you someone that you would if you could strip to the waist and stone or does your heart overflow with a humble desire for the spiritual well-being wealth and prosperity of Zion are you willing to stand are you willing to declare do you know what

God is doing for you how he's doing it why he's doing it I say history is being written up Lord Jesus receive my spirit that will be the beautiful closing first in our life you're thus favored to come where the martyr did or anywhere near it feel there's nothing to do been done it is finished nothing to do not by works of righteousness which we have done by his own mercy his sake amen drop than of that time to grab your heart x multiple