

Acts 7:17-43

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[0 : 00] We have come into Stephen's defense, which we're about two years maybe removed from Pentecost.

We're still in what would be considered Peter's kind of story arc in Acts. We have not yet got to Paul. Paul will start to come on the scene here shortly.

He's definitely been around when the apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin. They bring in all the council, and then Gamaliel gives his little spiel.

Paul would have been there. He would have been part of that council. He would have been Gamaliel's student. But we're still very much in Peter's story arc, and we've kind of come through this season of a little bit of turbulence, a little bit of persecution for the church.

But God has always come through in a pretty remarkable way for them, in releasing them from prison. And then the next time, they did get beat.

[1 : 01] That didn't turn out too well. And then we had our first, in the beginning of chapter 6, we had our first real more people equals more problems.

And they had the issue with the widows. And we looked at how they dealt with that. And then Stephen comes out of that, right? As the man filled with wisdom and filled with the Holy Spirit, he finally gets his chance, called on by the Lord to serve, and he's waiting on tables.

It took a man filled with wisdom and filled with the Holy Spirit to do that. And do we do that today? We're like, hey, you look capable to do something, so do something.

But here the priority was very much on the fact that they recognized that the Holy Spirit was the lifeblood of the church. And then Stephen, he begins to debate with those of the synagogue of the Libertines and the Cyrenians, all the former, probably his former cohorts, the former Grecian Jewish synagogue, and they cannot stand against his spirit of wisdom.

And so they bring these false accusations, which come in very much in chapter 7, where they said, they lay two things at his feet. They say, This man ceases not to speak blasphemous words against the holy place and the law.

[2 : 27] For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered. Eventually, he's speaking against Moses, and he's speaking against the temple. How dare he?

And then we looked in chapter 7. We got down to verse 18. And Stephen's defense is essentially, Look at all the people God has used throughout the history of Israel.

God's chosen one is always unrecognized and denied by God's people. And that's where we kind of have left off. So, let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your word, Lord. Lord, I just love your word. I thank you so much, Lord, for the encouragement, Lord. That it's your word, it's your spirit, it's your message, Lord.

I thank you for the scripture in Isaiah that says, Precept upon precept upon precept, line upon line upon line, hear a little, there a little, Lord. And I find great relief in that.

[3 : 23] It doesn't say, hear a lot, there a lot. It says, hear a little, there a little. And, Lord, I feel like I can do that. I can come to your word. I can see a little. I can chew on that. And then you can bring something out of that.

And I pray that you would do that tonight, Lord. That you would speak, Lord. That we would see wonders in your word. You'd show us new insights, Lord. And, Lord, I know I need to be edified. Like Lily prayed, Lord.

You're coming soon, and I need you, Lord. I pray that you would speak to us now. In Jesus' name, amen. So we've come down through Abraham.

Abraham, who was he? Oh, he's the father of faith. Well, no, he was a pagan in Babylon when God came and called him and presented his promises to him. He wasn't anybody special, despite the fact of the way he was venerated at this point by the nation.

He was nobody when God came to him. And then we see the patriarchs. The patriarchs, the 12 tribes, which everybody still identified themselves with. You know, Judah, Benjamin, Naphtali.

[4 : 25] Well, they took Joseph, God's deliverer, for his people, and they sold him. They didn't recognize that he was God's man. And then, moving on down, we see where Jacob, Jacob, you know, the Israel himself.

And in verse 12, it says, But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And what does he do? Right away, Jacob turns to Egypt. Jacob heads back to Egypt, back to the world.

After Abraham had gone to Egypt during famine and was chastened by the Lord, after Isaac as well, here Jacob, the man whose name Israel bore, instead of trusting God, he sends his boys to Egypt, little knowing that God had already provided for them.

And so, verse 15, So Jacob went down into Egypt and died, he and our fathers. And we talked about how Egypt, the world, always ends in death, always results in death.

When we go down into Egypt, there will always be a death. Abraham's only inheritance in the land.

[5 : 40] And God promised him. All he had was this little cave that he buried Sarah in. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt.

So God has a promise clock. And it went tick, tick, ding. And it was time for God's promise that he had promised. Over here in chapter 7 in verse 6, it says, And so God's promise is coming to pass, that it was time for that promise to be enacted.

And it's interesting as we think, yes, the time of God's promise is drawing nigh. Wonderful, God's going to fulfill his promise. And we think of that as an act of deliverance and joy.

And that is true. But yet, the enemy began to ramp up. Things got worse for God's people as God's promise drew closer. And then, verse 18, and this is where we left off.

Till another, yeah, 17. The people multiplied, grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. If you go back and look at the account in Exodus, the people, they do multiply.

[7 : 04] They multiply greatly. And the Pharaoh at that time, he gets really nervous. And his fear isn't so much that Israel will destroy them. He says that his fear is that they will join with the enemies of Egypt and will get up out of the land.

He didn't want him to leave. He wanted him to stay there. So it's funny, there's this recognition that God's people in my land is a good thing. You know, there is blessing in this. You think of when Laban didn't want Rachel to go back with Abraham's servant right away.

He's like, no, no, no, no. I see the gifts. I see the blessings, the jewels. And he recognized that there was a great blessing in God's people. And so the Pharaoh, he didn't want them to go.

And so another king arose, which knew not Joseph. And I was thinking about that with Joseph.

Like, so Joseph lives, it says he saw his children's, saw his children's children like to the second generation.

They were brought up on his knee, Ephraim's kids. So they're like his great grandkids. He saw them to that generation. And then he died. And so during that time, you'd have probably at least another Pharaoh. And then perhaps after Joseph had died, maybe another one.

[8 : 14] And you get to this point where one came which knew not Joseph. But there was this lingering effect of Joseph's life at the time in Egypt. You see this like lasting effect of a godly influence.

And you think of our nation today. We have a lasting effect of a godly influence. We're not a godly nation. But we are still reaping the benefits from that. And we don't realize the fruit that is sown when somebody chooses to walk after the Lord, to walk in righteousness.

The fruit of righteousness lasts a lot longer than the fruit of unrighteousness. Right? Sin is pleasurable for a season. It's a very short season. It doesn't last long. Like, think of the wicked men through history.

Eddie and I were talking about Hitler. You know, he didn't last very long. He's like, oh, it's Hitler. A few years and he's gone. You know? Think of the people that at times seemed like the biggest

crisis. Oh my word, that guy was elected.

It's over. And they don't last very long. Their legacy is not very lasting. But look at the legacy of the righteous men and women throughout history. That we're still reaping their benefits today.

[9 : 17] We're reaping that in our nation. We have the word of God because of the righteous and the benefits of their lives. And in our own lives. Look back over your history.

Right? You are probably, I am, I'm a direct result of reaping righteousness from someone else's life. From my parents' life. And those who've witnessed to them. You know? Think of Grandma Perino. And would I have the family I have now without her? You know? And then who shared with her? And then we're reaping those benefits. And so this king arose though.

And he knew not Joseph. And the same dealt subtly with our kindred. And evil entreated our fathers so that they cast out their young children to the end they might not live.

He gets this great plan. This great idea. Well, I don't want them to up and leave out of the land. But heaven forbid they continue to have children. And then grow stronger than us.

[10 : 14] So I got to figure something out here. And it says in Exodus that he said to his people, to the Egyptians, he said, hey, when they, when you see a male child born, get rid of it. If it's a female, leave it alive.

If it's a male, get rid of it. Well, Stephen here now is pointing out to us that it got to the point where the Hebrews, the Jews themselves, God's people, were casting out their own young.

It says he dealt subtly with our kindred and evil entreated our fathers so they cast out their young children. What does it take to bring someone to the point where they think, this is a good idea? This is, this is a really good idea to cast out my child.

You know, to, to God's people, where God's people are thinking, this is a really good idea. We don't need these people. You know, you look in scripture, children are a heritage of the Lord.

You know, blessed is the man who is his quiver full. In scripture, old age, fatness, children, they are a blessing from God.

[11 : 16] You know, an old fat man with a lot of kids? The scripture looks at that and says, how honorable and blessed is that man? And when a nation rejects God, it seems like they invariably turn to the young.

They focus on staying young, being young. You know, they don't see the blessing any longer in a long life. They can't see the value in that because they don't have spiritual eyes. It's just materialistic. What can you do for me at this point?

And so Stephen's going to go through his defense and we're going to look at like two angles. We're only going to get through Moses. Here a little, there a little. I'll bite off more than we can chew.

We'll probably just get through Moses. I've been sitting a lot with Moses this week and thinking through this guy and trying to get into his head. And so you have Stephen's defense. He's using Moses. He's going to show the key to that is when we look over in verse 39.

Speaking of Moses, it says, To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt. So he's using Moses because remember his defense, the accusations is, and that Stephen has said that Jesus shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

[12 : 29] And so Stephen's making this defense. Look, here is Moses. And my defense is that just like Moses, he was God's deliverer. He was God's chosen and you, well, your fathers rejected him.

Same way they did Jesus. I'm not changing anything. Jesus is actually right in line with Moses.

We're going to see that. But he also gives us some pretty cool insights into Moses. Stephen gives insights into events of the Old Testament that you don't find anywhere else.

The way he words it. We saw that with kind of with Abraham. He's the one who tells us that Abraham removed from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran, but then didn't leave there until his father died.

Yet God tells him from Ur of the Chaldees to leave your family, your father and your kindred.

Stephen gives us those little insights. So we're going to see some of those and how they apply to our lives.

But also keeping in mind, this is his defense. Do you think he practiced ahead of time? Do you think Stephen was like, oh, I need a good tie in. Okay, I did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses.

[13 : 31] How many verses I should spend on Moses for my defense, just in case I get, you know, taken before the same hatred. No, because what does the scripture say? I don't know if it's written

down, but it's in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

They all say it, that when you are taken before the rulers, do not think ahead of time, do not plan ahead of time what you shall say. For at that time, I will give you the words. Now, it doesn't say when you go to teach the word, don't think ahead of time and plan.

Unfortunately. It says study to show yourself approved, a workman that needs not reproved. It doesn't say, it's interesting, it doesn't say study the scripture.

It says study to show yourself approved. So we need to handle the word, and we do study the scripture, but we don't study the scripture for the sake of knowledge and then be like, well, I know a lot.

Therefore, I'll teach what I know. We teach because we trust that the Holy Spirit speaks. This is his method that he's chosen. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

[14:35] How shall they hear unless one be preached? And how shall one preach unless he be sent? Anyway, so here we have that they're casting out their young.

So if you are going to have children at this time, right, it's a really bad time to have a baby boy. Really bad time. Like, this isn't just like, well, you know, abortion is really pushed and we're overpopulated and, you know, you're awful young to have kids.

You're awful old to have kids. You're awful poor to have kids. You're awful rich to have kids. It's never a good time to have kids. Do you know that? It's never a good time to have kids. But God always blesses children.

You'll always have a reason. And you'll hear people, well, we're waiting until we get financially stable or we're waiting until whatever. God blesses children. It's their gift from the Lord. It's never looked at negatively from him.

But this is a bad time. You do not want to bring Moses into the world, right? God's up there going, you know, I need to bring Moses. Moses is going to lead my people out of Egypt.

[15:35] Moses is going to get the oracles of God on Mount Sinai. I need to let's and Gabriel's going, Lord, they're killing all the boys, Lord.

Can we wait a few years? It'd probably be better. Now is not the time. What does it say in verse 20? In which time Moses was born is the exact time God wanted to bring him.

It was not the time to be having a baby boy. And this was the time God brought him. I think about that right now with this idea of like playing a church. This is not the time to plant a church.

This is not the time to try and go find a house and buy. And like this is a horrible time. Like as the world will look at it. And the Lord goes, oh, perfect. In that time, this is the time.

You know, this is the time of the end. This is when the birth pains are happening. And the tendency is to be like, oh, wow, that's a pretty scary world out there. Come quickly, Jesus. I'm just going to like hide over in the bunker here until.

[16:32] No, this is the time to be out there. The gates of hell will not prevail against us. We have the promises of God. Let's go. Let's do it. So Moses is born in verse 20. And he was exceeding fair and nourished up in his father's house three months.

It doesn't just mean he's a cute baby. You know, some babies, you look at him, you go, oh, my word. Like Lily. Oh, she was a beautiful baby. She could have. We could have. We always said we could have made our fortune if we wanted to put her like into child modeling.

Right. And there's some babies are born. You go, it's a baby. There it is. Praise God. It'll probably look better when it's older. Right. A lot of potential there. This means it's more that he was fair to God.

But there is like there is something that his his parents recognize. God's hand is on this child's life. This is different than just, oh, well, this is a pretty, pretty child. So we'll keep him.

And so by faith, remember, in Hebrews 11, it says that by faith they kept him. They're in the hall of faith. So they nourish. He was nourished up in his father's house three months.

[17:32] So they kept him hidden for three months. I don't know how this was going down. If like it was like, oh, here comes baby patrol. And the guards from Egypt would come along and knock on your door and check and see if there's any baby boys or how this worked.

But you got to figure there was quite a bit of this going on. Trying to like shuffle kids around or whatever among the Hebrews. So for three months, they keep him hidden. And then for whatever reason, at this point, you know, you know, behind it's Oswald Chambers who says that that God works through the haphazard.

Like it just looks like some haphazard kind of like spur of the moment, whatever. And God is working through that. And so here Moses's mom, for whatever reason, is like, well, I got to get rid of him.

It's not going to work to keep him any longer. Behind that is the Holy Spirit prompting her because this is going to set off a crazy chain of events. And so she takes him and she cast him out.

Says in verse 21, when he was cast out, God's deliverer, chosen person to deliver his people, recognized by that and cast out. Wasn't able to be kept.

[18:38] Pharaoh's daughter took him up and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and in deeds. So for whatever reason, this young woman, she finds him in the rushes, right?

And she opens the basket and there's a cute little baby. And she has a heart for him and decides she's going to keep him and raise him as her own. You know, why? Has she found any other children before? I mean, kids are being killed constantly.

And interestingly, everybody's okay with this. Nobody's like, that's a Hebrew baby. Uh-uh. Uh-uh. There's plenty of Egyptian babies you can adopt. You're not taking one of the Hebrew babies. They got to go. But for whatever reason, and you just see the Lord's hand in this, the Lord using Egypt, representing the world, to raise and protect, you know, his chosen one.

What does that make you think of? Right? Jesus. When Joseph is warned in a dream to go into Egypt and he takes Mary and he takes Jesus and he takes the gold, frankincense, and myrrh and lives off that.

In Egypt until Herod is dead. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds.

[19:52] And when he was full 40 years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. So Moses now for 40 years is schooled as an Egyptian. In Exodus, when he eventually flees Egypt and he gets to Midian and then he helps the shepherdesses to water their flock and they all go home and say to dad, you know, hey, this guy, they say this Egyptian helped us.

So he was an Egyptian. He looked like an Egyptian. He walked like an Egyptian. And every time he talked to them, he probably turned in silhouette. It's just what they did. He was out of place by the time he got to Midian.

And he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. And he was mighty in words and in deeds. Moses has three periods of his life broken up by 40 years. He's got 40 years in Egypt where he becomes a mighty man in word and deed.

He has 40 years on the backside of the desert where he becomes just kind of a very insecure, reserved type man.

And then he has 40 years in which he leads Israel around through the wilderness. And he's quite a guy by that point. I think at that point when it was written of him and Moses was the meekest man that ever lived.

[21:02] But anyway, at this point in his life, he's ready. He's had all the training he needs. He's ready to go into whatever it is that Egypt has for him.

And then God breaks into his world. It says that it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. There's a couple of things there. He knew there was his brethren. He would have been raised until, could have been as old as seven until he was weaned, it tells us in Exodus, before Amram, Jacobed.

I don't know which one's the man and which one's the woman. But before his mother took him and turned him over to Pharaoh's daughter. So he would have been raised and taught who he was, taught of his God.

And at this point, God puts it in his heart. But it says it came into his heart. There's still an ownership here that's his. But he's recognizing something. There's a greater call for his life. And he goes to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

Way to go, Moses. Yes!

[22:06] Pow, pow, pow! Pow, pow, pow! You know, God, give him some supernatural strength like Samson to take out all the Egyptians. Pow, pow, pow, pow! No. This is God's call, but not God's sending. God had called Moses, but God had not yet sent Moses.

We're going to see in verse... Verse 35 says, The same did God send to be a ruler and deliverer. Moses recognized correctly.

And then he says in verse 25, Do you think Moses had probably seen one of his brethren being whooped down before?

Forty years old. I'm sure he has seen that. Seeing one of them suffering wrong, he defended him. Right? So what changed? Well, Moses now has this call. Right? And he expects these guys to recognize, This is my call.

And then he steps in. We can do the same thing. Right? The world's going on around us, and all of a sudden God puts a call in our life, and we expect everybody else to like, Well, stop! I have a call. You know, you need to make way for my calling.

[23 : 18] You need to let me do what God has called me to do. And if we push forward in that without the Lord sending, well, look at Moses and what he did. Was it good for him to fend his brother?

Maybe. Maybe. Maybe it was. But by his own strength and his own methods, how many people did he deliver? One.

One guy. But when he goes with God's method and God's timing, he delivers over a million people. And that has really been speaking to me. I'm a full 40 years old.

41. You know? And I look at Moses, and his period of fruitfulness was still in the future. It was still to come. His greatest period of fruitfulness in his life would be when he's over 80 years old.

I hope I don't have to wait till then. But to see that, like, ahead of me is the greatest period of fruitfulness. That the greatest potential is ahead. When I do things in God's way.

[24 : 16] When it's God's call, God's timing, and God's sending. So Moses, he thinks that these guys are going to just be like, yes, let's do this. Remember, he has all the learning and wisdom of the Egyptians.

This is the world's way. This is Egypt's method. And the next day he showed himself unto them, as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, you are brethren. Why do you wrong one another?

So now he comes with wisdom and knowledge. And what is the proverb? That he who passes by, and meddling in affairs not his own, is like one who takes a dog by the ears. Right?

So like, passing by, it's not your business, but you step in, it's like grabbing a dog by the ears. You know? What's that going to do? The thing's going to... And that's what it's like.

When they say, unwanted advice is criticism. Unasked for advice is criticism. You didn't ask for my advice, but I'm going to tell you. And it's going to come across as criticism. So Moses steps in here, saying, Sirs, you are brethren.

[25 : 15] Why do you wrong one another? But he that did his neighbor wrong, thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? God's timing will always bring God's authority.

Without that, Moses had no authority. He said, Well, I'm God's deliverer. I was a beautiful baby. You know? God blessed me as a baby. I remember this guy, I told the youth group this, last time we did youth group, that near where I worked, I worked at a water treatment plant, there was a neighbor, and he needed his water shut off or turned down, I don't know.

And I was walking with him up his driveway, and I said, Do you know the Lord? Oh, yeah. I'm a big Christian. Been a Christian before I was born. And I was like, Oh.

I don't think so. But first I was like, Oh, great. He's like, Oh, yeah, I know the Lord. Big Christian. I'm like, Okay. I don't think so. You know, Moses, He could say, Hey, from my birth, I was set apart.

And so can we. God set us apart from our birth. But Moses had this specific call. But he didn't have any authority here, because it wasn't God's timing, and he wasn't doing it in God's method.

[26 : 26] But, despite that, what is Stephen pointing out? They thrust away God's deliverer. Moses knew, that I am called by God to deliver these people. Yes, I am God's man for the hour, would say Moses.

And that the people of Israel thrust him away. Wilt thou kill me, as thou did the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying.

Whoa, Moses, come on now. You were like He-Man here, man of the hour, wisdom. You know, it says he was mighty in word and deed. Well, Egypt's wisdom quickly falls apart. Egypt's wisdom lasts about that long when it's put to the test, right?

The trying of our faith or good patience. Faith is meant to be tried. It produces fruit. But, the world's wisdom, when it's tried, quickly falls apart. There's nothing underneath it.

Boy, aren't we seeing that today. What's that thing they're at right now? Yeah, where they're talking about all the environmental stuff. It's like comical.

[27 : 29] It's like, you know it's a spiritual veil over the eyes of the world. When people are over there telling you, oh, don't be driving cars. Don't be eating this kind of food.

And like, they're eating gourmet food and doing all, it's like, hypocrites. And then, I think it was John Kerry, not to get off on this, he said, well, already half the species of the world have died. It's like, what?

Come on, man. Yeah. Yeah. They can walk outside. You know, it's like when, when COVID was at its height. People are dying everywhere. I never saw one person die.

I've seen more people die now after COVID or heard of them or seen videos of them dropping dead than I ever saw during COVID. You know, there wasn't people walking on the streets. And if you turn off your TV and stop reading your smartphone and the news on there, you'd realize that there's nothing here.

This is just the wisdom of the Egyptians. Then fled Moses at this saying, and he was a stranger in the land of Midian where he begat two sons. And when he was 40 years, and when 40 years were expired, oh, ouch, the way it's put.

[28 : 34] When he was 40 years older, you know, 40 years were expired. I think for Moses, they were. When Moses was God's man, he thought. Two years into Midian, hey, well, all right, you know, three years, four, five years, 10 years, Lord, this must be the time because, you know, 10 years ago on this date when the moon was, all right, we do the same thing, you know, well, 6,000 years from creation.

Would that be this date? I wonder then maybe the Lord's coming now because we do the same thing trying to figure out dates. And maybe Moses was doing some of that. And you gotta figure by the time 40 years expired and the man's 80 years old, he was just doing his routine.

Then, at this time, just like we had read into which time Moses was born. There appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

When Moses saw it, he wandered at the sight and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Then Moses trembled and durst not behold. God shows up to Moses and I don't see God telling anything about who Moses is because God needed Moses to get to the point where it wasn't anymore about Moses.

[29 : 59] God could reveal himself and say, I am. Can you live with that, Moses? Can you handle that? What are we told? We're told that if any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Death to my own plans, desires, will, self? Okay, Lord, sure. Well, death to recognition, death to being noticed, death to being thanked, right?

Hmm, that one can be hard. Death, when someone else gets credit, but you're like, but I did that, right? Those moments where God says, come with me, right?

This is the way the crucified went. Will you follow on this path? The God of the call must be known before the call of God can be fulfilled. I butchered that. The God of the call must be known before the call of God can be fulfilled.

And here God is revealing himself to Moses, showing him who he is. Then said the Lord to him, put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place where thou standst is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people, which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and I am come down to deliver them.

[31 : 07] And now, come, I will send thee into Egypt. The call fully realized. When it's not Moses, came into Moses' heart, it was Moses who acted.

No, it's God saying, first come, come, come unto me, and then go. I will send you. We do not fulfill God's call. God fulfills his call by using us.

When God puts his call in our life, we don't then go forth and say, yes, I'm going to do this.

Unfortunately, many times we do, and the church as a whole does that a lot. They do a lot of good things in the name of Jesus.

But is it Jesus doing the work, or is it people doing the work on Jesus' behalf, and then saying, God, please bless this. But specifically, the Lord reveals himself, and he reveals his purpose, and then he

sends.

And so this Moses, now Stephen's getting into this defense, he just laid out who this Moses was. This Moses, whom they refused, saying, who made thee a ruler and a judge, the same did God send to be a ruler, a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

[32 : 16] Moses was not sent by man's choosing or authority. Man had rejected him. From Moses' standpoint, he was done. Nobody had accepted him, nobody believed him, nobody responded. But from God's standpoint, he was right on track and right on target.

Divine appointment very often is unrecognized by men. There's not going to be any people, you know, your neighbors aren't going to knock on your door and be like, I realize you're born again. I'm so excited that you can tell me about God.

You know, that you are anointed by Jesus. You have the filling of the Holy Spirit? No way. You have eternal life? I can't believe it. Give me some of that. Not usually going to happen. It's unrecognized. And then even among God's people, how infrequently do we really recognize God's hand on someone?

I can attest to that. You see God use someone and you go, no way. Sometimes I look in the mirror and it's like, no way. I look at my heart and I'm like, no way. You know, I can't even recognize that. But God's grace is sufficient. And so, here he became a ruler and judge. I like to think that maybe that guy that he killed the Egyptian and the guy he delivered and then the next day who said to him, who made you a ruler and judge over us?

[33 : 25] I like to think he was still alive. That when Moses came back, you know, they rejected their deliverer. They rejected God's chosen but he came back. Moses, rejected by God, came back as God's deliverer.

You see that in a picture of Jesus. He was rejected. And Stephen's presenting that to these guys. The deliverer you rejected, he's come back. He's come back as your redeemer. He's come back to take you out of bondage. And I like to think that this dude was alive, some old man now, and is heading out with Moses and how awesome that would be a redemption story for him.

He brought them out. Moses did. After that, he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness 40 years. Acts 4.12 says, Neither is there salvation in any other name for there's none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

Speaking of Jesus, there is no other salvation. There is no other name. There's one way. God's deliverer is the only option. These guys weren't getting out of Egypt any other way. Moses was the only option.

This Moses he delivered them. And then Stephen says this, This, isn't that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me.

[34 : 39] Him shall you hear. Remember they asked John the Baptist, they said, Are you the one who is to come? Are you the Messiah? Are you the prophet who is to come? And John said, No, I'm not him. That's not me. And Jesus asked in Matthew 16.13 when he said, Who do men say that I am?

And they said, Well, some say Elijah. Some say John the Baptist. Some say you're one of the prophets. And Jesus said, But who do you say that I am? And so this is the prophet.

Jesus is that prophet. He's the one who Moses, who was rejected by God's people, prophesied of another one that God's people has now rejected. This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sinai and with our fathers who received the lively oracles to give unto us to whom our fathers would not obey but thrust him from them and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt because the flesh can never be brought under God's authority. Look how quickly they turn. They turn very quickly in their hearts. Romans 10.10 tells us that with the heart man confesses, man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made. So out of the heart. So their hearts had not believed. Their hearts hadn't believed and so they were living at this point, I think they were living like sign by sign by sign. You know, and that's what the flesh does. The flesh has to have one more.

[36 : 01] Just one more example. One more. One more. Faith says, God, you said it. I'll believe it. Faith is Abraham. When God comes to him in Ur of the Chaldeans and says, I'm going to bless you and Abraham says, okay. The flesh says, can you show me?

Can you show me that? And then God shows us and the flesh goes, will you show me one more time? Just one more. And here you see with these guys, they've been brought through the Red Sea.

They've watched Pharaoh's army be destroyed. And now they say to Aaron in verse 40, make us gods to go before us. For as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's become of him.

You do too. He's on the mountain. The mountain is burning with fire. There's smoke on it. It says, darkness descended upon it and the fire of God was there. They know exactly where Moses is. And they made a calf in those days and offered sacrifice unto the idol and rejoiced in the works of their hands.

Their own hands, their own way, and their own gods. That's what they wanted. They wanted all the benefits of deliverance, but they did not want to be under God's authority.

[37 : 07] And so they've rejected Moses. Stephen's defense is being made to these people that at this time they believed they had all the benefits of being God's people. They were the chosen people.

They wanted all the benefits, but they did not want to put themselves under God's authority. And so here in the wilderness, they've rejected Moses. And then verse 42, then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven.

Did God change his mind? No, I think God changed direction. He changed the direction that these people were heading because in their hearts they turned back from him. So it wasn't that, you know, he's punishing them.

When they didn't go into the promised land, it was because they couldn't. The promised land had to be taken by force? Faith. The promised land was taken by faith. If that generation had gone into the promised land, they would have been smoked.

God's people would have been done. You know, you'd have like Joshua, Caleb, and Moses couldn't go in because he'd struck the rock. You'd have nobody. So God was protecting them by this.

[38 : 13] And you'd like to think that the generation that died off in the wilderness, you'd like to think that they had turned to the Lord and repented because their kids did go in and did conquer.

And you gotta think as they're walking through the wilderness, you know, year 35, and little Johnny's like, Dad, I'm tired of this. Why are we in the wilderness? You know, every time I buy a pair of shoes, they wear, no, the shoes didn't wear out.

You know, I've been wearing the same shoes for 15 years. That's cool. But, and you gotta hope.

You say, well, son, we had our chance and we didn't obey. You know, the covenant we're under right now is God has made a covenant with us and we all said yes at the mountain, that yes, we would follow and obey.

We didn't. And so now we're under God's wrath, but even in his wrath, he still loves us and there's still a promised son that you will go into the promised land. Don't miss it. When you have your chance to walk by faith, when the impossible is in front of you, don't do what we did.

Don't turn back in fear. And so God turned their direction, gave them up to worship the host of heaven as it's written in the book of the prophets. Oh, you house of Israel, have you offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of 40 years in the wilderness?

[39 : 25] Yeah, you took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your God, Rephin, figures which you made to worship them and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. He's kind of compressing into here, you know, they're wandering in the wilderness into their rebellion after they're even in the land and how they had to be carried to Babylon.

It seemed very good at the time to them to worship these gods, to follow after them. In the moment, it seemed like a good idea. They had their reasons. It wasn't just like, woohoo, let's throw off all your strength and be evil, debauched sinners.

There was, you know, good reason. They thought Proverbs 11, 19, and then we will wrap up here.

It tells us, as righteousness tends to life, so he that pursues evil pursues it to his own death.

Indication, righteousness tends to life, he that pursues evil. They start at the same point. As you move down that path, you don't turn to the path of evil and it's like, oh, I'm dead. Smoked.

[40 : 36] You know, it's a path. You pursue it. As you continue to pursue and move down it, it ends in death. As you tend towards life and pursue life, it ends in life.

And there's people we can walk with right now where maybe we're only a couple degrees apart and it seems like, huh, well, everything seems to be like we're going in the same direction. But man, I'd swear that they're not tending towards life.

The decisions they're making just don't seem to be in line with what the Lord would call life, that he would call us to do. Putting on the new man, putting off the old man. And yet, I don't see any effect in their life.

Seems like it's okay. But as you keep walking and as you walk in the path of life, you know, eventually, you get further apart and further apart and you, wisdom is justified of our children, right? We reap what we sow. We reap later than we sow and we reap more than we sow. So, I think we'll end there. I have a tendency to go really long.

[41 : 37] I had very good counsel and then the Lord spoke to me last week when I was thinking about that because man, I go back and forth about like, oh Lord, what teaching style? And he took me that verse in Isaiah where it was precept upon precept, line upon line and then here a little, there a little.

And he just spoke to me like, it's all right. You're a little, there a little. I don't have to try and eat the whole thing. We'll finish out seven next time.

I think we're going to do study next week because the week after the first of February, we are going to California, taking Natty to California Wednesday through Sunday to check out Bible College out there and you pray for me.

I'm teaching at it. So first time I'll teach for an hour and a half on purpose. So yeah, they're like, you want to teach? You can get Friday morning at eight from eight to nine 30.

That's going to be great. A bunch of kids at the end of their week, you know, but I think the scripture in Psalm, I think it's 11, three, that if the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?

[42 : 40] Just thinking how Bible college has been such a foundation in my life and theme other foundations in my life, the word of God, you know, faith, hope, and love. What is our hope, our blessed hope, the rapture?

And if these things are removed, what would I have? What would I be? So that's what I'm thinking of doing. But as we move in this next section, he's going to then transfer, transition from looking at specific people who are God's deliverer and were rejected by Israel into then where he talked about, well, they said Jesus would destroy this temple.

And he's going to look at the physical representations of God, of the witness of God's presence on earth, looking at the tabernacle, looking at the temple, and how for the first time in history of the world, God puts a physical representation, a witness of himself in the world, and then how even then it didn't actually do anything for these people because their hearts were so turned.

And so I think as we close, the two things I really take away are, man, our greatest days of fruitfulness are still ahead of us. There's a harvest to be brought in.

Jesus said, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest that you send forth laborers into the harvest. That means there's room for all of us, guys. It's plentiful.

[43 : 57] I mean, you could be there and I could be here and grabbing in the harvest and we're not going to overlap. There's so much. So pray. Pray for a harvest. Pray God will give you a harvest. He will. Whether it's a soul, many souls, whether it's teaching God's people, whether it's encouraging someone, whatever.

Pray that God gives us a harvest because our greatest days of fruitfulness are still ahead. They're still to come. In God's timing, God's call produces God's harvest. Or brings in God's harvest, produces fruit.

And then the second thing is, I think of that dude, the dude that I hope was still alive when Moses came back. When he was like, who made you a ruler and a judge over us? That there's always a second chance with the Lord.

You know, it's going to tell us that so many of the priests had turned to the Lord. Have we already looked at that part? I don't know. It's been a while. So many of the priests would come to know the Lord and would turn to the Lord through the witness of these apostles who's being brought before them over and over and over and over.

And, you know, Scripture says that the, Peter says that the long suffering of, know you not that the long suffering of the Lord works salvation. You know, let patience have her perfect work.

[45 : 05] The trying of our faith worketh patience. Let patience have her perfect work. You may be perfect and tire wanting nothing. So, as faith is tried, right, what we saw with Israel when they were tried, they didn't have faith.

It was the flesh and it falls apart. The flesh can't stand pressure. It crumbles. Faith, when it's tried, produces patience. Patience, then, produces a sense of a completeness and a wholeness.

But what does patience take? Time. Time. Moses took a lot of time. And so, Stephen holds before us this amazing man and, just as Jesus is held before us.

And it's like, do we accept him or do we thrust him away from us saying, who made you? You saved my soul, but who made you a ruler and a judge over that part of my life?

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. I like watching that show. Get out of there. You know? No, no, no. My time is mine. I give, I go to work, I come home, I, you know, I go to church and I serve.

[46 : 04] You're not going to take that time, Lord. Who made you a ruler and a judge? Let's not thrust him from us. Let's recognize that, you know, he's our deliverer. Lord Jesus, thank you for your word, Lord.

Lord, you're little, they're little. And then, the next part tells us in Isaiah that that is our, our rest and our strength think, the wording.

So, Lord, thank you so much, Lord. Thank you for this word. Thank you for holding up to us tonight, Lord. Moses, in all his faults and frailties, Moses, thinking, it's over.

I've been rejected. I've been set aside. I'm on the shelf. You know, I tried my best. That was awkward. I knew I should have shared the gospel with that guy. I did. I think he might have got saved and I'm not going to try that again.

And little did he know, his greatest days of fruitfulness were ahead of him. And, Lord, when we do so foolishly thrust away your deliverer, when we thrust away the only name under heaven by which we must be saved, thank you, Lord, that you come back around again and again and again, Lord, and that you are our deliverer.

[47 : 14] So, tonight, Lord, we say yes. Yes to you. We do not thrust you away, Lord. And, Lord, like Stephen, we want to be men and women filled with wisdom, filled with the Holy Spirit, ready to give an answer to any man who would ask us for the reason of the hope that is in us.

Give us a harvest, Lord. Give each one of us a harvest. Lord, I am excited because I believe the greatest days of fruitfulness for this group and for the church, Lord, the true church, your remnant, Lord, is ahead of us.

And, Lord, you're going to come soon, Lord, with a shout and you're going to gather your harvest, Lord. You're going to gather your church, gather us all in, Lord, and it'll be over. There'll be no more opportunity to strive with sin, to say no to the flesh, to go out and labor in the harvest, Lord.

So, Lord, let us do that now and let us do it well because pretty soon we're all going to be together with you. It'll all be over. Let us spend and be spent, we pray. Fill us through your spirit and just the presence, Lord, of your amazing redemptive peace and in Jesus' name, Amen.