



Matthew 7:14

Excellent Things

"Have not I written to thee excellent things..." Proverbs 22:20

A monthly teaching newsletter of *Narrow Way Ministries International* Issue 12 - March 2019
nwmin.org or NWworship.com



*"GO YE THEREFORE,
AND TEACH ALL NATIONS"
MATTHEW 28:19*

The True Revelation Of Stephen's Death



Dear Friends and Family,

In this month's teaching, I would like to talk about a man named Stephen in the Bible and his impact during his life and how it speaks to us today. We find his story in Acts 6-7 and it ends with him being stoned to death. Stephen seemed to have so much to give with such a bright future, especially in ministry, only to be stopped abruptly with his death at the hands of Saul and the Jews.

What do we do when we are accused of things we didn't do or didn't dream of doing? What do we do when people are stoning us, accusing us with their words, like they were doing to Stephen? What do we do when it seems that God doesn't show up on our behalf? Many Christians could look at Stephen as a failure since he had such an apparent bright future of ministry. But Stephen gave his life for the Gospel!

Years ago, I heard a famous brother in the charismatic movement share out of Hebrews 11:13, where it says, *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises."* He ridiculed the congregation and said that they didn't have enough faith to receive what God promised them. Now in the evangelical world where martyrdom is highly esteemed, they seem to understand this principle more. But in the charismatic world, where we live in this hyper-faith

prosperity driven Gospel, little is heard of suffering for the Kingdom of God's sake. I grew up in the faith movement. I watched every single word that came out of my mouth. I was taught that everything bad that happened was of the devil and everything good that happened was of God. Over the years as I searched the Scriptures, I discovered we were taught wrong. The blessing of the Lord is not determined by how much money you have or by how "successful" you are in the world's or religion's eyes. It is determined by the grace of God that is upon your life and upon your character.

Stephen's story starts out in Acts 6. Stephen was one of the first deacons in the church. Stephen was a servant which is very rare to find nowadays. Let's read his story:

"¹And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. ²Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. ³Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. ⁴But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to

the ministry of the word. ⁵And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: ⁶Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. ⁷And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. ⁸And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." (Acts 6:1-3)

First, in verse 1 this all began with murmuring and complaining from the people. As a pastor for over forty years, I can't tell you how many times I have had to oversee arguments arising because somebody was feeling like their needs weren't being met. This is the body of Christ in a nutshell. In the body where many people are murmuring, arguing, backbiting, and hearing voices about each other, God has to find people that are pure hearted, clean, and shine in the midst so His Kingdom can move forward.

In Acts 6, the Apostles met together to deal with the neglect of ministry to the widows and chose Stephen and six others. All they had to do was look out among the crowd and figure out who

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the true servants were. This wasn't difficult at all because if you ask any church, you always know who the true servants are. When you call for helpers or for a prayer meeting, the same faithful servants are the ones who are going to show up and do the work.

So out of this confusion, strife, and contention in the body of Christ, as depicted in Acts 6, God has servants in the midst that the people recognize as such. When somebody has the anointing of God, everybody is going to know it and recognize it. We don't have to force our authority because people will be drawn to somebody who is a servant and has the anointing upon their lives. This is why the Apostles gave instruction to the people, *"look ye out among you seven men of honest report..."* (Acts 6:3). In other words, the Apostles told the people to choose those in the midst of them who were already doing the work. Of those seven men, Stephen was one of the chosen. Not only did he have an honest report and lived a life of integrity, he was *"...full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom."* People who are servants, who live a life of integrity, and are full of the Holy Ghost, will have the wisdom of God to accomplish the work God has called them to. Stephen was one of seven appointed as a deacon and was *"full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."*

Notice also that after the apostles laid their hands on them and set them in as deacons, verse 7 says, *"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied..."* Once servants are recognized and set in their place, this is when increase comes to a local church or to the body of Christ.

In verse 8, it continues and says, *"And Stephen, full of faith and power did great wonders and miracles among the people."* I like this. Out of Stephen's simple service to widows, God moved mightily

You may think your job of service you do is insignificant because it is behind the scenes. Don't fret and have a pity party. Believe God in your situation and be like Stephen. Be full of faith and the Holy Ghost in everything you do! Keep your eyes on Jesus, like Stephen, and you will be amazed at what Jesus can do through you!

I can attest to this myself. When I was a young disciple, I was the go to man for everything. When nobody wanted to do something, they would just say, "Call Sam, he'll do it." Many times I would be doing the work alone. I always had to keep my heart right and not judge others who always sought the limelight but never lifted a finger to help. This is part of the process and dealings of God! All of us are nothing more than servants. God wants His ministers to have a servant's heart because it is not about us. It is always about others. Because Stephen was faithful where God planted him, God began to do great wonders and miracles among the people. God used him mightily. What an awesome young man Stephen was!

But with every person God anoints and uses, great warfare will follow. This reminds me of II Samuel 5:17-18 when David was anointed, *"¹⁷But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold.¹⁸The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim."* The name Rephaim here in the Hebrew means "giants." The enemy loves to spread themselves against you when the anointing of God comes upon you, especially in the valley of giants. This is why the ministry is hard and why great preparation is needed. People never know the warfare that comes until you are placed there. People see the anointing upon others and want it for

themselves, but are never willing to pay the price. It all begins by learning to be a servant. If you can't keep your heart right and shine in the midst of the body with regular murmuring and complaining, you will never be ready when Philistines spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. The ministry is one of the hardest jobs and many people that enter the ministry themselves, quickly find this out and want to get out of it soon thereafter.

With every person God begins to use mightily, great warfare comes. When great warfare comes, we must be faithful to the Word God has given us. If we can't be faithful with the little things, we will never be faithful in the great things. This is why servanthood is the proving ground for everybody! But even though Stephen was being a faithful servant and doing what he was told to do, watch what happens:

"⁹Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.¹⁰And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.¹¹Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.¹²And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,¹³And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:¹⁴For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.¹⁵And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." (Acts 6:9-15)

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Despite the warfare, *“they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.”* Stephen was a man of God and he kept himself. He had control over his own spirit. He was faithful to the word God had given him. He didn't allow the accusations and warfare to come in and change him. He didn't lose his cool or react in the flesh. If we are accused of things we didn't do, then pride so many times can easily come in and cause us to defend ourselves. Not with Stephen! He simply spoke the truth in love and was faithful to the end.

But the more he spoke, the worse it got. Stephen did not deserve any of this. All he did was serve faithfully, spoke the truth, and did what God called him to do. God was using him mightily and the reward was great warfare and accusations. This is the right of passage for God's true anointing.

In the midst of the warfare, this was Stephen's testimony, *“And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”* There was nothing self-righteous or phony about Stephen. Your face reveals your heart. His inner purity and beauty was being revealed. He truly had a God-like character, so much so, he is the only character in the Bible that we know Jesus stood for. The Bible is clear that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. But Jesus stood up for Stephen while he was being stoned! Stephen had the face of an angel. What a man of God!

Acts 7 begins by the high priest asking Stephen, *“Are these things so?”* So the rest of Acts 7 is Stephen standing and giving an account of the history and story of the children of Israel and their journeys in the Old Testament. Stephen ends by saying in Acts 7:51, *“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart*

and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.” Was Stephen saying anything wrong? No. He was simply telling the people what they had and who they were as well as exposing how they were resisting what God was wanting to do in their lives.

In my years of ministering, I can honestly say that there are far too many believers that fit this description. They are stiffnecked and always resist the Holy Ghost, especially when the Holy Ghost is trying to deal with them. Instead, most people blame the messenger, run them out of town, and justify their sin. Stephen continues, *“Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?”* This is a script that has been played over and over again with the children of Israel and continues to this day in the body of Christ. Here was their response:

“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth,” (Acts 7:54). This says to me that they were convicted of their sin. “Cut to the heart” means they knew Stephen was right and knew their history. God was dealing with them, trying to penetrate their stubborn hearts. If they had just repented right then, Stephen would have lived. But God allowed it because a greater purpose was at work in Stephen's life.

A greater purpose is at work in your life and in my life. What we don't see or understand now, we will see later. Hosea 6:3 says, *“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning...”* God knows what He is doing! We can't just keep our eyes on our current situation and think this is all there is.

Instead of repenting, they gnashed on Stephen, which means they called him every ugly thing you can think of. They

cut him down with their words. Stephen's response was glorious, *“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.”* (Acts 7:55)

Most people just want to be filled with the Holy Ghost only during a worship service or in a meeting. We don't really want to be full of the Holy Ghost at our jobs. We don't want to be full of the Holy Ghost when there is an argument going on or when there is some sort of conflict. We definitely don't want to be full of the Holy Ghost when we are accused of something we didn't do. How indignant we become when lies are told about us and we lose the preciousness of the Holy Ghost moving through us.

Suffering is the door that the Holy Ghost finds such great purpose through which to move. II Corinthians 4:17 says, *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”* Now Stephen died pretty quickly in this story, but Jesus was working something far more glorious. He knows His will for our lives even if we don't many times. It may not be time for us to understand. God hides many things from us. We don't have to know everything that is going on right now. In Job 33:13 it says, *“For He giveth not account of any of His matters.”* God is not obligated to tell us what is going on. He only does it because He loves us and occasionally it is in His will to let us know what is happening to help us.

While they were gnashing on Stephen with their teeth, Stephen saw the glory of God and Jesus standing up. When do we seem to hear about the greatest number of visions and supernatural experiences in life? It is when people

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are being martyred or persecuted. In our persecution, we can see the Lord.

Then Stephen had the audacity to ignore everybody else and say what he was seeing, *"Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God"* (Acts 7:56). Stephen had an open vision of what was going on in the heavenly realm. When we submit to the will of God in suffering, God will let us see something. Nobody else may know or see, but we will certainly know. Everybody else may be persecuting us and saying how we missed God or whatever, but we and Jesus will know. Jesus stood up to honor Stephen at that moment.

What happened once Stephen confessed he saw Jesus standing up? Did they repent, bow down, and worship the Lord? It says, *"Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him..."* (Acts 7:57-58).

They couldn't take listening to this pure man of God talking. I wonder what the other believers who may have been there or heard about it later were thinking. Perhaps their first thought was, "Oh well, another man of God down. He had such promise. What a ministry he could have had. He had a face of an angel and now he is dead. How sad."

I don't believe Stephen was feeling the pain of those stones. Even if he did, it wouldn't have mattered because he saw the glory of God. Stephen may not have understood everything at that moment. Even though we don't understand everything we go through in this life for what God is doing, know He has a greater purpose.

My heart is moved every time I read about the hall of fame of faith in He-

brews 11, especially for those that *"were tortured, not accepting deliverance...And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise,"* (Hebrews 11:35,39). These all died in faith and Jesus says of them, *"Of whom the world was not worthy,"* (Hebrews 11:38). Another translation of this reads, *"Of whom the world was too evil to see their worth."* This is true faith! All Stephen must have known during these last moments of his life was that he had told the truth and that he had done the best he could. God honored him by showing up and giving him an open vision.

The Bible includes some more information at the end of stoning Stephen that tells it all. It blew my mind when I read it again the other day, *"... and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul..."* (Acts 7:58). Saul who would later become Paul and write two-thirds of the New Testament saw it all. Paul gets saved shortly after this. Paul was holding their clothes as they stoned Stephen. Paul was so affected by the testimony of Stephen, something was birthed in his heart that day. I don't believe they would have mentioned this if this wasn't true. Perhaps Stephen had a moment before he died where he looked at the young man Saul. Perhaps while Stephen was beholding Jesus standing at the right hand of God, Jesus pointed Saul out to Stephen and he witnessed Stephen's end.

While Stephen was being stoned, he called upon God and said, *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep,"* (Acts 7:59-60). It says Stephen cried with a loud voice. Saul must have heard Stephen and watched his reaction as he died right there. Stephen didn't say

that so he could get glory or anything foolish like that. He said it to let those there know that he wasn't like them. He wasn't vengeful, but rather used that moment for them to see the mercy and love of God that Jesus had for them, despite what they were doing. He didn't want Jesus to lay his stoning to their charge, especially Saul.

Whatever you are going through today, trust the Lord! He knows what is going on. Trust in the counsel of His will that He knows everything and cares for us. Have a Kingdom perspective. Stephen's life was not a failure. It didn't end in failure. It ended with the purposes of the Kingdom of God written all over it. Out of this, Saul would become Paul and write two-thirds of the New Testament. Even today, I thank God for Stephen because perhaps we wouldn't have most of the New Testament if Saul hadn't had been there consent to Stephen's death and hear his final words. It would only be a short while after this that Saul would be on the road to Damascus with a glorious light knocking him over.

Stephen's life was glorious and it ended far more glorious than anything else he had ever done his entire life!

Help us today Lord Jesus to be like Stephen! Help us to see our lives from a Kingdom perspective. Help us to see our lives and the lives of those around us knowing Jesus has a plan for everything as God's Kingdom moves forward. What appears to be failures around us, let it all redound to the glory of God bringing life changing experiences to everybody and not just ourselves. Give us the grace and mercy to be faithful to do our part unto the end like our precious brother Stephen!

*Jesus Is Precious!
Brother Sam*

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Katie's Korner

This is Thankworthy

I've been rolling a scripture around in my head for weeks. It wasn't until I listened to Sam's word on Stephen, that it became illuminated. What a Word! God help us to be more like Stephen! I'm soooo close. Lol! Not even in the ballpark.

I Peter 2:19-20 says, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. Vs.19 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

Wait! Hold on Peter! He was just giving a grocery list in the previous verses on things we need to do: abstain from lusts, speak honestly, follow the local ordinances of man (don't break the law), don't abuse your liberty, honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear and honor God and so forth. He doesn't mention any special benefit for us when we do these things, but he does single out one specific thing that, if done, is THANKWORTHY.

Now I am excited! What is this *thankworthy* thing that makes it so coveted? It means thanks in the typical way we understand the word, essentially "thanks for your service." It also

means grace. It means loving-kindness, good will, or favor. This is the character of God that causes Him to stoop in kindness to inferior ones.

He says "Take it patiently. This means to 'endure, bear bravely and calmly, and don't flee. So, now I'm not so excited. You understand what he's asking right?' It's not thankworthy to do this when you've done something wrong, when you're taking your medicine for some stupid thing you've done. This is what's expected of you when you're 'completely and totally innocent of all charges your Honor'. Now abstaining from lust and all those other things he lists don't even get an honorable mention. Nope, this hearty thank you is only good for when you're completely innocent.

Wow! I'm thinking, "Peter, all I get is a 'thanks for your service', when I do THE MOST IMPOSSIBLE THING EVER". Ok, so not impossible, but really, really hard. How many people do you know can be egregiously wronged and keep quiet about it? Thanks Stephen for making the rest of us look like petty children! Actually, it wasn't until I was listening to Stephen's story that God chose to straighten my way of thinking. Acts 7:55, says that Stephen saw Jesus standing on the right hand of the Father. This was happening at the moment Stephen was about to pay the ultimate price, his natural life. Then I heard a whisper in my spirit.

"That was me thanking Stephen for his service." That 'Thankworthy' scripture flew into my head and my eyes saw the truth of it.

There are many things as a Christian we are to strive for, many hard things, but nothing that He does not give us the wherewithal to obtain. However, there aren't so many things that the Lord takes time to stop everything and let us know that He is thankful. I mean, we are all used to telling Him what we are thankful for. I never considered that He might be thankful for something! When ANYTHING is done to us wrongfully, and we endure this grief patiently, that is **thankworthy**. I'm not just talking about people bad-mouthing you because of your doctrine, but ANY harm coming your way that is unwarranted. When we stoop in kindness to an inferior one, and, that means anyone that would do us harm unjustly, we show Gods character, and the sovereign God of the universe stops and thanks us. 'For this is thankworthy...to suffer wrongfully'.

Ok Jesus, we got this! We'll bear it bravely and CALMLY when people wrong us, and we won't run! (And we certainly won't call everyone we know and tell them how terribly unjust this person is). God help us all! Don't know about you, but I really want to give Him something to be thankful for.

♥ Sister Katie

YOU'RE INVITED!

NWMI Minister's Conference!

April 11-14, 2019, Jacksonville, FL



Narrow Way
Ministries Int'l

Narrow Way Ministries International is excited to announce our first minister's conference in April. Brother Sam will be teaching on "The Mantle" throughout these four days, as well as we will be hearing from the different Narrow Way Ministries around the country and world. We will come together to worship Jesus and hear a living Word to strengthen and encourage us into the future! Brother Sam is trusting that it's going to be a glorious revelation and impartation to everyone present. He would love for you come and be part of it. It will take place at Narrow Way Jacksonville next month. The address is 1301-17 Monument Road, Jacksonville, FL 32225. We will be posting meeting times soon on our website, nwmin.org. If you have any questions, feel free to call Martin, Pastor of Narrow Way Jacksonville at 904-625-0655.



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OTHER NEWS

New Website - coming soon!

www.nwmin.org

Over the next month and year, we are redoing our website, nwmin.org. If you happen to go on it before completion, please forgive us for the digital mess, lol! This new website that we are making is going to strive to be a powerful resource for everyone. By the grace of God, Brother Sam will be streaming an apostolic video series as he looks to share and connect with people as much as possible. We hope to have many other new features to help bring you the Word of God and Glory of God to encourage your walk with the Lord and keep us all pressing towards the mark for the prize! We will have more information at the conference and in the next few newsletters, so stay tuned and keep checking back with us online!

We Are So Grateful For Your Faithfulness!

Thank you so much for your faithfulness to the Kingdom of God with your prayers and support to this humble ministry. Brother Sam has plans for visiting Kenya and South Africa this summer, so stay tuned for more information! He has so many other exciting things happening that he plans to share at the conference. Just know that we could not do any of this without you and your support. You mean so much to Jesus and this ministry and it doesn't go unnoticed! Your faithfulness strengthens Brother Sam and Sister Katie and the work here!

As always, here again is our contact information and the 3 different ways to give. Please stay in touch and let us know if there is anything we can do for you. If you ever desire for Brother Sam to come and visit your area, let us know as well. Receive all our love from Asheville, NC:

- 1) Call me, Andrew Jensen, at 904-514-0409 to give using your debit or credit card
- 2) Mail a check payable to "Narrow Way Ministries International" and mail it to:
Narrow Way Ministries International
825 C Merrimon Ave, PMB #300
Asheville, NC 28804
- 3) Go online to pay via PayPal with your debit/credit card at: <http://www.nwmin.org/donate>