HIS STORY – HIS PEOPLE
"Stephen: The First Martyr"   Acts 6:1-7:50

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I. Background to Stephen's Story.
   A. The founding and dramatic growth of the church in Jerusalem.
   B. Satan's attacks on the church.
      1. Intimidation. 4:17   2. Corruption. 5:3   3. Division. 6:1
   C. Apostles respond by appointing "deacons," including Stephen. Acts 6:2-7
      1. Pastoral priorities of preaching and praying preserved.
      2. Spiritual gifts of membership identified and mobilized.
      3. Outreach increasingly effective as "the Word of God spreads."

II. A Man Whose Life Was Irreproachable.
   A. A man affirmed by his peers – "They chose Stephen…" 6:3, 5
   B. A man recognized by his enemies – "like the face of an angel." 6:15
   C. A man meeting divine criteria.
      1. "Full of the Spirit and wisdom" – spiritual and practical. 6:3
         a. Commitment to meeting social needs…
         b. …in the context of prayer and anointing. 6:6
      2. "Full of faith and the Holy Spirit" – believing and trusting. 6:5
         a. Insight into the eternity – Jesus at the right hand of God. 7:55
         b. Confidence in the face of death. 7:59
      3. "Full of God's grace and power" – "sweetness and strength." 6:8
         a. Sweetness in a dying prayer for his murderers. 7:60
         b. Strength in a confrontational exposure of sin. 7:51

III. A Man Whose Deeds Were Irrefutable.
   A. The manifestation of "signs and wonders." 6:8
   B. The authentication of his ministry to the skeptical.
   C. The application to the contemporary church. Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12

IV. A Man Whose Words Were Irresistible. 6:10
   A. The accusation. 6:11-14
      1. Partially right.   2. Totally wrong.
   B. The "apologia." 7:2-53
      1. God is never limited to a place – e.g. Abram, Joseph, Moses, Solomon.
      2. Law and Temple being superceded by Christ Whom you rejected.
   C. The action.
      1. The execution of the first martyr.
      2. The introduction of Saul of Tarsus. 7:58; 8:1; 22:20
      3. The expansion of the church. 8:1

Point to Ponder: When Satan's plans collide with Spirit-filled people, he loses.