

Letting Jesus Shine Through Us!

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[0 : 0 0] Are you letting Jesus shine through you? In 1924, B.B. McKinney wrote these words to a hymn. While passing through this world of sin, and others your life shall view, be clean and pure without, within, let others see Jesus in you.

Your life's a book before their eyes. They're reading it through and through. Say, does it point them to the skies? Do others see Jesus in you?

Then live for Christ both day and night. Be faithful, be brave and true, and lead the lost to life and light. Let others see Jesus in you.

Let others see Jesus in you. Let others see Jesus in you. Keep telling the story. Be faithful and true. Let others see Jesus in you.

Our question this morning is, are others seeing Jesus in you? Are you letting Jesus shine through you?

[1 : 1 0] In the book of Matthew, chapter 5, verse 16, Jesus said, Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven.

Several years ago, Billy Graham was in India for a crusade, and he shared the gospel with an Indian man, and during that presentation, he asked him, Would you like to trust Jesus as your Savior, and would you like to become a Christian?

He looked at Billy Graham, and he said, I like what you have said. If I see a real Christian, I will become one.

Billy Graham said, The most tragic aspect of this was, he was looking at me when he said it. I want to challenge every one of us, if you're here today in this room, if you're watching online, I want to challenge everyone who is a born-again child of God to allow Jesus to shine through you daily in your attitudes and in your actions.

Acts chapter 6, verses 8 through 15, shows us a little bit about how we can let Jesus shine through us.

[2 : 3 5] So we're going to be looking at continuing with Stephen. Stephen, one of these servants who was chosen when the Hellenistic Jews, the Greek-speaking Jews, had said that they felt their widows were being neglected in the daily food distribution.

In verse number 8, we are presented with Stephen. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

Then there arose some from what is called the synagogue of the freedmen, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen.

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke. Then they secretly suborned, they secretly induced men to say, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.

And they stirred up the people. They incited the people, the elders and the scribes. And they came upon him. Suddenly they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.

- [3 : 54] They also set up false witnesses who said, This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against the holy place, this holy place, and against the law.
- For we have heard him say that this Jesus, they didn't even say that Jesus, they said, This Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.
- And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.
- Let's talk to our Heavenly Father this morning, ask him to bless this time in his word today. Father, we ask today that your word would speak to us.
- Lord, I pray that you would help me to be able to expound, to be able to show what simply the message that Luke wanted us to understand from this passage today.
- [5 : 00] Use it, Heavenly Father, to help us to realize that as we are surrendered to your Holy Spirit, as we are allowing your Holy Spirit to produce fruit in our life, that we will allow Jesus to shine through us in our attitudes and in our actions.
- Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. This passage, as we said earlier, shows us a little bit about how we can allow Jesus to shine through us.
- Let's take a look at verse number 8 this morning. And Stephen, he is one of these that were chosen to run the food bank, to daily administer the food that was given to the Greek-speaking and the Aramaic-speaking widows.
- And it says, He was full of faith and power and did great wonders and signs among the people. First of all, we see that Stephen was actively used by God among his current culture.
- We see that he was doing this among the people. A little bit later, we're going to see that he was doing it among his own people group, among those that spoke his language, among those that were part of his tribe, if you will.
- [6 : 23] First part of verse 8 says, He was a man full of faith and power. Luke already in verse 5 told us a little bit about Stephen and about he was full of the Holy Spirit and he was a man who was full of faith.
- In some manuscripts, it says that Stephen was full of grace. Now this was a very common Lukean terminology. In other places, Luke talked about Jesus was full of grace, that the early church was full of grace.
- And what we see here is Stephen was gracious in his character. Now how do people see you? When people see you as you are going through your day, as you're dealing with people, and maybe you have a disagreement with others, are you full of grace?
- Are you faithfully trusting his Holy Spirit to be able to produce the fruit of the Spirit within you? Because when we are allowing God's Holy Spirit to produce his fruit within us, we won't be crude, we won't be cynical, we won't be unloving, or we won't be negative.
- We're going to be winsome, as this term means, full of grace, and it's going to be attractive to other people. Because when the Holy Spirit is producing his fruit in our lives, he will produce within us love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- [8 : 15] I want to ask, does that describe you? In your dealings with other people, are you full of love, and joy, and gentleness, and goodness, and faithfulness, and self-control?
- You see, Stephen was submitted to the Holy Spirit. It says he was full of the Holy Spirit. He was surrendered and submitted. And he was a man full of faith. He was a man that was gracious in all that he did.
- So he was able to allow Jesus to shine through him. But look at the second part of verse number 8. It said, He did great wonders and signs among the people.

Great wonders. He was full of power, according to the first part of verse number 8. Now the word that was used there, that Luke used, is the word dunamis.

It's the root word from which we get our English word dynamite. So Stephen was full of faith. He was gracious in character.

[9 : 19] And the Holy Spirit produced power, great power in his life, because he was surrendered and submitted to the Holy Spirit's power, working through him.

And as Jesus shined through him, he was able to do some wonderful things. He produced, in verse number 8, he did signs and wonders among the people that he was rubbing shoulders with.

Now Luke doesn't specifically tell us what kind of signs and wonders. Also, he doesn't tell us whether these signs and wonders were being done before the apostles laid their hands on him or not.

But undoubtedly, these were some similar signs that Paul, other apostles, and that Jesus was doing. He did.

He did. The root word, poieo, in the Greek, it is written in the imperfect tense in the Greek language, so we could translate it as he was doing.

[10 : 24] He was performing wonders and signs. He continually was doing it. It was something that he was doing among the people. Now, Stephen wasn't just simply satisfied with serving tables.

He wasn't satisfied just running the food bank. Now, if you read commentaries and if you read what others believe about this particular passage, there are some who say that they're not sure how this could be because he had a job and he wasn't doing his job.

Well, we're not told that. We're not told that he shirked his responsibility to the widows, but I believe what it's telling us is Stephen wasn't satisfied with just doing something.

He had to do more, and so what he did was as he was worshiping, he went to a Hellenistic temple, and there we'll see in a moment that he was talking about Jesus and he was sharing Jesus with others, with others who were similar to him in their culture.

He had a burning desire to witness for Jesus, and just like Mark talked a little bit earlier about the Hope Initiative, you don't have to be a preacher, you don't have to be a Sunday school teacher or an elder or a deacon to pray for someone.

[11 : 49] You don't have to know a whole lot to walk down your street and pray for homes, or as you're driving by somewhere to pray for that home and pray that God's Holy Spirit would draw them to him, that God would maybe repair any breaches within the marriage or within their relationships, and that God would draw them into a Bible-preaching church where they could be actively involved and engaged in service for him.

It doesn't take much. It also doesn't take much to write a letter or to write a note to someone. It thrilled my heart this morning. Two people walked in and thanked me for sending an encouraging note to them.

Now I know you appreciate, and I appreciate, receiving mail, even an email or a text from someone, and I appreciate the texts that you send me. We're saying, you're praying for me, and you're thanking God for our ministry.

These are all things that we can be doing. He was doing signs. He was doing wonders among the people. Think about this. God can do wonders through any of us who are surrendered to him and will allow him to use us.

Many of you know Laramie Chestnut. I was speaking to him earlier this week, and he was sharing about an experience he had a little earlier in the week. He said he had gone out and they were in there side by side.

[13 : 25] He and Kaylee and the boys were driving down their road, their gravel road, and they noticed there was a man in a pickup truck who was parked on the side of the road.

And he went and he did what he was out there to do. Then he went and he brought Kaylee and the boys back home. He went and he grabbed his Bible, got back in the side-by-side, and he drove down the road and he stopped near the truck.

And as he approached the vehicle, he noticed there was a man about his age in the truck and he began a conversation. Evan, is the man's name, said he was having a bad day.

He said he had just come back to town and his business partner had cleaned out their bank account and skipped town. Laramie told him that God loved him.

He told him that there was hope. He opened his Bible and he shared the gospel with Evan. Although Evan said, I'm not into all that kind of stuff.

[14 : 44] But he told again, he said, Evan, God loves you. Evan, because God loves you and because he wants what's best for you, there's hope.

They exchanged phone numbers before Laramie left. He said, you know, if you would not have stopped and talked to me, I was going to take my own life.

This seemingly ordinary act was a turning point for this man. Larry's timely act and the grace that he showed gave this man hope.

He may not have performed the miracle in the traditional sense, but still, through his genuine compassion and his kindness, Laramie allowed Jesus to shine through him.

So, the little things that we do, God can use to allow the light of Jesus to shine through us. And maybe not in the traditional sense, God can work wonders through your life because you never know the impact that you're going to have in someone else's life.

[16 : 03] Now, we may not be performing miracles today, but when we allow Jesus to shine through us, God can work wonders. Stephen was a man full of faith, full of power.

He was a man that God was using to make an impact on his culture. Now, what happens next Stephen's own people opposed him.

The people attacked him, we see in verses 9 and 10. Let's look at verse 9. Then there arose some from what is called the synagogue of the freedmen, or some of your translations might have the libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, those from Cilicia and Asia, and they were disputing with Stephen.

Luke tells us who these men were where this dispute arose. they were men from the synagogue of the freedmen. These men were probably descendants of people, of Jews, that had been enslaved by Rome many years earlier, possibly a few years before Christ, but they had gained their freedom.

And these were Jewish descendants of these Roman slaves, Jews. And as many of the different cultural groups within Jerusalem, and even as we see today, they congregated in their own area of Jerusalem, and many of these people groups had their own synagogues.

[17 : 33] And so here was a Hellenistic, a Greek speaking, or a non-Hebrew Jewish synagogue, and if you remember, these seven that were chosen to work the tables, to work the food bank, these were all Greek speaking men.

These were Hellenist, not Hebrew Jews. And so what Stephen did, he goes to the temple to worship and possibly maybe even to share Jesus with them.

And here is what the people group that made up this synagogue, the Cyrenians, these were Jews from Cyrene. This was the main city in North Africa.

Some of you remember the man who was tasked to help carry the cross of Jesus. He was a man from this area, from Cyrene.

Also there were Alexandrians. These were Jews from Alexandria, which was the capital of Egypt. Also Cilicia, we had Jews from Cilicia.

[18 : 40] Some of you may recognize that area, Tarsus, was in the province of Cilicia. Where was the apostle Paul from or where was Saul from?

Saul of Tarsus. It's very possible that Saul was in this synagogue and it's very possible that Saul was listening to this debate going on about who Jesus was and about that Jesus had come and he had fulfilled the law.

We're going to see Saul a little bit later next week in that he held the cloaks of those who were going to kill, who were going to martyr Stephen.

But these were Hellenistic Jews, the word that's used, disputing here. It doesn't necessarily mean an argument, a knock-down, drag-out. The word disputing here means to inquire, to question with, to reason together.

It was probably more of a debate but I'm sure it probably got a little heated from the perspective of or from the side of the Hellenist Jews that he was debating with.

[19 : 53] So they didn't like what Stephen was saying but notice this in verse number 10. They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke.

Want to know a little secret? Matter of fact, Jesus even promised this. He said, you will stand before leaders, you will stand before others, and when you do, don't worry about what you're going to say because I'm going to put the words in your mouth.

Isn't that good news? All too often I hear people say, well, I don't know what I'll say. What if they ask a question that I can't answer? It's very simple. Tell them I don't know. And say, how about if I get back with you?

But know this, that if you are opening yourself up and submitting and surrendering to God's Holy Spirit and you are allowing the fruit of the Spirit to be produced within you, and you are allowing the light of Jesus to shine through you, Jesus is going to give you the words.

They may not be eloquent, but as long as you use God's words, that's where the power is. In God's word, they're alive, they're sharper than any two-edged sword.

[21 : 11] So, these Jews weren't able to withstand his debating, his dispute. He was speaking to them from what he had learned from the apostles.

Even the apostles, you remember when they had been with Jesus? Remember the Pharisees? the scribes, the Pharisees? They couldn't understand. It blew their mind. Where did these ordinary, unlearned fishermen become so eloquent?

It's Jesus. And so they cannot refute him. Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with wisdom, and the power of God, and the result was these people were defenseless.

By the way, when we're filled with the Holy Spirit, we're letting him work through us, God can use you to share the gospel. The point is, we don't have to win the argument.

Don't feel like I have to be like Stephen and win the argument. See, you can lose the argument, if you will, and still use God's word, and God's Holy Spirit can use it hours, days, months after.

[22 : 26] You may feel like, well, you know what, I don't think I did such a great job. And you'll think about things that you wish you could have said, or wish you would have said, but as long as you speak from what God's word says, God is going to use it.

He was letting Jesus shine through him. And next, what happened? Well, they plot against him. They couldn't beat him in the debate, so they figured, let's take it, let's go to plan B.

Verse 11, then they secretly induced men to say, we have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.

Isn't this just like Satan? If his initial plan falters and fails, Satan's going to go to plan B. He will use plan B to try to get to God's service.

The story of Stephen, doesn't the story of Stephen parallel Jesus' life? They couldn't stand up to what Jesus was saying, so what did they do? They couldn't find fault with Jesus, so they set up false witnesses against them.

[23 : 37] And they arrest him, and they accuse him of all of these things. Then the Bible talks about the secrecy of the plot. They secretly induce men to lie against him.

They accused Stephen of blasphemy. They also set up false witnesses and said, this man does not seek to speak blasphemous words against the law, against this holy place, and the law.

Most likely, they were half right. Do you remember what Jesus said about the law? He said, I came to fulfill the law.

there's nothing wrong with the law, but the law cannot save you. I came to fulfill the law, and Jesus went on to say, now he mentioned his body, the temple, his body would be destroyed, he would raise it up, he would be raised up in three days, and undoubtedly Stephen was saying that we no longer need the sacrifices performed in the temple.

And Jesus fulfilled the law. And so they took those words, and they were so jealous of their law, they were so jealous of their temple, that they could not even accept what Jesus had said.

[25 : 09] And they could not accept what Jesus did. And so they say, he has, he has said blasphemous words against Moses, against this holy place, and the law.

David Jeremiah said this, he said, it's interesting that they cited Moses first. They were more concerned about Stephen's damage to their religion than they were about damage to God.

They were more concerned about losing their tradition than they were doing damage to God. Then they apprehended Stephen, verse number 12.

We have heard him say that in verse 14, this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, change the customs which Moses delivered to us. Now, back to verse number 12.

So they stirred up the people and the scribes, they came upon him, suddenly, seized him, brought him to the council. So they did a very thorough job of inciting the people against Stephen.

[26 : 20] They were infuriated by what they heard and so they attacked him. John Phillips wrote this, he said, the nation, having officially rejected the Son of God, was now going to officially reject the Spirit of God with the same trumped up charges, the same use of false witnesses, the same use of the mob, the same lawless murder of the victim.

When Satan can't get us through intimidation, he will try manipulation. And when Satan can't get us through manipulation, he will move to domination.

And that's exactly what they did with Jesus, it's what they're doing with Stephen. Now, Stephen is a turning point in the book of Acts, because with the martyrdom of Stephen, the focus of the gospel now is going to leave the Jews, and the focus after Stephen's martyrdom is going to turn to Samaria, then after Samaria, the gospel is going to be going out to the Gentiles and everywhere else around them.

But when we keep allowing Jesus' light to shine through us, Satan won't be happy, but keep shining. Finally, we see how Stephen responded to all of this.

Stephen's attitudes and Stephen's actions allowed Jesus to shine through. Let's look at verse 15. And all who sat in the council, probably a large number of people, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

[28 : 13] First, what we see in verse 15 is everybody saw it. They were waiting to see how Stephen would respond. Stephen didn't put on a face, didn't react, didn't respond.

How did Jesus respond when he was falsely accused? He said nothing. How did Stephen respond when he was falsely accused? He said nothing, but I'm sure he was looking at them in their face as they looked upon him.

This word here, looked intently, steadfastly, to gaze intently. This is also a common phrase by Luke. They fastened their eyes upon him.

They were looking intently at him. It's almost like they were stretching to see how he would react, how he would respond. They were looking steadfastly at him.

Would he be angered by the accusation? Would he show fear? Stephen didn't put on a false face, but his appearance was evident to all.

[29 : 24] It was there for all to see. We also see verse number 15, they saw as the face of an angel. His face.

Now, would that look like? I don't know. Was it like Moses in the Old Testament after the burning bush? We're not sure. But whatever it was, we're told that Stephen was full of grace, gracious in character.

Why did they see this kind of look on Stephen's face? Jesus? Because he knew Jesus. He had spent time with Jesus, maybe not personally, but he had God's Holy Spirit flowing through him, and he was allowing Jesus to shine through him.

When you have Jesus in your life, and when God's Holy Spirit is allowing Jesus to shine through you, people are going to see it. People are going to see that you're not ordinary.

They're going to see that you are different. You don't respond like normal people do, because normal people get upset, get aggravated.

[30 : 39] Normal people sometimes, you know, use sarcasm. Sometimes normal people do, but what did he do? He just looked at them, and they saw Jesus.

shining through him. The Jews had accused him of blasphemy and speaking against Moses.

Warren Wearsby wrote this, It was as though God was saying, This man is not against Moses. He is like Moses. He is my faithful servant.

All the council looked steadfastly at Stephen and saw his face shining like the face of an angel. John Phillips wrote, It was not hate that they saw, nor horror, but heaven.

When others look upon you, and when others look upon me, I pray that they would see faithful men, faithful women, faithful boys, and girls who shine the light of Jesus in this world through their attitudes and through their actions.

[31 : 54] Are we willing to let Jesus shine through us? In his book, Pursuit of Excellence, Ted Engstrom writes, I was cleaning out a desk drawer when I found a flashlight I hadn't used in over a year.

I flipped the switch and nothing happened. He said, I wasn't surprised. I unscrewed it and shook it to get the batteries out, but they wouldn't budge.

I'm sure some of you have had flashlights just like that. Finally, after some effort, they came loose. What a mess! Battery acid had corroded everywhere.

There was a problem. These batteries weren't made to be warm and comfortable. They were designed to be turned on, to be used. It's the same with us. We weren't created to be warm, safe, and comfortable.

You and I were made to be turned on, to put love to work, to apply our patience in difficult, trying situations, to let our light shine.

[33 : 02] God is calling followers of Christ to let Jesus shine through them. He's calling us to let Jesus' light shine through us.

Are you serving Jesus? Have you found a place to serve yet? Stephen was working in the food bank. But Stephen said, this won't keep me from sharing the gospel with others.

This won't keep me from telling others about Jesus. Laramie was out. it's an interesting story.

He was throwing away chickens. The heat had killed some of their chickens. And he said, the interesting thing is, he said, this was the first time that it happened.

And he said, ordinarily, I wouldn't have been driving my side-by-side down that road. And I told Laramie, I said, well, you know what that was.

[34 : 05] Not that God kills chickens, but the thing is, God used something in your life to put you in the right place at the right time. It was a God appointment.

It was a divine appointment. God put you in Evan's life for a purpose, to give hope and to let the light of Jesus shine through you.

I know what many people would have picked up when they went home. to go back and check. Laramie picked up his Bible, and he went and shared Jesus. Let Jesus shine through you every day through your attitudes and your actions.

Let's pray. Father, today we thank you for your goodness. Father, we thank you for your love in our lives. We thank you that through your Holy Spirit you can produce within us love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, kindness, self-control.

Father, we pray that as we are surrendered and submitted to your Holy Spirit, as you're producing the fruit of your Spirit in our life, when others see us, may they see Jesus shine through us, just like the life of Stephen.

[35 : 27] God, amen. We thank you. Father, we praise you for what you are going to do through our lives as we go out, pray for others, as we share the gospel with others around us, as we invite them to worship with us.

Father, we pray that you may be able to work wonders through our lives. We thank you, Father, as well for this offering that we're about to receive in just a moment, and for each heart and mind and life that is touched by your word this morning.

We pray in Jesus' name.