

Acts 7:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

Analysis

Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. Stephen highlights David's faithful desire to build a permanent dwelling for God, a desire born from gratitude and reverence.

Found favour indicates David's covenant relationship with God—not earned but graciously given. David, despite his sins, was 'a man after God's own heart' (1 Samuel 13:14). His desire to find a tabernacle sprang from holy ambition—wanting God's worship to have permanence and dignity matching His glory.

The phrase God of Jacob emphasizes covenant continuity—the same God who made promises to the patriarchs. Jacob's name recalls the wrestling episode (Genesis 32), where God transforms a deceiver into Israel. This hints at God's transforming grace, even working through flawed individuals like David.

Yet desire alone wasn't enough—God denied David's request (2 Samuel 7:12-13), giving the privilege to Solomon. This teaches that godly desires must submit to divine timing and sovereignty. Reformed theology emphasizes God's will transcends human religious plans, even well-intentioned ones. The permanent temple, when built, still pointed beyond itself to Christ as the true temple.

Historical Context

2 Samuel 7 records Nathan's prophecy—David desired to build God a house, but God promised to build David a house (dynasty). This Davidic covenant became foundational to messianic hope. David reigned 1010-970 BCE; his son Solomon built the temple around 960 BCE.

David's denial teaches that being in God's favor doesn't mean every desire is granted. His warrior background disqualified him from temple-building (1 Chronicles 22:8), though his preparations made it possible. Stephen's audience in 34-35 CE prided themselves on the temple (rebuilt by Herod), yet missed that David's true Son, Jesus, fulfilled the temple's ultimate purpose.

The God of Jacob language connects to ancestral promises, reminding hearers that God's purposes span generations. The temple wasn't an innovation but fulfillment of long-standing covenant relationship between God and His people.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How should believers respond when God denies godly desires or religious ambitions?
2. What does David's unfulfilled desire to build the temple teach about delayed gratification and generational faithfulness?
3. In what ways does the Davidic covenant find its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus?
4. How can we distinguish between human religious ambition and God-ordained ministry?
5. What does the progression from David's desire to Solomon's accomplishment teach about God's timing in His kingdom work?

Interlinear Text

ὅς	εὗρεϊν	χάριν	ἐνώπιον	τοῦ	Θεῶ	καὶ	ἠτήσατο	εὗρεϊν
Who	found	favour	before	G3588	God	and	desired	found
G3739	G2147	G5485	G1799		G2316	G2532	G154	G2147
σκήνωμα	τῷ	Θεῷ	Ἰακώβ					
a tabernacle	G3588	God	of Jacob					
G4638		G2316	G2384					

Additional Cross-References

Acts 13:22 (Parallel theme): And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

1 Samuel 16:1 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2 Samuel 6:21 (Parallel theme): And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.