

The Death of Stephen

Acts 7:1-60

March 20, 2022

If we look back to Chapter 6 we see:

Stephen, (the Holy Spirit thru Him), does many wonderful signs.
He was accused of blasphemy.
However, his face was that of an angel.

Stephen addresses the Sanhedrin who was the highest Jewish Council in the 1st century that was made up of 71 members of which the High Priest presided over. Most likely, some of these had already or were beginning to believe in Jesus.

Stephen walks thru the history of Israel:

They misunderstood their own spiritual roots. (vs.1-8)
They rejected their God-sent deliverers. (vs. 9-36)
They disobeyed their law. (vs. 37-43)
They despised their Temple. (vs. 44-50)
They stubbornly resisted their God and His Truth. (vs. 51-53)

Concerning Stephen:

- **He was a witness.**
But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8
- **He was an instrument of transition.**
Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20
- **He was "giving an answer".**
But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. 1 Peter 3:15
Are we?
- **His stand allowed the word of Jesus to explode.**
Therefore, those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Acts 8:4
- **He had confidence in Jesus.**
- **Told the Truth that led to his death, a witness (martyr) to the greatest extreme.**
For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Romans 1:18-23

God has called all of us to be Stephens (witnesses) for His sake.

Acts 1:8

However, we can't be a witness to something that we have not first experienced firsthand.

Imagine if this happened today, would our response be different?

When the Truth is told there is really two options for unbelievers:

1) GUILT→ (cut to the heart) CONVICTION→ REPENTANCE→ SALVATION

2) GUILT→ (cut to the heart) ANGER→ SIN→ ANGER→ SIN

Stephen reminds the Sanhedrin of this. They would have clearly known this, but Stephen was reminding them and setting them up if you will.

They were cut to the heart, but not in a good way (look back at Peter sermon in Acts 2:37).

The same sun melts ice and hardens the clay, and the Word of God humbles or hardens the human heart.
~ Vance Havner

The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. And the same Gospel which melts some persons to repentance hardens others in their sins.
~ Charles Spurgeon

The same “pattern” is also true for the Believer:

1) GUILT→ CONVICTION→ REPENTANCE→ SALVATION (SELF)

Ungodly thoughts

Bitterness

Unforgiveness

Reactions

Bad attitudes

Gossip

Ungodly Anger

Lust

Selfishness

Pride

Jealousy

2) GUILT→ ANGER→ SIN→ ANGER→ SIN

If you are not yielding to the Holy Spirit this becomes a vicious and self-destructive cycle.

“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

Hebrews 3:15

If we haven’t experienced firsthand we can’t be an effective witness if we are not constantly turning in repentance to Him.

Are you a believer? Have you put your faith in Jesus?

If so, what do you do when you hear “Truth,” God’s Truth? Do you get made, become defensive or yield to the Truth?

Prayer Focus:

- That I would trust in Jesus for salvation alone
- As a Believer, when confronted with the truth, I would yield to the Holy Spirit and not “fight” it.
- I would realize that I am a witness of some sort, what or who am I a witness of? I would be a witness for Jesus at all costs.
- I would be convicted by the Truth and I would tell the Truth.