

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How To Stand in The Face of Lies

Acts 6:8-15

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: The time of war in Jerusalem toward the young Church is now upon it. Not because of evil. Not because of sin. But because the name of Jesus as the Christ is the cornerstone of the Church's message. It begins and ends with the person and work of Jesus. And if Jesus is supreme then there are consequences to how a Jew is to believe, live and worship. And this attacks the power structures of the day. In this story, Luke records the build up to Stephan's execution and shows Stephan to be a man fully walking in the light.

I. Introduction.

A. Review:

1. Ch 1 — Apostles are taught by Jesus Christ about the Kingdom of God and told to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit.
2. Ch 2 — On the Day of Pentecost the Spirit came as the Scripture promised. And Peter preached about Jesus being the promised Messiah. Thousands believed. The people of Jerusalem loved the church.
3. Ch 3 — Peter heals a lame man and then preaches Jesus Christ to the people in the bluntest of terms. He calls them to repent and believe and follow Jesus.
4. Ch 4 — Peter and John are arrested and the religious council investigates them. Peter again preaches boldly about Jesus Christ but they reject the message and threaten them to stop preaching in the “name” of Jesus.
5. Ch 5 — A husband and wife are killed by God in the midst of a church service because they lied. The result was a great fear of God that was upon the rest of the church. This was to prepare them to not fear man more than God. Then all of the Apostles are arrested, tried and almost executed because they won't stop talking about Jesus as the Messiah.
6. Ch 6 — An opportunity arose to divert the Apostles from preaching because of widows who were suffering. But they refused to be diverted from their job and established a committee of godly men to oversee the care of the widows. Two of those men were Stephen and Philip, which Luke will now discuss.

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7. Read Acts 6:8-15.
- B. The time of suffering is now upon the early Church. But it comes in the presence of wonderful and powerful things. Stephan turns out to be an evangelist and also a man who did great wonder and miracles.
 1. It is in that context that he is confronted and ultimately arrested. Just like Peter and John, healing those who are ill and casting out demons from people.
 2. Stephen is doing good works, genuinely helpful and exciting works **but he does them as a preacher of Jesus Christ.** And that cannot be tolerated.
- C. Today I want to take us through this story and consider what it means to be able to stand firm in the face of lies. The “secret” is to be **defined** and **controlled** in some very specific ways. This passage affords us the ability to see how Stephen remained firm in the midst of lies told about him and we can learn from it.
- D. I want to show you three lessons on how to stand firm when faced with lies. When you are falsely accused regarding your faith as a Christian, how to stand firm in a way that is honorable to God.

II. **Standing in The Face of Lies.**

- A. First, you stand in the face of lies when you are defined by grace (8).
 1. No one enjoys lies about them and even less do they enjoy statements that falsely represent what they said or did. This is common today but it is an age-old issue.
 2. As a Christian we have to think hard before we face situations like what Stephen did. We need to establish non-negotiables ahead of time.
 3. So how? Only if you learn to walk in the grace of God. Notice vs 8, Stephan is doing some works of power.
 4. Notice how he is described though. “Full of . . . “
 - a. That term “full” is the same word we’ve seen repeatedly in Acts. It speaks not of some special empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. It speaks of being under the control and influence of whatever is described. And here the key one is that he was constrained, directed and defined by grace.
 5. It is the grace of God that caused him to be among the people in the first place. He saw their burdens and he saw their needs and he knew that he was able to meet them where they were.

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- B. Second, you stand in the face of lies when you speak with wisdom (9-10a).
1. The problem in this passage had nothing to do with the miracles of Stephan. It had to do with his words. Note the idea of speech throughout the passage: “argued” (9); “speaking” (10); “say, speak, words” (11); “speaks” (13); and “say” (14).
 2. A lot of words, some true and some not. But for Stephen there was only one way to speak. In vs 10 we see it
 3. Understand again that the problem would be what this man was claiming as he did these miracles. It would be “in the name of Jesus.” The very thing the religious leaders had forbidden of the Apostles in Acts 5:28.
 4. And that is where the arguing starts. But Stephan doesn’t descend to that level. Instead he speaks with wisdom and the Spirit.
 - a. Remember that the Spirit of God is always attached to the Word of God. If you have the Word read, spoken or preached, you have full confidence that the Spirit is present. For He is the one who brought us the Word of God.
 - b. Wisdom in the bible is never just cleverness. It always begins with the person of God and a life arranged under Him. But it is also a life that is skillfully living out the things of the Word, the Bible. A wise man or woman is a godly person who lives well and right.
 5. When lies are said, you don’t counter with your own. You don’t descend into a fit of shock and outrage. You don’t lose heart or become embittered. You return with speech that is full of biblical wisdom.
 6. But wise speech is not done simply to win the argument, which too often is what we are try to accomplish (though we like to frame it in spiritual sounding ways). Wise speech is spoken because it is the only type of speech fitting a servant of the Most High God.
- C. Third, you stand in the face of lies when you are controlled by the Holy Spirit (9b-14).
1. Note the progression here: Stephan did miracles and wonders in the name of Jesus. This created tension with the others in the synagogue who argued with him. He spoke with skill and grace. So those in opposition resorts to lies and then brings violence and finally through lies accuse him of violence.

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2. This is Stephan's situation. And I suspect that as it all played out he realized that he was not going to get out of this alive. He saw where it was heading and he was at peace about it, hence vs 15.
3. If you fear death then when the witnesses lie about you becomes a horrible time where you fight and scream and strike out. But if you are a man or women filled with wisdom and the Word of God then you are a man or woman who is controlled by the Holy Spirit; which means that you are a person who is filled with peace and gentleness.
4. The lies kept rolling in on Stephen and Stephen kept on speaking with wisdom and the Spirit.
5. If your hope is found in this age and life then this situation would be utterly frightening or infuriating for you. But if you hope rests upon Christ then you will find that it is enough for you to know that you are innocent before God.
6. And so he is there before a crowd of men who have lied to condemn him and he is at peace. The powers of this age keep thinking they are far more powerful than they really are.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Stephan was never alone even though it looked to his enemies to be that way.
 1. "... I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat 28:20b).
 2. "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Heb 13:5).
 3. He had a dark journey before him, but it was down a well-worn path of others who went before him to the grave. But every step of the way his Savior and King was with him. And the same is for all who love Jesus.
- B. Let me end this with some additional observations that may be of help to you.
 1. The length of one's ministry and life is unimportant. It is the faithfulness in it.
 2. The breadth of ones influence is unimportant. It is the faithfulness in it.
 3. The response to one's words and deeds is unimportant. It is the faithfulness in them
 4. Christ did not save you so you can then reach some world-bound life goal. He saved you to display the Father's love. He saved you to display his infinite grace in save a sinner. **Did God fail Stephen? On the contrary, He brought Him home.**

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- C. In your life as a follower of Jesus, enjoy it.
 - 1. Enjoy the freedom and the forgiveness. In times of sorrow know that He sympathizes in the fullest sense. He bears your weakness and rejoices with you in your joy.
 - 2. But when it is time to stand and confess Him, know that He presses in even more closely to you. There will come that day, that moment, when you realize it is all done. You will be like Stephan.
 - 3. Find rest in knowing it is all in the hands of the One who bears the scars of the Cross, whose nail pierced hand is reaching out to bring you to your eternal reward and rest.
- D. In our day there are countless who set themselves up as experts in affairs of the soul but whose minds are darkened in unbelief. Don't not be impressed nor afraid. Stay with biblical truth. Stay with the Gospel. Even in their lies and false judgments the True Judge sees all and shall render His verdict against which no man shall resist.

Benediction

**Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever.
Amen.**