

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

## *God is Our Salvation*

### **Acts 7**

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**PowerPoint Presentation included:** none

**SermonAudio Blurb:** In this long speech Stephan picks out key figures in Israel's history to show how God has always provided one to deliver them from evil and harm. But also that Israel has made it its habit to reject that savior. Nonetheless, God continued to care for the nation even while rejecting the many who refused by faith to trust His savior. With that in mind, Stephen points out that the religious leaders are still doing this same thing in rejecting not just Jesus Christ as the true Savior, but in rejecting those calling Israel to repentance.

#### **I. Introduction.**

- A. We return to Acts 7 to consider another key aspect in the speech by Stephen and his resulting martyrdom.
- B. We saw the underlying problem that is true of all humanity—dead in sin. And the solution—rebirth through the Holy Spirit.
- C. We learned last week about the necessity and value of using words and using them correctly.
  1. How we live in a world today where we believe words are what we want them to be. And in this is a drive to be able to define truth and reality however we wish.
  2. There is currently a strong push in the evangelical world of a type of gospel/good news that is all about salvation and liberation/deliverance, but is truly a different gospel. It is better known as Liberation Gospel and it takes biblical words and reworks them into a social gospel about salvation from oppression and socio-economic suffering.
  3. That sermon was designed to set up this sermon and the one next week as we see the masterful work of Stephen showing these religious leaders how they redefined what salvation and deliverance was. And how they were showing their dead, rebellious hearts in doing so.
- D. In this long speech Stephan picks out key figures in Israel's history to show how God has always provided one to deliver them from evil and harm. But also that Israel has made it its habit to reject that savior.

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1. Nonetheless, God continued to care for the nation even while rejecting the many who refused by faith to trust His savior.
  2. With that in mind, Stephen points out that the religious leaders are still doing this same thing in rejecting not just Jesus Christ as the true Savior, but in rejecting those calling Israel to repentance.
- E. Stephen gives us two shadow-saviors who powerfully display the kindness of God toward rebellious people and the hardness of the hearts of those people. In doing so, the emphasis is the fact that God must be Our Salvation.

## **II. Jesus, our Deliverer.**

- A. The shadows of deliverance.
1. The setting of the stage (7:6-7)
    - a. Stephen starts with Abraham, the father of Israel and their most beloved patriarch
    - b. By doing this Stephen reminds them of one of the darkest and yet most wonderful parts of Israel's history. The story of the exodus is something that is pointed to repeatedly in the bible.
    - c. Then he picks up two key figures related to that event but on either side of the Exodus. Two men appointed by God—they were God's men. Two men who were rejected by Israel. Two men God nonetheless used to deliver His people out of death and bondage.
    - d. These men function in Stephen's speech as shadows of what was to come in the person of Jesus Christ. We see clear parallels in their lives with Jesus that Stephen draws out.
  2. Joseph (9-16).
    - a. Notice again the idea of deliverance and bondage in this section. But also how Stephen adds an additional aspect, the rejection of the deliverer, the savior.
  3. Moses (19-44).
    - a. In this large section of the speech we now fast forward 400 years in the life of the nation of Israel. From a tiny clan to a large nation.
    - b. Egypt is no longer a place of safety; rather, it became a place of bondage. He describes this in vs 19.

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- c. Notice in vs 20 how Moses is described as “lovely” in the sight of God. This is simply a way of describing that he was beloved of God, that God’s favor was upon him. It is reminiscent of the Father declaring of Jesus at His baptism, “This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” In fact He repeats it when Jesus pulls back the humiliation of His humanity and is transfigured, “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him.”
  - d. But what is interesting is that Stephen then picks a specific event in Moses’ life in this speech. In vs 24-25 we read of it (read)
  - e. In vss 30-33 we see him before God. We see the favor and care God showed him in speaking and revealing Himself to Moses. This is the calling and sending of Moses back to deliver Israel.
  - f. He ends it with the powerful rebuke that the whole history of Israel, leading all the way up to present time, was one of God sending a savior and the nation rejecting that savior.
4. Here is the simple point that is at the forefront of Stephen’s blistering speech. Since the time of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God has shown kindness, patience and care for Israel. God is the One who brought it into existence through the fathers. He has delivered Israel time and time again in its troubles. And Israel, as a nation, has made it their habit to reject those God sent to save them and, in doing so, therefore Israel rejected God Himself.
  5. Stephen is merely stating what Israel’s own history shows. But like any nation and people, there is a whitewashing of reality. All people like to think more highly of themselves than they ought.
  6. Jesus said very similar things just prior to His arrest and death (Matthew 23:23-39).
    - a. These same leaders are under the gaze of the promised Savior Himself. They see Jesus as an enemy. They see Him as a person who will steal their honor and comfort.
    - b. But they posture themselves as servants of the Most High God, holy and reverent. But Jesus says. . . .
    - c. What you see in that passage is the true heart of God. A hatred for any form of false worship, no matter its shape or sound. And also an intense love for sinners and a plan to deliver them

# M i s s i o      D e i      F e l l o w s h i p

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- (1) Is a description of the heart and purposes of God as opposed to the heart and purposes of people. Here, specifically, Israel as a nation.
  - (2) Without the regenerating, life-giving work of the Holy Spirit humanity will by nature reject God's saving purposes.
7. With our remaining time I want to show you how from the beginning to the end the bible speaks of how as humans we need to be delivered/rescued/saved.
- B. God is our salvation.
1. First, in thinking about salvation and deliverance, it is important to not read New Testament concepts into Old Testament. The idea of salvation is not merely related to salvation from sin, nor is it limited only to the idea of being justified. It is very broad, full, and multi-colored.
    - a. Examples:
      - (1) Exodus 15.2:
        - (a) *The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him.*
        - (b) But the context is the "song of Moses" and how God delivered Moses and Israel from the pursuing Egyptian army.
      - (2) 1 Chronicles 16.35:
        - (a) *"Then say, 'Save us, O God of our salvation, And gather us and deliver us from the nations, To give thanks to Your holy name, And glory in Your praise.'"*
        - (b) This is all part of a song/psalm by David giving thanks to the Lord's protection and deliverance from the many nations who were enemies.
      - (3) Psalm 18.46:
        - (a) *"The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock; And exalted be the God of my salvation."*

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- (b) A psalm that shows up in several songs and hymns about salvation from sin. But hear the context in vss 47-48:
- (c) *“The God who executes vengeance for me, And subdues peoples under me. He delivers me from my enemies; Surely You lift me above those who rise up against me; You rescue me from the violent man.”*
- (4) Even in the passages Stephen pointed to, the deliverance was physical and very real to the people. Salvation from death through starvation. Salvation from physical bondage and pursuing armies.
- b. Isaiah 52:1-10 (Turn).
  - (1) As I read see if you can hear familiar wording and ideas.
  - (2) This passage is referred to, in part, in Romans 10.15 which we often use to speak about evangelism. Turn briefly to Romans 10:13-15 and show them.
  - (3) As a result take that thinking process and read backward to Isaiah and believe he was referring to getting saved from sin. This idea, however, is very short-sighted and fails to see the fulness of what salvation involves. And it also fails to see what Romans 10 is actually talking about.
  - (4) Salvation in it fullest sense is the declaration that God reigns! Note this idea in Isaiah 52.7.
    - (a) Note the parallelism in the passage. Brings good news. Announces peace. Brings good news. Announces salvation. **But the sum and substance of that good news is that God reigns.**
    - (b) The peace referred to there is *shalom* and refers to the day when God brings all things under His rule and reign. Where the righteous are finally vindicated (acquitted), (the meaning behind the term “justification.”).
  - (5) What is fascinating about this text in Isaiah is how it uses terms with which we are very familiar.

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- (a) “. . . who announces (evangelizes) peace And brings good news (evangelizes) of happiness. . . .”
- (b) And, of course, he uses the term “salvation.”
- (6) Salvation in this passage, as well as throughout the bible is far greater and fuller than merely the battle of sin and death. We tend to think of salvation in a “motion” sort of way. We see it is something **from which** we came, usually sin and death. And while this is acceptable to a degree, the bible more forcefully describes it as something that we and all of creation is **going toward**.
  - (a) A simple example of this is seen in the following passages:
  - (b) Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.
  - (c) 1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
  - (d) 1 Corinthians 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.
  - (e) Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
- 2. Second, we need to see that salvation is found in the truth that God has come and accomplished the necessary work to make all things right again.
  - a. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the great enemies have been conquered (there is a kingly concept being described in these events).
  - b. Those enemies are sin, death and Satan. The process of this salvation, however, is still being worked out in various ways and involves the concept of the Kingdom of God.
  - c. Ultimately salvation is eschatological in that it looks to the ‘end’ of the old and the fulness of the ‘new.’

### III. Conclusion.

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- A. So as we take this home today I ask that you consider how you think about salvation.
  - 1. Is it primarily a vague spiritual salvation from hell?
  - 2. Is it a hope of heaven?
  - 3. Do you inadvertently look for other saviors right now? Financial security? Weapons? Education? Political parties? Laws and justice systems?
- B. When you thank God for saving your soul what do you mean by it?
  - 1. How are you considering your salvation? How does your life choices reflect this understanding of salvation?
  - 2. I am asking you to do some real thinking on this. And then come back next week and we can see what Stephen, the Bible and God actually says about deliverance, liberation and salvation.

## **Benediction**

**May our God cause you all to not stumble and to make you stand one day in His presence filled with joy. May God's Spirit hold you in His mighty hand until that day of redemption. And may you find your hope, joy and life in His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. To Him be the glory and majesty and dominion for all time. Amen**