

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE AND THE DEATH OF STEPHEN

Act.6:1-8:4 - Manna December 13.

FOR WHOSEVER WILL SAVE HIS LIFE SHALL LOSE IT; BUT WHOSEVER SHALL LOSE HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE AND THE GOSPEL'S, THE SAME SHALL SAVE IT. Mark 8:35 (KJV)

We live in truly unprecedented times. Even the worldly minded masses gasp at the rapid deterioration of society and realize that ostensibly stable societal conditions can become unstable very quickly. Will unfolding events steal away our peace of mind, cause us to slip or stumble and leave us shaken? Surely they will try. We pray that this discussion will help each of us to be better prepared, and able to maintain our balance and remain settled, having our hearts full of God's assurances that give us greater courage as Christian soldiers. Looking at the very early gospel church we find an outstanding example in Stephen that we can try to follow. Let us resolve to always remain faithful to the Lord to the truth and to the brethren, no matter how conditions in the world around us may change.

"Trusting myself to Divine care and the Providential overruling of all my interests for my highest welfare, I will seek not only to be pure in heart, but to repel all anxiety, all discontent, all discouragement. I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord's providence may permit, because 'Faith can firmly trust Him, Come what may.'"

Reference material: 2Tim.3:10-12. Heb.10:32-36, 13:3, 1Pet.4:12-14, 1Pet.5:6-10, Matt.10:24-32. Psa.16:8-9, Psa.27:14, Psa.121:2-4, Psa.23:4, Jn.16:2, 33. Act.6:1-8:4.

R:2437 "There are lessons here for all who are seeking to walk in the Master's footsteps:" – see # 1) 2) 3)

R:80 "Ah, yes, to be dead indeed, and crucified with Christ is also to be 'made a partaker of His sufferings'"

R:4514 "A Frenzy Of Delusion" - 2Thes.2:11 – Consider listening to some Discourses from the 2021 Harvest Convention (specifically Br. McClellan's talk)

C:207-209 "The way is made narrow by the circumstances of the present time, by the opposition of the worldly spirit against truth and righteousness, so that whoever walks in the footprints of our Leader and Forerunner will find the way narrow or difficult and must suffer persecution. To walk in this way, as our Lord set us an example that we should follow in his steps, implies not only a passive conformity to his disposition or spirit, but also an active, energetic zeal in the promulgation of his truth at all hazards. And all who walk in this narrow way, faithful as he was faithful, unto death, have fellowship in his sufferings, and will also in due time have fellowship in his glory, at the marriage feast – in the glory to be revealed at his appearing and Kingdom. [Phil. 3:10](#); [1 Pet. 4:13](#)...

And suffering with Christ, we have seen, is not the ordinary suffering, common to all in the fallen state, but only such sufferings as are the results, more or less directly, of the following of Christ's example, in advocating unpopular truths and in exposing popular errors. Such were the causes of the sufferings of Christ; and such will be the causes of persecution, suffering and loss to all who follow in his footsteps. They will have fellowship in his sufferings now, and in the end will be accounted worthy to share in the reward of such faithfulness to principle...

But to be the bride of the Lamb, she must not only be a virgin in purity, and in addition be free from sinful alliance and coquetry with the world, but she must be more, much more than this. She must so closely resemble her Lord, and so closely follow his footsteps and his counsel, that she will on this account be a sufferer, a martyr, as he was, and for the sake of the same *principles* of truth and righteousness."

R:2108 THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

R:5857 THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

Discourse by Br. Michael Nekora; "The Life And Death Of Stephen"; on Bible Resources app.

Study 1) Stephen's ministry Act.6:1-8. Stephen's witness Act.6:9-7:50. Stephen indicts the leaders Act.7:51-53. Stephen's example of faithfulness even unto death Act.7:55-60.

Questions:

- a) What do we know about Stephen prior to his being accused before the Sanhedrin? Act.6:1-8
- b) Discuss Stephen's situation when the tumult began – Who was present? – Where did these events take place? Act.6:9-12
- c) Discuss Stephen's line of reasoning when he answered the Sanhedrin. Act.7:1-50

Study 2) Songs In The Night - June 22

Stephen was a "martyr." Act.22:20

"martyr" Str. 3144 martus mar'-toos); a witness (literally [judicially] or figuratively; by analogy, a

"martyr": KJV-- martyr, record, witness. [this word is also found in Rev.2:13]

Wikipedia: "In its original meaning, the word martyr, meaning witness, was used in the secular sphere as well as in the New Testament of the Bible. The process of bearing witness was not intended to lead to the death of the witness, although it is known from ancient writers (e.g. Josephus) and from the New Testament that witnesses often died for their testimonies."

Questions:

- a) Any additional comments remaining from Study 2 Question "c" ?
- b) Was Stephen too forceful in judging his audience? Act.7:51-53 What should be our approach?
- c) Do you think that Stephen anticipated such a violent response?
- d) How can we maintain our spirit, our composure, when faced with intense or unexpected responses?
- e) Which was literally more vital to Stephen, protecting his life or speaking forth the truth?

Study 3) Stephen's response to his attackers. Act.7:55-60

Questions:

- a) Thinking of the example of Stephen, how did he reflect walking in the Master's footsteps?
- b) Were Stephen's experiences a part of the anti-typical Sin Offering? R:80
- c) Do you see any similarities between Stephen's time and experience and our time and experience?

Study 4) Act.8:1-4, Jn.16:1-4.

R:5858:1 "Probably had attended the same synagogue as Stephen."

R:2109:4 "A young man's feet – Indicating that Saul was a leader in the prosecution, and influential in the Sanhedrin."

R:2958:5 "Saul was probably a member of the Sanhedrin, and surely one who consented to his death."

R:4329:2, 4, 5858:5 "Saul gave his sanction by taking charge of the outer garments of those who stoned Stephen to death."

Questions:

- a) How would you rate Saul's integrity prior to his conversion? How much did Saul likely know about the "suborned witnesses?" What can be said about taking the law into their own hands by committing a capital punishment? What lessons can we learn from this part of the narrative? Act.8:1-4
- b) Considering all that we know about Stephen, and Paul, what can we glean from their experiences that will benefit us in our present walk in the narrow way as this age comes to a close?

Study 5) Timely considerations for the feet members of Christ's body.

Questions:

- a) Do you feel that you experience or have experienced opposition/persecution for proclaiming the harvest "truth" message to others? Define "persecution." Consider 2Tim.3:10-12
- b) Do you expect that the final feet members will be more intensely persecuted for giving their witness? Consider how 2Thes.2:11 may apply.
- c) If you answered "yes" to (b) do you personally believe these events are likely near at hand? If you answered "no" to (b) then please share your thoughts.
- d) Please share any practical methods that you have employed to better prepare yourself for such experiences should they arise? Please try and be specific.