

Stephen was Faithful to Jesus

May 7, 2017 – Acts 6:8-11; 7:59-60

“Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) – Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by Whom he spoke. Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, ‘We have heard Stephen speak words of Blasphemy (To INSULT) against Moses and against God.

Acts 7:59 – While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them. When he had said this, he fell asleep.’”

The 8th Commandment says, “You shall not bear false testimony against your neighbor.” In other words, do not tell lies about your neighbor.

In the O.T. of the Bible – I Kings 21:1ff there was a king by the Name of Ahab. One day King Ahab saw a vineyard owned by a man named NABOTH. It was a wonderful vineyard, and King Ahab wanted the vineyard. So King Ahab offered to buy the vineyard from Naboth, but Naboth said “No” it was an inheritance from my father.

This made King Ahab very upset, so upset that his wife – Queen Jezebel saw how sad King Ahab was and asked him what is wrong. King Ahab said that he wanted Naboth’s vineyard, but Naboth refused to sell it. So Queen Jezebel came up with a plan. She said, “Let us have a big banquet in the city where Naboth lives, invite Naboth and then hire two scoundrels to sit one on each side of Naboth, and then those two scoundrels can accuse Naboth of cursing the Name of God and of the king. And then when everyone is upset with Naboth, they will stone him to death.”

So the two scoundrels told lies concerning Naboth, and Naboth was stoned to death and King Ahab took over the ownership of the vineyard.

Today in the book of Acts - we heard that there was a group of people telling lies about a man named Stephen.

Stephen was one of those men chosen to help sort out the disagreement that occurred between the Hebrew speaking Jews and the Greek speaking Jews concerning the food distribution to the widows.

The Greek Speaking Jews felt that their widows were being overlooked.

Even though Stephen was chosen to organize the distribution of food, he also turned out to be a very good preacher and knew the Scriptures quite well.

There were those who opposed Stephen, and even though he was doing good for the community, they told lies about him, the lie that the opposition came up with was of such a serious nature that it would lead to stoning him to death.

Vs. 11 – Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, ‘We have heard Stephen speak words of Blasphemy (To INSULT) against Moses and against God.

Naboth’s faith in God was tested. He simply was going about his daily duties, yet was stoned to death.

Stephen’s faith in God was tested. He remained faithful, and yet he was stoned to death.

TODAY – 4 Confirmation Students passed the confirmation examination test. These 4 students learned about various teachings in the Bible – specifically The 6 Chief parts:

- The 10 Commandments
- The Apostle's Creed and its significance
- The Sacrament of Holy Baptism
- The Sacrament of Holy Communion
- The Keys and Confession
- The Lord's Prayer

These 4 students learned: Why You are here in this World – That is to serve God, the God of all creation your Savior from sin - in all that you say, do and think.

These 4 students faithfully put in the time and the effort. But the real test is yet to come.

Hearing about believers like Naboth and Stephen could make any Christian have second thoughts about standing before the altar of the Lord and promising to be faithful to the Lord God, even unto death.

The test of remaining faithful to God for the rest of your life 70 – 80 or 90 years if God gives you the strength.

You may run into people who try to hurt you and your life by telling lies, (Make sure you are not one of those people telling lies to hurt others.)

In High School there will be those who try to pull you away from God. There will be so many things that will come up in your day to day routine that you will need to decide where your priority lies, staying faithful to God and hearing and studying it regularly, or neglecting the study of the Word of God for all the extracurricular activities that are offered in school.

In College there will be professors who do not believe in God and teach things in the classroom that are not in line with Scripture. You will need to evaluate those courses in comparison to God's Word.

In Marriage will you marry a spouse who holds to the teaching of the Bible, or not?

How will you raise your children? Will instruction in God's Word be important? Will you set a good example for your children so that they will see how much you value the Lord and His Salvation?

In your old age, when your health begins to fail, will you curse God for your aches and pains, or will you trust God as He helps you endure the pains.

In death will you join with Stephen and say:

Acts 7:59 – While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

Vs. 60 – Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them. When he had said this, he fell asleep.'

Regardless of how faithful you are to God, YOUR faithfulness cannot save your soul from hell.

Just as Stephen's Faithfulness did not save him from sin, death and hell.

The ONLY ONE WHO SAVES YOU and Has saved you - IS JESUS!!!!

As you have learned from these past two years of class, we are all sinful from the moment we are conceived and we cannot save ourselves, we cannot even come to faith in Jesus. It was and is all the work of God for us and in us.

That is why Jesus came and was faithful in His Work of Saving you and I and all people from hell by living a perfect life in every way from the cradle to the grave. By sacrificing Himself on the cross of cavalry for you and all people we are forgiven and we have heaven.

How do we know that Jesus was and is Victorious?

As Stephen was dying, he was given a glimpse into heaven and he saw Jesus - Living and victorious, and it is recorded in the Scriptures:

Acts 7:55-56 – Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Look, he said, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the Right hand of God.”

AMEN