

Small Group Guide - 5/8/22

Acts 7:1–37 - Stephen's Defense, Part 1

Sermon Outline/Notes:

Recap:

- Stephen chosen to serve widows
- Full of faith and the Holy Spirit
- Full of grace and power
- Groups rose to dispute him but couldn't withstand
- They instigated false witnesses
- Saw his face like that of an angel

Four false accusations of blasphemy:

1. God and Moses (v. 11)
2. The Law and the Temple (v. 13)

Look at Acts 7:1, "Are these things true?"

- the high priest will now give Stephen the opportunity to defend himself and the gospel

1 Peter 3:15 - "but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect"

Titus 1:9-11 - "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach."

*We must be able to give a defense for our faith.

*What we believe and why we believe it.

This is called "apologetics" - defending and presenting truth.

Philippians 1:6-7 - "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel."

Sadly, many believers today cannot do this.

Ephesians 4:11-16 - "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Let's go back to the text:

Over the next few weeks, we will see Stephen's defense against the four accusations.

This week (God/Moses), Next week (Law/Temple)

I. God (Acts 7:2-16)

- * Pattern of defense
 - * gain their attention
 - * defend himself
 - * indict his listeners
 - * present Jesus
- * He addresses them as brothers and fathers
- * God of glory (encompasses all of God's attributes/names) (sovereign source of history)
- * Our father Abraham (ancestry)
 - * They loved to talk about their ancestry
 - * Believed they were saved because of their lineage
- * God called him (3) (tracing their lineage and faith to God)
 - * He sets out to say that Christianity does not destroy their faith but fulfills it
 - * Not new destroying the old, but fulfilling it
 - * We see God's faithfulness to His plan, despite man's rejection over and over
- * Abraham lived in the promise, not the possession (heaven for us)
 - * Promised him that his offspring would have land even when he didn't have one
- * v. 6 - Egyptian slavery
- * v. 8 - God gave them the covenant of circumcision
- * 12 patriarchs (he's now gained their attention and defended himself)
- * Now he will turn the tables
- * Verse 9 - out of jealousy, the patriarchs sold Joseph
 - *this is important for us to catch
 - *the man God had chosen, they rejected (common theme & point of conclusion)
- * But God was with him (a type/foreshadowing of Jesus)
- * Man rejected him, but God chose him, delivered, and exalted him to give grace to even those who sold him into slavery

II. Moses (Acts 7:17-37)

- * Follows the same pattern
- * Time of the promise - gaining their land
- * Again, God is the source of history
- * Introduces Defense #2 - Moses (v. 20)
 - *Moses was born in this time of great bondage of the people
 - *Moses was beautiful in God's sight (God chose him, God sent him)
- * They did not understand (v.25)
- * v. 27- ridiculed him
- * v. 30- God initiated conversation with Moses and called him to go free his people
- * Now he will redirect the accusations and present Jesus:
 - *v. 35 - this Moses...they rejected
 - *God sent him as ruler and redeemer by the hand of an angel**** catch that
- * God was with Moses leading them out for 40 years
- * They rejected the very man that they accused Stephen of blaspheming
- * Moses prophesied, "God will rise up a prophet like me"
- * Jesus is this prophet

Application:

1. **God is faithful despite our unfaithfulness.**
2. **God sovereignly rules all of human history.**
3. **Be bold in the face of adversity.**
4. **Study the Scripture to be able to give a defense and present the truth of what you believe and why you believe it.**
5. **Trust God in His promise until we experience the possession of it.**

Small Group Questions:

1. **What spoke to you from the Bible passage and sermon Sunday morning?**
2. **Look at 1 Peter 3:15 again. What does it mean to be ready to give a defense for the hope that is in you? Why is it important for us to be ready and able to do so?**
3. **What is the difference between defending truth and presenting truth? Why should we be able to do both?**
4. **How does it encourage you to see that God is the sovereign source of redemptive history?**
5. **How is Christianity the fulfillment of Judaism?**
6. **How have you experienced God's faithfulness even in your unfaithfulness?**
7. **Where is God calling you to be bold in your life?**