

IT TAKES COURAGE

Part 2

“It Takes Courage to Stand for Truth”

Acts 6:8-7:60

Presented by
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Swindoll writes:

Reading this segment of Scripture is like standing on hallowed ground before a fallen hero's monument. As I read about the first martyr's last stand, I can see the entire tragic scene in my mind's eye. I see a man looking death in the face yet humbly submitted to truths he refuses to deny. I hear the shouting of enraged religious leaders against the calm reasoning of a man constrained and upheld by truth. I can feel the rumble of pent-up pride and hatred ready to roll down on a man simply for holding his own in a debate.

This is not just any inquisition by any tribunal, however. History records the final words of many brave souls facing certain death for their convictions. Luke includes this trial in his record of church history because this moment will mark a turning point. Perpetrated by evil men yet foreordained by God, this tragedy established a pattern that would define church growth for centuries to come.¹

THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS

Stephen

- His Ministry (Acts 6:8-15)
 - Titles are used to help others identify us from a ***distance***. Our nature and character are revealed by our actions ***up close***.
 - Every great leader is a servant first.

- His Message

- Historically you have rejected:
 - ✓ God's Leader (Acts 7:9, 27)

- ✓ The Land (v. 39)

- ✓ The Law (vv. 40-42)

- ✓ The Dwelling of the Lord (vv. 43-44)

- You are repeating generational sin! (vv. 51-53)

- His point was cut off (Isaiah 66:2b)
"But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." Isaiah 66:2b

Repent: There is still time!

- His Martyrdom

*He heeded not reviling tones
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
Tho 'cursed and scorned and bruised with stones.
But looking upward, full of grace,
He prayed, and from a happy place
God's glory smote him on the face.
Tennyson*

Death will ultimately reveal what each of us truly is. Stephen lived his last hours as Christ would and did. He spoke his last words as Christ would and did. He died a martyr's death as Christ would and did. He stood tall through the matchless grace of God! If today were our final day, what would others write about us?²

➤ Stephen died receiving and extending grace.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

- Today is the day of salvation!
 - If you have come with a hard heart, surrender today.

- Most of God's great evangelists have no credentials.
 - We share our faith because it fills our hearts, not because we have a position.

¹Charles R. Swindoll, *Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Acts*, Copyright © 2016, Tyndale House Publishers, pg. 125.

²R. Kent Hughes, *ACTS The Church Afire*, Copyright © 1996 by R. Kent Hughes, Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois 60187, pg. 108.