

When Men Slander and Slay You: Standing Strong in Faith

In our social media age, we've created a platform without accountability where lies spread like wildfire and personal attacks happen publicly. But this isn't a new problem. In Acts chapters 6 and 7, we see Stephen facing false accusations and slander from religious leaders who couldn't stand against his wisdom and faith.

What Do You Do When Falsely Accused?

When facing slander or false accusations, people typically respond in three ways: fight back with fire, run from conflict, or ignore it hoping it goes away. But Stephen shows us a biblical way to handle these situations with integrity and godly character.

Stephen: From Servant to Slandered

Stephen began as a simple servant chosen to distribute food to widows. Acts 6:8 tells us he was "full of faith and power" and did "great wonders and signs among the people." His faithful service in small things became the foundation for God to do great things through his life.

Simple, loving servanthood and faith in God become the groundwork for God to work powerfully in your life. When you serve faithfully and trust God completely, He fills you with the power of His Holy Spirit.

Why Do Attacks Come When God Uses You?

Often when God starts using your life in mighty ways, the enemy doesn't sit still. He stirs up trouble through slander, lies, jealousy, gossip, fear, and discouragement. These are Satan's tools to disrupt God's work and pull your focus away from the Lord.

If Satan is having a heyday in your life right now and you've lost focus on Jesus because you're consumed with what others have done to you, you've been duped. Turn your eyes back to the Lord and go forward in faith.

How Stephen Faced His Accusers

They Couldn't Stand Against His Wisdom

When religious leaders debated Stephen, they couldn't resist "the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke" (Acts 6:10). Jesus promised in Luke 21:15 that He would give believers "a mouth of wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist."

Lesson 1: When men slander you for your Christian stance, know that the Spirit of God is there with you to comfort, encourage, control your emotions, and counsel your next steps.

They Resorted to Lies

Unable to win through debate, Stephen's opponents "secretly induced men" to make false accusations of blasphemy against Moses and God (Acts 6:11). When the enemy sees they're losing ground, they often resort to lies and personal attacks.

Lesson 2: The same Spirit that opens your mouth can help you keep it shut. Stephen remained silent until asked to speak in Acts 7:1.

They Escalated to Arrest

The false accusations led to Stephen's arrest and trial before the council. Standing up for Jesus doesn't always end favorably - sometimes things get worse.

Lesson 3: When we stand up and speak of Jesus, it doesn't always end well, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't stand.

Stephen's Heavenly Response

Despite the false witnesses and accusations, Acts 6:15 says "all who sat in the council looked steadfastly at him and saw his face as the face of an angel." Stephen's face didn't reflect hatred or horror, but heaven itself - peace and confidence from one who had been in God's presence.

Lesson 4: When men slander you, keep your eyes on the Savior and follow His example. As 1 Peter 2:23 says about Jesus: "When he was reviled, did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously."

What About Fighting Back?

Everything within us wants to pay back those who falsely accuse us. But God says, "Stop. I'm in charge, not you. It's my battle, not yours. I will take care of it. You walk in your integrity."

When you let God handle it, He keeps your hands clean in the process. Looking back, you'll thank God for shutting your mouth and guarding your steps.

Stephen's Defense: Speaking Truth in Love

When finally asked to respond (Acts 7:1), Stephen delivered a powerful sermon covering Jewish history through Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, and Solomon. His message revealed four key truths:

1. God promised to bless and deliver His people
2. God provided deliverance time and again
3. People have a habit of pushing God away when He provides deliverance
4. We pride ourselves on religious duties while rejecting relationship with God

God Wants Relationship, Not Religion

God wants a living relationship with you, not legalistic religious duty. He's not looking for your goodness or religious actions - He's looking for a surrendered life that He can lead.

You could read the Bible and pray constantly, attend church six times a week, and still not be right with God. Righteousness comes by faith, not religious duties. When you embrace Christ, everything you do isn't to earn His favor - it's because you already have His favor.

How They Responded to Truth

Acts 7:54 says when they heard Stephen's words, "they were cut to the heart and they gnashed at him with their teeth." They were convicted by the Holy Spirit but chose to resist rather than submit.

When God convicts your heart, you have two responses: humble yourself and submit, or resist and stand in pride.

Stephen's Final Moments: Eyes on Heaven

While his attackers raged below, Stephen looked up and "saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). Here are four principles for when men attack:

1. Keep Your Eyes on Jesus

When your eyes are fixed horizontally on what people are doing to you, you lose peace. When fixed vertically on Jesus, you're no longer concerned about their actions because you're focused on what He has done.

2. Keep Speaking of Jesus

Stephen continued proclaiming Jesus as the Son of Man, connecting Him to Old Testament prophecy. Don't stop speaking truth boldly, but ask for grace, tact, and wisdom in how you do it.

3. Talk to the Lord

Stephen prayed "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). When you know where you're going - heaven - your heart settles in peace as you talk to Him.

4. Pray for Your Attackers

Stephen's final prayer was "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60). This goes against every emotion we have, but it's exactly what the Holy Spirit can work in our lives.

The Lasting Impact

Notice that Saul (later Paul) was present, holding the coats of those stoning Stephen. The seeds planted through Stephen's witness would later transform this persecutor into the greatest missionary the world had known.

You never know what God is doing through your faithful witness during trials. You're responsible for obedience; God is responsible for the results.

Life Application

This week, when facing criticism, false accusations, or attacks on your faith, remember Stephen's example. Instead of fighting back, running away, or ignoring the situation, fix your eyes on Jesus and respond with His character. Let the Holy Spirit control your words and emotions. Trust God to handle the situation while you maintain your integrity and witness.

Ask yourself: Am I more focused on what others are doing to me or what Jesus has done for me? When attacked, do I respond with the character of Christ or my flesh? How can I pray for those who have hurt me this week? What seeds might God be planting through my faithful response to trials?

Remember, you can't play the victim card when the cross is in view. Your faithful response to slander and attacks may be exactly what God uses to transform someone else's life.