When Stephen Saw Jesus

Acts 7:1-53
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Ken Dalton

The Big Idea: After being accused of disrespecting Moses, the Law, and the Temple, Stephen responds with a masterful history lesson on the consistent resistance of God's people to *hearing* and *obeying* the Lord. Scripture points us to the sovereign, abundant grace of God toward rebellious sinners, but also to the danger of hardening our hearts against God's grace.

Acts 7 (ESV)

7 32 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham
and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not
dare to look. 33 Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals
from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy
ground. 34 I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are
in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down
to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

37 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up
for you a prophet like me from your brothers.'

48 Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as
the prophet says. 49 " 'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my
footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the
Lord, or what is the place of my rest?

51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you
always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.
52 Which of the prophets did your fathers ***not*** persecute? And
*they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the
Righteous One*, *whom you have now betrayed and murdered*,
53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not
keep it."

THE FOREVER TRUTHS FROM STEPHEN'S SERMON

1. We can trust God's sovereign hand to guide and arrange the details of history and of our own lives even when cannot make sense of what the Lord will ultimately do.
2. In spite of God's abundant and repeated acts of grace, we too often "long for Egypt", forgetting the bitterness of our slavery.
3. Like Stephen, we must find it more important to speak God's truth than to say what people want to hear. Do we pull back from truth in an effort to protect ourselves from harm or to simply to be liked and accepted?
4. If we're not careful we can be like the brothers of Joseph, rejecting and resenting the one who can actually save us. Jesus came to deliver us, leading us out of the slavery of sin and into the freedom and protection of His redemptive work on the Cross.
5. As John Calvin said, our hearts are "perpetual factory idols," manufacturing cheap and unsatisfying substitutes for the True Lord.

[Our problem] … may not be the worship of a church building
(though certainly that does take place from time to time),
but it is the confinement of God to one place.
In other words, the only place they meet God is at the church.
As far as they are concerned, God is absent from the rest of their
lives. In the minds and lives of some today,
God might as well only live at the church.
– David Guzik