



“Outliving the Opposition”

The Character of a Witness:

“And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit...” Acts 6:5 (ESV)

“And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people...” Acts 6:8 (ESV)

“They could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.” Acts 6:10 (ESV)

“And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.” Acts 6:15 (ESV) (See Jesus’ promise in John 15:27-6:3)

The False Witnesses:

“and they set up false witnesses who said, “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law,¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.” Acts 6:13-14 (ESV)

“Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.⁵⁵ But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.⁵⁶ And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him.⁵⁸ Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.” Acts 7:54-58 (ESV)

They often have a misguided religious concern
which leads to ungodly character.

A True Witness:

- Is winsome: out-thinks & out-lives those who oppose the Gospel. (Eph. 5:15-16)
- “Superabounds” with God’s grace - (Romans 5:20; 1 Timothy 1:14)
- Exhibits deepening communion, courage and confidence. (Psalm 27:1-4)
- Is constantly “being filled” with the Spirit. (Eph. 5:18)
- Identifies with the sufferings of Jesus Christ. (Mark 14:62, Luke 22:69)

Stephen’s Last Words

“And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Acts 7:59 (ESV) (see also Acts 2:21, Luke 23:46)

“And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” Acts 7:60 (ESV) (see also Luke 22:41, 23:34, 46)

Small Group Questions

1. In Acts 6:5, 8, 10 & 15, there are 6 descriptions (underlined on other side) which describe Stephen. Which one of these would you say is your strength and which one is your weakness?
2. We discussed how we can become misguided and overly concerned with things that are ancillary to the Gospel, which can lead to ungodly character. When have you struggled with this recently (either seen it in yourself or in someone who was opposing you)?
3. Read the 5 descriptions of a True Witness as well as the scriptures associated with them. Which one of them stand out to you as something you need to grow in? Can you think of an example of someone who exemplifies one of these to you?
4. Stephen’s “last words” as well as the similar last words of Jesus (see Scripture notes above). What strikes you about these? What is challenging to you?