



Being with Jesus:

A Devotional From the Book of Mark

Week 4
The Cost of Following Jesus

Day 4

Scripture

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. — Acts 7:54-60

Reflection

Stephen from the story above is considered the first Christian to die for his faith. He was preaching about Jesus and performing miraculous signs. Many people were believing in Jesus because of him. Some of the Jewish religious leaders tried to prove him wrong by debating with him about their faith, but Stephen won the arguments. Then, they got people to accuse Stephen of blasphemy, which means speaking falsely or saying insulting things about God. He ended up in court, and when they asked him about the accusation, he had a choice to make. He could either tell them what they wanted to hear and deny Jesus, or stand up for his faith.

At first, Stephen tells them of the history of the Jewish people. He mentions how God interacted with their ancestors and names some of the heroes of the Jewish faith. Then, he tells how the Jewish people had often turned away from God. Finally, he tells them that they also fought against God by killing Jesus. What happens next is written in the scriptures above.

We've been talking this week about the cost of following Jesus. Stephen paid the ultimate cost by giving up his life to make Jesus known. Sometimes we face situations where we are tempted to deny Jesus by our words or actions just like Stephen. The cost of following Jesus in these situations may be as great as it was for Stephen, but it often won't have as high a stakes. There are two things that helped Stephen stay faithful in this tough spot that can help us, too. One thing is that Stephen remembered what God had done in the past. He reviewed the history of God's faithfulness to His people and knew that He would continue to be faithful in the future. Another thing is that he got a glimpse of God's glory in that moment. He saw the greatness of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand.

If you are in a tough spot, remember what God has done in the past. Think about your own life. Consider the lives of other Christians you know or have heard about. Look to the Bible and recall God's faithfulness there. In addition to this, ask God to give you a glimpse of His glory. Pray that He will interact with you right then and give you the strength, peace, or wisdom you need. Stephen saw a vision that helped him through. When you're struggling, ask God to show you Himself. Remember what He has done in the past.

Prayer:

Jesus, thank You for the example of Stephen. Thank You that You are worth more than life itself. Help me to remember what You have done in the past so I will trust You in the future. Reveal Your glory to me so that I can be strengthened and encouraged by it. Amen.

Questions

When are you tempted to deny Jesus out of fear?

What has God done in your life that you can look back on and see His goodness?

When you are in a tough spot, how often do you go to God for help?