

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Suppression of Truth

Acts 7

Keywords: Acts 7, Justice, Truth, Regeneration, New Birth, Sin, Depravity

PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: In this long speech Stephan chooses to declare to the religious leaders of his day the long history of Israel rejecting God and turning to idols. He does not seek to save his life; rather, he chooses to lay down his life for the sake of truth. And in this speech and its aftermath we have a sad, but powerful display of how sin infects and destroys the human soul. We see how truth is suppressed.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read the chapter.
 - 1. Longest sermon/speech in Acts.
 - 2. Likely due to it being a pivotal point in the book. From here on the Church and the gospel begin to flow away from Jerusalem. It shows how the nation, as a whole, continued to reject Jesus as the promised Christ.
 - 3. Stephan is now speaking in response to the many lies said about him and his message.
- B. Key observations on the speech.
- C. There are two main themes in this speech.
 - 1. The first is that God has faithfully given Israel faithful leaders to point them to God and to sustain them.
 - 2. The second is that Israel, in turn, rejects these leaders and turns to idols, even turning good things into idols.
- D. The core of the speech:
 - 1. We see here a description of the nature and power of sin.
 - 2. All of us from birth are under the power and dominion of sin.

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- E. My goal today is to develop through Stephan’s speech the idea of sin’s incredible hold on humanity. How sin pervades, perverts and dominates all things.
 - 1. This is what Stephan is doing here. **He is not trying to get out of trouble.** He is **not** trying to free himself.
 - 2. He is handling this as an honorable man. His duty is not to save himself; it is to be a faithful spokesman for truth.
 - 3. He is speaking like an Old Testament prophet to a disobedient nation. He like Nathan, pointing his finger to these leaders and saying, “Thou art the man.” And in the power of the Holy Spirit he pronounces judgment upon them as he outlines their evil.
 - 4. They are men under sin’s power. They are false shepherds starving and abusing the flock of God. They are false teachers, robbing God’s people of the richness of His truth. They are white-washed graves who dress and act so piously while over-flowing with the stench of self-righteousness and deceit.
 - 5. And what is sad is that you and I are no different apart from God’s gracious intervention.
- F. But why? It is because in our natural state, each person is unregenerate.
 - 1. “Unregenerate” is a fancy way to say that we are spiritually dead due to our state of sinfulness
 - a. The bible, starting in the beginning and running all the way through to the end, starkly displays two truths.
 - (1) The first is that all our ways are under the dominion of sin—we are dead in our sin.
 - (2) The second is that we are rescued from that state only and ever by the grace-filled saving work of our Creator.
 - 2. To be unregenerate is to say that every aspect of a person is irreparably stained by sin. And it is for this reason that the bible says that we must be born again, or “regenerated.”
- G. I want to make some simple, but serious observations, about the nature of sin and how it dominates everything but God. And then show you how this state of being dead in sin pervades the whole speech of Stephan.

II. How Sin Dominates Everything But God.

- A. First, the unregenerate cannot and will not love, submit, trust nor obey GOD.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. Romans 1:18ff.
 2. 1 Corinthians 1:18ff.
 3. Romans 8:5-7. Five brutal truths about the unregenerate person.
- B. The great sin is not what we often call sin; rather, it is the active, ongoing rejection of God. It is evidenced in not giving thanks nor giving Him honor.
1. Unregenerate humanity, by nature has an inflated sense of their wisdom and are not afraid to parade it before a willing audience who will ooh and aah in appreciation (21-22).
 2. Unregenerate humanity, by nature, worships—but always a counterfeit god of their own choosing (23).
 3. James 4:1-3 says that the source of fighting and murder is our own desires that control us. My simple definition of identifying idolatry in our life, even as a Christian is: We sin to get it or we sin when we do not get it.
 4. James 4:13-15 tells us that to live a life assuming that we will conduct business and then go home is simply evidence of idolatry. Instead we are to say, “If the Lord wills. . .” Here is what James says is really going on, “But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil” (16).
- C. These are all illustrated by Stephan in Acts 7.
1. Stephan starts this speech with Abraham, called out of idolatry and into life under God. He quickly sketches out the stories of Genesis up to the sons of Jacob.
 2. From there, in vs 9 we see Joseph who was favored and loved by Jacob. And the other sons, who were to become the tribes of Israel, were jealous and sold him into slavery. Yet God was with Joseph and raised him up to be the savior of the infant nation of Israel in the time of great famine.
 3. Then Stephan turns his attention to Moses when he killed the Egyptian abusing an Israelite. In vs 25 we see that Moses was trying to communicate to his people that salvation/deliverance was available to them if they would only see it, but they did not understand and rejected him. But God then raised him up as their savior and ruler (35).
 4. Then Stephan speaks of God making a covenant of blessing with Israel after being delivered out of Egypt and Israel responded by worshipping idols instead, rejecting God and His savior (40-43).

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

5. Then we find him using the building of the Temple and how they turned it into an idol as well as if God could dwell in anything made by human hands.
 6. But all of this is then summed up in vss 51-57.
 7. So where is hope to be found? If we are born under the power of sin and are dead in our sins, how can we find life and forgiveness?
- D. Only by God's regenerating work will we believe, love, trust or obey.
1. John 3:1-8.
 - a. Though no question is asked by Nicodemus, Jesus answers what must have been in the heart of this man.
 - b. We all are born but this is insufficient. For in our birth we are born under the dominion of sin. We are born “in Adam.”
 - c. To not be born again means you can’t see the Kingdom of God, meaning you can’t even gaze into this kingdom, you are blind to it (3). The Kingdom of God is another way of describing when God makes all things new, without sin. It is really what is meant when a person says that they are “saved.”
 - d. Because you can’t even see it, you can’t enter it without this new birth (5).
 - e. And this new birth, this regeneration is something only the Holy Spirit can do.
 2. When a person is born again, regenerated, made alive or however you wish to state it, faith is born in his heart.
 - a. Remember Romans 8:5-7 and those five brutal truths about the unregenerate person. They are now flipped the other way because of the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. So now he walks in the newness of true life.
 - c. He is now at peace with God.
 - d. He will now submit himself to God.
 - e. He is now able to submit himself to God.
 - f. And he is able to please God.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. So as you share the gospel and you challenge people to come and believe and follow Christ, you are also asking God to make that person alive, to awaken their dead soul to salvation.

III. Conclusion.

- A. So what is the mark of one who is regenerated?
 1. They believe and love Jesus Christ. What they naturally resisted and hated they now love and embrace.
 2. They shall see Christ as He is.
 3. People hear the way of salvation over and over. They sit and receive its words but not unto life. It bores them. It demeans them. It judges them. It anger or offends them. But it doesn't save them.
- B. Beloved, we cannot make a person believe. But we can call them to believe in Jesus Christ. We cannot make them accept the bad news of their sinfulness. But we can speak the truth. We must speak the truth.

Benediction

May the God who gave us the Word sanctify us in it so that we might find ourselves strengthened in the truth, humble of heart, able to encourage one another toward love and good deeds, especially as we see the day of our Lord's return drawing nearer. Amen.