

Acts - Commentaries by Grandma Smith

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 2, What Did Stephen See? (7:54-60)

Stephen's face was shining like the face of an angel. But the faces of the men around him were like thunderclouds. Here is the reason why.

The men were all looking down and around and back, but Stephen was looking up into heaven, and that made the difference. Those men of Jerusalem had a wonderful past history and they were proud of who they were, and that was all they could see. But Stephen had reminded them how their nation had disobeyed God for hundreds of years, and in their hatred and rebellion they had finally crucified the Son of God. The men did not want to hear this, and it made them angry.

Why show the men of Jerusalem their hatred and rebellion if it makes them angry? Why not look on the bright side and forget all the awful things their nation did in the past? Because it is God's Word that shows up our sin, not to make us unhappy, but to make us repent of our sins and to bring them to God to have them washed away forever in the precious blood of Christ. Would you rather hide your sins and keep them forever, even in eternity?

The faces around Stephen grew angrier. They showed their teeth like wild animals, as if they were ready to bite him. But Stephen looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. He told those angry men of Jerusalem what he saw: "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man [Je-sus] standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

That was enough! They covered their ears so they would hear no more.

Is that what you do too? Do you cover your ears and say in your heart, "Don't tell me what God says in the Bible - I want my own way instead"?

That wonderful, joyful sight of Jesus which Stephen saw filled those men with anger, and they missed it forever. But they will see Je-sus, at the great white throne before they are cast into hell. And you will see Him there too, if you will not uncover your ears to listen and open your heart to Him now.

They threw Stephen out of the city and angrily began throwing stones at him, intending to kill him. And as the stones were hurled against him, Stephen knelt down and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he gave one last, loud cry, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Then he fell asleep. That means he died, but it was not awful for him when his body slept in death, because the Lord Jesus took his spirit up to heaven.

Was it still possible for those wicked men to be saved from their sins, even the sin of murder? Yes, if they would repent and come to God before it was too late. Saul, who was later known as the Apostle Paul, was there that day, and although he did not actually throw a stone, he agreed with what those angry men did. But he later repented of his sins, and God saved him. You can read in 1 Timothy 1:15 what he wrote: "Christ Je-sus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

God is ready to save you too, right now. It is sinners, not good people, whom Jesus came to save. Now, as you read this, come to Him and find that He loves you and He has a home in heaven for you, bought and paid for by the precious blood of Christ. That's where you will be forever, if you will repent and look up to Him now to be saved from your sins.

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17).

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 3, What Happened to the Crippled Man? (14:8-22)

He had been crippled his whole life. When other boys could run and kick balls or jump over puddles, he could only watch them. I'm not sure that anybody cared very much about this cripple living in the city of Lystra, but God cared, and God cares about you too.

That crippled boy was a man now. His sandals never wore out, because he never walked on them. I'm sure he had sadness in his heart, but there was something else in his heart too. Maybe your heart is sad or maybe it's full of fun. But do you have this other secret in your heart too? You're probably asking, "What is the secret?"

The crippled man had something God values, and that something was "faith." He didn't wonder and hope that maybe God could heal him. He KNEW that God could heal him. Faith always knows, and faith was the secret in his heart.

If you have faith, you are not wondering if maybe God can save you and take your sins away and make you one of His very own children. You KNOW you can trust His promise; He has written it in the Bible for us to read and believe: "He that [believes] on Me [has] everlasting life" (John 6:47). Faith always knows, and faith in the Lord Jesus will not only save your soul, it will change your life!

The crippled man heard Paul speak. What do you do when someone is speaking the Word of God? Do you listen? Do you want to hear more? This man did, and this is what he heard: "Stand upright on thy feet" (Acts 14:10). And for the first time in his whole life, that's exactly what he

did -he stood up on his feet! And not only that, but he leaped and walked!

The crowd of people saw what Paul had done, but they really missed seeing what God had done. Paul's words were good words, but the power of God was behind those words, and they missed that part.

Bible words are always good words, and maybe you can repeat some from memory, but do you know that the power of God is in those words? And do you know those words are for you? The crippled man knew the power of God was in Paul's words, but the crowd didn't know that.

The crowd got all excited about this man's wonderful healing, and they said, The gods have come down to earth in the likeness of men! They are Jupiter and Mercury! Then the religious priests brought garlands of flowers and oxen to sacrifice to Paul and his friend Barnabas.

Oh, no, no, no! The crowd had it all wrong! There was no faith in their hearts. Paul and Barnabas ran in among the people, crying, We are only men, just like you! Turn to the living God who made heaven and earth and the sea!

Perhaps in your heart you still believe what others tell you or what you can see. But it is the living God who fills our hearts with truth and gladness. Faith says, "Yes, I know," even if the crowd does not agree.

Some people came from Antioch and talked the crowd into turning against Paul, and the crowd listened to them. Then they picked up big stones and hurled them at him from all sides, until he fell down unconscious. He's dead, they said, and they dragged him outside the city. But his friends stood around him, and soon he revived, got up and went back into the city. The next day he was off to preach the same good news in another city.

You would expect that Paul would never go back to Lystra, but he did! There were people there who had believed his message, and he came back to encourage and help them. He told them to continue in the faith. Yes, they would have troubles, but it was worth it all.

We are telling you the same message today. Trust Jesus Himself, read His Word, and don't be surprised if you have troubles. The living God is the One who cares about you. Jesus has gone to heaven, and He has prepared the place for you. Here is His promise: "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself " (John 14:3).

Think About God's Word!

1. How did the crowd react to the wonderful healing?
2. Have you ever run into troubles when you were doing something for the Lord? How does He encourage us in John 16:33?

Project: How many different troubles did Paul run into in his life? You can get your list off to a great start with 2 Corinthians 11:23-33.

God's Wonderful Stories: Volume 1, Story of Rhoda, The (12:12-16)

I cannot tell you how old Rhoda was, but the Bible calls her a "damsel," so I think she could have been a young teenager. She may have been a servant-girl or even a daughter in the house of John Mark. I know she was an active girl and not afraid of the dark, even though it was late at night.

It was shortly after midnight, and there were many gathered together in that house, praying. Peter was in prison and his life was in danger. They were not signing a protest to the government to release him. Instead, they were praying to the God of heaven, the Father who loved them, and to the Lord Jesus who has all power in heaven and earth.

Rhoda was there at the prayer meeting. She knew Peter, for she had often listened to his voice and she knew it well. His words were precious, because he told her that she was not redeemed with silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ. He told her that Jesus, His own self, bore her sins in His own body on the tree. And he told her that she was a living stone in God's great spiritual house. Perhaps she had not yet heard of all these wonderful truths, but all this was part of Peter's message, and since it was God's Word, it was precious to the hearts of those in John Mark's house that night. Maybe there were groans and tears as they prayed for Peter in prison and about to lose his life.

Listen! There is a knock at the gate. It was Rhoda who ran down the passageway in the dark where she heard not only a knock but a voice calling to be let in. She recognized the voice, and she was so surprised and happy that she ran back to those praying with the news that Peter was at the gate!

But girls can be wrong! Why listen to Rhoda? It couldn't be true. Didn't she know that Peter was in prison? They told her she was out of her mind.

But she insisted that it was Peter's voice and that he was at the gate!

"It is his angel," they said.

Maybe there has been a time in your life when you knew that the answer is "Yes," even when everybody around you said "No." If you are trusting what God says, you may be sure that His Word is true. Others will see it later. Yes, God is true and His Word is worth trusting no matter what anybody says.

By this time everybody could hear the knocking on the gate, and when they opened it. . . there stood Peter - the very man they had been praying for! They were so delighted that they all talked at once, but Peter raised his hand to hush them.

After they became quiet, he told them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. It was a very interesting story that he told them, and we will tell it to you next.

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