

5/8/18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

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 clothes 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 7:55-60

In the years after Jesus' death and resurrection, the believers in Jerusalem asked Stephen and six other men to oversee the care for their widows. Stephen faithfully served these women in need and spent his time sharing Jesus' love with many other people.

The Jewish leaders became angry that Stephen was claiming Jesus was God and had died for the sins of all people. They put Stephen on trial for abusing God's name. The verses tell us how that trial ended.

Stephen had spent his life helping others. He had shared God's love with everyone he could. What did all his service and love get him? Condemnation and death.

That's not fair!

It wasn't. It also wasn't fair what happened to Stephen after he died. Jesus welcomed Stephen into heaven. Despite all Stephen's good work, he still had disobeyed God plenty of times. The fair thing for God to do would have been to condemn Stephen. Instead, God placed Stephen's sins on Jesus so Stephen could go to heaven. That wasn't fair!

God has done the same thing for you. Maybe you got into trouble for doing the right thing. Maybe people took advantage of you. Maybe you played by the rules and the cheater won instead of you. You have every right to cry out, “That’s not fair!” You might be tempted to blame God for being unfair to you.

But don’t blame him, praise God for not being fair. He heard your lies and your complaining. He felt your distrust of his plans for your life. He knew your worries and heard your accusations. Instead of condemning you for these sins, which would have been fair, God was unfair to you.

Just as he did with Stephen, God blamed Jesus for all you’ve done wrong. God punished Jesus in your place. Then God unfairly reserved a spot for you in heaven—because of Jesus.

No matter what you suffer and endure in life, you can thank God that he has and will treat you unfairly. He will welcome you into heaven, just as he did Stephen—because of Jesus!

Prayer: *Jesus, thank you for being “unfair” with me. When I struggle, when people do wrong to me, remind me how God punished you so I could go to heaven. Amen.*

(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

Pastor Alan W. Gumm

Phone: 630-947-4317 - revagumm@hotmail.com