

Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 13 and begin with an opening prayer

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? Look on me and answer, LORD my God Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. (Psalm 13:2-5)

Where do you identify with David's prayer this morning? The key is that even when David is in agony, he never stops praying. Bring your heart this morning, wherever you are, before the Lord & ask that he would reveal his unfailing love to you today, restoring peace & joy in your salvation.

Acts 7:54-8:3

Passage Introduction:

After calling the people to repent, how did they respond? Just as people reject the gospel today, so too Stephen's hearers rejected his preaching. Just as in Acts 2:37, there was a reaction—but this time it was of a different nature. Again, God cut the people to their hearts—but this time, they were cut in a way that hardened them. Feeling their hearts pierced by the word of God, the people immediately responded in vicious, brutish anger. It is this moment in history when persecution is triggered in a much more intense way, forcing God's people to move outward with the gospel.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Use the space in the margin to jot down notes, or themes/ideas that stand out as important.

Acts 7:54 - 8:3 - 54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. **55** 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. **56** "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." **57** At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, **58** 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. **59** While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." **60** 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.

8:1 - And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. **2** Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. **3** But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- Take a few minutes to think carefully about the passage. What are some things this passage reveals about God (the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit) Try to list as many as you can.

- What do you learn or observe about people or yourself in this passage?

- Are there any examples to follow, sin to avoid, commands to obey in the passage? What would it take for you to be willing to live as Stephen did (and, if necessary, to die as Stephen did)?

Key Takeaway:

What does today's passage show you about a need you have in your life? What do you need to do or become in light of this truth? How can you begin to petition God for it?

Close in Prayer:

Do you know of someone experiencing real hardship because of their faith? Ask God to bless them with endurance and perseverance. Pray for courage and boldness for you and your family to share the gospel with others who might be resistant or antagonistic.

