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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas

Lesson Leaders:

James Haymon
Barry Hosford

Class Leaders:

Inreach: Pat Hester
Deacon: C M Hester

Living in Faith Acts 6:7-15

Lesson Background and Introduction

After Jesus' ascension, the number of believers increased and were added to the numbers in Jerusalem (see Acts 2:47b; 5:14; 6:1). The expanding number of believers led them to develop habits for their gatherings and expectations for how they would treat each other (see 2:42-47a; 4:32-35). During that time, almost all believers were ethnically Jewish. However, not all had the same cultural upbringing. Some had lived in the Greek-speaking (Hellenistic) portions of the Roman Empire, while others lived in Jewish regions of Palestine. The differences between these groups of first-century Jews led to conflict regarding the treatment of widows (Acts 6:1). As a result, the apostles faced challenges while trying to oversee the church (6:2). To ease the load for the apostles, they selected seven men to handle specific tasks (see Acts 6:3-4). The book of Acts mentions two of these seven men in further detail: Philip (8:4-40) and Stephen (6:8-8:1). In some ways, the role of these seven men was analogous to the position of deacon (see 1 Timothy 3:8-13). Stephen's teachings gave these groups a reason to argue with him. If he had only performed miracles and served food (compare Acts 6:2-3), it is unlikely that these groups would have had any dispute. However, what led to conflict with the synagogue members were his words. Stephen undoubtedly followed Peter and John in proclaiming God's salvation in Jesus the Messiah (compare Acts 3:12-26). However, the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem did not want anyone to preach that message (4:13-18). Jesus' promises to his followers regarding opposition (Luke 21:12-15) were coming true. 10. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. That the synagogue members could not stand up against Stephen does not mean that they agreed with that message. Rather, they had no answer to his teachings. They had opposed the leading of God's Spirit. They were "stiff-necked people" with "hearts and ears uncircumcised" (Acts 7:51). Stephen had been chosen because he was "full of the Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). His irrefutable words were a direct fulfillment of Jesus' promises to his disciples (Luke 21:15).

What should the Christian's response be to attacks and insults to faith? Such attacks might include name-calling, harsh remarks, or judgment regarding our use of time, energy, and resources. These abuses might even come from coworkers, friends, or family members. The verbal attacks on Stephen led to a physical attack that resulted in his death. It is unlikely that we will experience the same end as Stephen. However, his manner of living can inform our behavior, whether or not attacks on our faith result. Stephen was a student of Scripture, demonstrated by his speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2-54). Not only did he know the facts of Scripture, but he also knew how Jesus fulfilled all of Scripture. This knowledge led him to display confidence and hope during his interaction with the Sanhedrin. He proclaimed the gospel with the hope that they would believe in Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. Most of all, Stephen faced his final crisis with peace and poise. He displayed a sense of peace that comes from a knowledge of God's will and power. The false accusations did not deter Stephen; he trusted that it was all a part of God's plan. Consider the example of Stephen the next time you pray. Ask the Lord for wisdom, power, and peace. When we practice and display these attributes, we can better serve the Lord, especially in the face of criticism or attacks from the world.

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:
Our greatest comfort in sorrow is to know that God is in control

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK:
What our faith rests on is the belief that God is in ultimate control and will indeed keep His promises, whether that happens in this life or the next

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:
But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him
(Heb 11:6 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", July 30, 2016)

Series: Examining Our Faith

UNIT 1: Faithful vs Faithless

NEXT WEEK

**The Resurrection:
Key to Faith
(Mark 16:1-8)**

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Living in Faith through the Church (Acts 6:7-10)

A Church where God's Word is spread (7)

Spread because it is useful to equip for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17)

Spread because it is trustworthy and true (2 Peter 3:5-7)

Spread because it has the power of God in it (Rom 1:16-17)

Spread because it is the sword of the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:17)

Spread because it is living and enduring (1 Peter 1:23)

Spread because it revives the soul (Ps 19:7)

Spread because it provides a rebirth by God (James 1:18)

A Church where faith is displayed (8)

Faith based on seeking the God that exists (Heb 11:6)

Faith that trusts God and His deliverance (Ps 78:21-22)

Faith that results in no condemnation (John 3:18)

Faith that believes that Jesus is God in the flesh and Savior (John 8:24)

Faith that expresses itself through love (Gal 5:6)

Faith that results in entering God's rest (Heaven) (Heb 4:2-3)

A Church where faithfulness is strong (9-10)

A faithfulness that is based on a calling into fellowship (1 Cor 1:9)

A faithfulness that is based on a Divine promise (Heb 11:11)

A faithfulness that should be committed to (1 Peter 4:19)

A faithfulness that is irrevocable (Rom 11:29)

A faithfulness that means it will be done (1 Thess 5:24)

A faithfulness that cannot be disowned (2 Tim 2:13)

A faithfulness that is unswerving (Heb 10:23)

A faithfulness that is just and powerful (1 John 1:9)

Living in Faith Enduring Opposition (Acts 6:11-15)

Opposition through slander (11)

Slander that is not tolerated in the congregation (James 4:11)

Slander that should be gotten rid of (Eph 4:31)

Slander that comes in the last days (2 Tim 3:2-5)

Slander that should be taught against (Titus 2:3)

Slander that come during maturing of faith (1 Peter 2:1)

Opposition through imprisonment (12)

Imprisonment because of Satan's testing (Rev 2:10)

Imprisonment because it has been prophesied (Acts 20:22-24)

Imprisonment because of the sake of Jesus (Luke 6:22-23)

Imprisonment because of being betrayed (Luke 21:16-17)

Imprisonment because of the world hating Christians (John 7:7)

Opposition through false witnesses (13-14)

False witnessing that is commanded against (Exodus 23:1)

False witnessing that is to be purged from the saints (Deut 19:16-19)

False witnessing comes from an evil mind (Matt 15:19-20)

False witnessing that must be punished (Prov 19:9)

Opposition endured through righteousness (15)

A righteousness that brings eternal life (Rom 5:21)

A righteousness that we have in Jesus (1 Cor 1:30)

A righteousness that God provided through Jesus (2 Cor 5:21)

A righteousness that we have faith and hope in (Gal 5:5)

A righteousness that comes from God through faith (Phil 3:9)