

Witness Unhindered:
 “Living and Dying as a Christian”
 Acts 7: 54 - 8:3

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“All human nature vigorously resists grace because grace changes us and the change is painful.”
 - Flannery O’Connor

“I lost fear in the black belt when I began to know in my bones and sinews that I had been truly baptized into the Lord’s death and Resurrection, that in the only sense that really matters I am already dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God . . . I began to lose self-righteousness when I discovered the extent to which my behavior was motivated by worldly desires and by the self-seeking messianism of Yankee deliverance! The point is simply, of course, that one’s motives are usually mixed, and one had better know it.” - Jonathan Myrick Daniels

*“Let the world despise and leave me
 They have left my Saviour, too
 Human hearts and looks deceive me
 Thou art not like them, untrue
 Oh, while thou dost smile upon me
 God of wisdom, love and might
 Foes may hate and friends disown me
 Show thy face and all is bright*

*Soul, then know thy full salvation
 Rise over sin and fear and care
 Joy to find in every station
 Something still to do or bear
 Think what Spirit dwells within thee
 Think what Father's smiles are thine
 Think that Jesus died to win thee
 Child of heaven, canst thou repine?”* - Henry Lyte, “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken”

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- Stephen, as he was being stoned to death, saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
 - Why is this vision so crucial for him and for us as believers in Jesus?
 - Why does the anomaly of Jesus “standing” make such a difference for Stephen and for us?
 - How can we access the same truth even though we are far removed from Stephen and the book of Acts?
- While we may never be in a position to give our life away as a martyr, what demands for sacrificial living are you facing:
 - Family?
 - Church?
 - Vocation?
- Because of Stephen’s vision, he was able to entrust himself to Jesus, to endure the murderous mob and their violence, and to forgive them for their sins.
 - What is the vital link between Stephen’s actions and the work of Jesus?
 - What do you need to see, to endure, to entrust, to forgive?