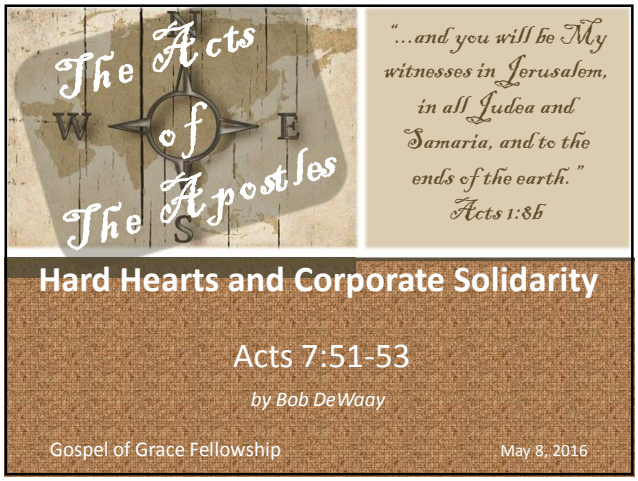

A High Priest Who Sympathizes With Sinners

Hebrews 4:15 (NASB)

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

- Å Jesus received sinners (Luke 15:1, 2)
- Å Jesus had suffered before the Council (Luke 23:13-21)
- Å Jesus made the good confession (1Tim. 6:13)
- Å Stephen would finally appeal to Christ (Acts 7:59, 60)
- Å Jesus was sinless and offered Himself as a sacrifice

Hard Hearts: Acts 7:51-53 2

Access to the Throne of Grace

Hebrews 4:16 (NASB)

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Å "Let us" is an hortatory subjunctive (functions as an imperative; here present passive subjunctive).
- Å "Draw near" was used in the LXX as a technical term for drawing near to God. (Deut. 21:5; Lev. 21:17)
- Å Jesus the High Priest is on the throne for us
- Å "Confidence" also can be translated "boldness"

Hard Hearts: Acts 7:51-53 3

What Constitutes Answer to Prayer

- Å "Mercy"
- Å "Grace"
- Å Timely Help
  - Å This does not imply "new words from God." Hebrews 1:1, 2 says "God has spoken"
  - Å God's visitation in Christ was a display of His mercy (Luke 1:78) "Mercy" is found 10X in Luke
  - Å Christ is our "mercy seat" (Romans 3:25 NET)
  - Å God's grace enables us to persevere in all situations and live so as to honor Him
  - Å "timely help" implies "just when we need it"

Hard Hearts: Acts 7:51-53 4

Corporate Solidarity

Acts 7:51 (NKVJ)

You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did,* so *do* you.

- "Stiff-necked" alludes to OT rebukes: Deut. 9:13, Exo. 33:3; 2Kings 17:14 LXX
- Uncircumcised heart: Lev. 26:41; Jer. 9:26 LXX
- "Resist" is used in Num. 27:14 LXX along with "holy"
- Uncircumcised ears: Jer. 6:10 LXX
- Stephen was "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5)

Hard Hearts: Acts 7:51-53 5

"Our Fathers" Then "Your Fathers" Stephen Indicts the Sanhedrin

- "Our Fathers" in Stephen's speech: Acts 7:12; 7:19; 7:38; 7:39; 7:44; 7:45
- "Your Fathers" in Stephen's speech: Acts 7:51; 7:52

Stephen was willing to own their joint, sinful, corporate past until it came to their treatment of Messiah, the greater "Moses." Then the Jewish leadership still owned the corporate guilt, but Stephen who had come to Messiah no longer did. The only way to escape from their history of apostasy was to believe in Christ.

Hard Hearts: Acts 7:51-53 6

The Sanhedrin Is Culpable of Murder

Acts 7:52 (NKJV)

Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers

- Again he says "your fathers" implying both physical descent but more importantly corporate guilt.
- The "Righteous One" is Christ
- Peter preached this same thing (Acts 3:14, 15)
- See Zechariah 7:11, 12

Hard Hearts: Acts 7:51-53 7

It Was the Sanhedrin, Not Stephen, Who Opposed the Law

Acts 7:53 (NKJV)

who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it*.

- Peter had called them to repent over this: Acts 3:18-23
- They, not Stephen, had rejected Moses!
- Stephen's face was like that of an angel (Acts 6:5) and angels announced Messiah in Luke 1 & 2

Hard Hearts: Acts 7:51-53 8