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STEPHEN.

A SERMON

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And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts vii : 59-60.

GUIDED by these words, and helped by the Holy Spirit my desire is to study with you the life, the work, and the tragic yet triumphant death of the first Christian martyr, and to gather therefrom some useful lessons for our edification and comfort. The biographies found in the Scriptures are significant object lessons, whereby doctrinal truth, practical piety and precious promise are set forth in concrete form, and often with vivid reality and striking effect. There is no setting forth of useless details of life and conduct, as in modern works of fiction ; only those things which are necessary for the moral and religious ends in view are noted in the sacred narrations, and nothing is given for the purpose of painting a picture, or satisfying idle curiosity. With a few descriptive strokes a character is outlined or a life depicted, and it stands there for all time like a marble statue defying the ravages of time. Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Elijah, David, Daniel, Peter, John, James, Stephen, Paul on the one hand, and Cain, Esau, Pharaoh, Balaam, Achan, Jezebel, Herodias, Ananias, Judas, and Demas on the other hand illustrate the truth just stated. Of all these the life of Stephen is one