

the last crime he could commit, and false witnesses are brought against him, yet he makes no angry protest. He rejoices in an opportunity to defend himself and the honor of his Master, and when the anger of the Jews rises into mad fury he utters no hasty word. And even when he is about to be put to death he looks up to heaven, and then looks around upon his murderers and in the triumph of tenderness can say with his expiring breath, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." What patient tenderness, what amazing forgiveness!

Think of the circumstances! If ever a man, humanely speaking, had good reason to be angry and die cursing his enemies surely Stephen is the man. A false charge, bribed witnesses, no real trial, for the Council changed into a mob before proper sentence seemed to have been passed, no time given him to prepare for death, and every circumstance of shame and cruelty attending his death, yet he does not lose his temper, he does not vow vengeance upon tormentors; he even rises to the lofty plane reached by his Master before him, and in the midst of cruel injustice, dies with no anger in his heart, and with forgiveness on his lips. Philosophy cannot produce so heroic a death; such grandeur in the dying hour is the achievement of the Gospel.

So if we would have our spirits made patient, and our hearts tender the power of Christ's Gospel can effect this. To enable us to curb temper, and hold the proud and restive spirit in check, the yoke of Christ is the only instrument which will surely secure this end. It makes men patient, tender, loving, and ready to forgive injuries. It puts a man in a position in which "he can be angry and sin not, nor let the sun go down upon his wrath."

Such then are the illustrations of the power of the Gospel given by Stephen. Character is purified, true courage is given, and real tenderness is produced.

1. A second lesson we learn here is "*the importance of 'looking up' in the experience of the Christian.*" He is taught by the example of Stephen, "to live the life which he now lives by the faith of the Son of God." See how this practical injunction is illustrated in Stephen's case. As he is brought before the Council he looked up, no doubt, and his face appeared to be like an angel's. As the Jews gnashed on him with their teeth and cast him roughly out of the city, he "looked steadfastly up into heaven." He had the windows of his soul open to heaven. He looked up *steadfastly*. His gaze faltered not. By faith he lifted up his soul, and in spirit he beheld a glorious