



What Do You Do When You Lose?

Acts 7

About Down & Out

If you've ever felt down and out, here's what we are going to discover in this series: You may be down, but you're never out. There is still hope. Sure, you may be behind. Sure, you may feel down. But you're not out. It may be the Bottom of the Ninth, but there's still a chance to turn this game around.

One Thing: You can be **used** even when you **lose**.

Introduction

The Bible has no shortage of people who faced *Down & Out* moments. Guys like: Daniel (lion's den); Moses (most of his life – infancy, fleeing Egypt, demanding Israel's freedom, Red Sea); Jonah (from fish food to evangelist); David (facing Goliath); Jesus (looked bad on Friday, but Sunday was coming).

These stories are really quite amazing. They have a common theme – comeback! They all went down and out, then won.

But ... then there's Stephen. I'm not sure what to do with this story.

Truth

Read Acts 7

God didn't save him. God didn't remove him from the stoning. He saved Daniel, Peter, and John. He came through for Abraham. Moses lived a life of down and out moments and God kept coming through. Good grief. He brought Jesus back from the dead!

Why not Stephen? What are we supposed to do with the story of Stephen?

Reality Check

I know one thing for sure. Many of us can empathize with Stephen. Maybe not giving speeches and being stoned, but we've been down and even out. If not us, we know people who lost. Some of you are there right now in some area of your life.

Finance ... *Down & Out*

Marriage ... *Down & Out*

Parenting ... *Down & Out*

Dating ... *Down & Out*

Health ... *Down & Out*

You prayed. You hoped. You came to church. You prayed some more. But you went from bad to worse ... from down to out. Now, it's over.

But ... that's not the end of the story!

The full story of Stephen teaches us how to still love even when we lose.

Life After Stephen

After Stephen died and was buried, a massive persecution broke out against Christians and the church in Jerusalem. As a result, Christians fled, and the Gospel spread. Christianity began to move from growing only in Jerusalem to growing around the world. And ... it all started with Stephen, a guy who lost. But God was up to something much bigger and used Stephen's life as a catalyst to take the Gospel to the world.

Lessons from Stephen

You can be used even when you lose.

God used Stephen for good even though he didn't rescue him.

God can use you and me even if he doesn't remove our suffering and pain.

How we live as we lose ultimately determines if we can be used.

Application

Most of us miss this because *Down & Out* moments have a way of focusing us on ourselves and our circumstances. However, if we shift our focus from “Why didn’t God remove me?” to “How can God use me?” it opens us up to the bigger things of God.

This should be great news:

*Being used when we lose is something we can **choose**.*

From Saul to Paul

God used the coat-checker at Stephen’s death to ultimately begin **the** church movement around the world. At the end of the Apostle Paul’s life, while he was in a Roman prison awaiting his own execution, he wrote ...

2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith.”

Herein lies the secret to being used when we lose:

Fight

No matter how bad it seems, God can use people who are willing to go down swinging.

Finish

Sometimes, even when we fight, we still lose. Sometimes we swing and miss.

When we finish well, we create a unique context to be used by God.

Faith

This is the biggest challenge of all. When the game is ending, and loss is inevitable, we must keep the faith. **Faith believes we can be used even when we lose – even when the pain isn’t removed.**

Action Items / Next Steps

- Memorize 2 Timothy 4:7
- Remain in the Fight
- Finish Strong
- Keep the Faith to the End