

1. Introduction
  - a. Google search for Acts29
    - i. High profile people, leaders, anyone who tries to do anything good will be the subject of ridicule, rumors, accusations, etc
  - b. Mark Driscoll - planting phase was the loneliest time of his life
  - c. Has already happened to me and us at Revolve
  - d. Can you relate?
  - e. How should we respond?
  - f. Acts - summarize
2. *And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. Acts 6:8-9*
  - a. Doing great wonders yet here come people who despise him
    - i. Jews who were abroad and came back - more zealous - c.f. Muslims in Europe
  - b. Leaders are sitting ducks for accusations
    - i. especially from people trapped in a religious system/culture
    - ii. we've all attacked leaders, made assumptions, etc
  - c. Leaders can't be everyone's best friend, can't make everyone happy
    - i. All of us are leaders (parents, siblings, school, church, work)
    - ii. Expect opposition, disagreements, criticism, accusations
  - d. The big question is how we respond to our critics, the accusations against us
    - i. Too much focus on critics has potential to derail us from what's important
      1. Focus on the 2 naysayers when 98% is onboard
    - ii. Sometimes the critics might be accurate and we need to turn our critics into coaches
  - e. Back to Stephen's story
3. *But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. Acts 6:10*
  - a. In the midst of the controversy, he responds full of wisdom and the Spirit
    - i. Not wisdom in some mystical sense
    - ii. Wisdom = knowledge applied → explain
      1. Calm, collected, thoughtful response - not giving more ammo
      2. Wisdom = applying the Gospel to self & others
  - b. What does it look like when someone brings a charge against you?
    - i. Wisdom ≠ knowledge bullying, political manipulation and maneuvering, getting defensive, getting your back up, bulldozing, or throwing a fit
4. *Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of*

*Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”*  
*Acts 6:11-14*

- a. He is innocent so they have to instigate people against him the core things of the faith
    - i. There are times when things are brought against us because we are innocent and times when the charges are valid
    - ii. This is not about valid charges
      - 1. If people are finding out about your skeletons and bringing them up as accusations, that is an entirely different story...
    - iii. Be so innocent that charges made against you have to be false
  - b. They spread lies about him, twist his words, instigate false claims/spread gossip
  - c. If you pursue a life of holiness, the world will hate you. Don't be surprised.
    - i. Why? Because the world hated Jesus first
    - ii. True holiness makes proud people feel guilty and broken people see hope
      - 1. Friend's story about choosing the high road at work
  - d. When accusations come against you - be sure that they are false and ungrounded or you run the potential of bringing dishonor to yourself & to Jesus
    - i. How do you stand tall against accusations?
    - ii. Pursue integrity - who are you when nobody's watching?
  - e. Stephen had integrity - he was innocent so they had to make stuff up about him
    - i. Be like that. Pursue integrity, pursue holiness in the power of God
    - ii. Don't use God's grace as an excuse to get away with sin, let it spur you on to desire to live a life of holiness that is in line w/ being "set apart"
5. *And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel. Acts 6:15*
- a. What does the face of an angel look like?
    - i. Looney Toons
  - b. When false accusations come, respond with innocence, humility and confidence knowing that God is your judge and you have your integrity
    - i. That's what it means to respond w/ wisdom
      - 1. If wisdom = knowledge applied, respond w/ Gospel knowledge
    - ii. The Gospel means that although you are not innocent, you are made righteous in Jesus Christ
    - iii. *For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. (1 Corinthians 4:4, ESV)*
      - 1. e.g. - I don't have a guilty conscience in this situation, but that doesn't mean I am innocent - that's for God to judge.
    - iv. Respond w/ the knowledge that God is your judge, not your accuser
      - 1. **God has silenced Satan, the Accuser, w/ the blood of Jesus**
        - a. False accusations come from the father of lies so be mindful what rumors you spread about people
  - c. But if the accusations hold water, repent, make recompense, and move forward in the grace and mercy of Jesus

- i. If you are guilty, don't respond with ignorance
- ii. **In the Gospel there is no reason to hide behind a facade of holiness**
- iii. None of us are perfect, we all have problems, and will all make mistakes
- iv. When you are wrong, admit it and move on
  - 1. The more you hide it, the deeper you dig ditch of your demise
  - 2. Many a man and woman have fallen because they didn't take ownership over sin immediately
  - 3. **Hiding behind lies will destroy your integrity and ruin people you lead**

## 6. Application

- a. How do you respond to critics, accusations, rumors...
- b. **Pursue holiness and integrity** as a response (not a means) to God's love
  - i. Holiness is a response to grace Titus 2:11ff
  - ii. Don't use grace as an a get out of jail free card (image)
  - iii. You can have assurance in the midst of temptation - 1 Cor 10:13
  - iv. Be the same person no matter who you are with
    - 1. Jokes
    - 2. Internet - unless you want it to be on the front page of the NYTimes, don't write it, email it, post it, tweet it, or google it
- c. **Respond to real accusations with repentance** (define repentance)
  - i. Don't dig yourself a deeper grave via denial
    - 1. Leaders: (everyone is a leader somewhere) Don't be so fearful of your reputation that you hide your sin. Part of being a servant leader is knowing when to be open, transparent, and repent
    - 2. Parents: use your failings to teach repentance/grace, not to pretend you're perfect and, so, pave a culture of hypocrisy and double standards
    - 3. Kids: Realize your parents aren't perfect, just like you, and they need grace and forgiveness as well
    - 4. Personally: Might be saying, "Bill, you don't know what I've done...I'm a hypocrite"
      - a. Messing up doesn't make you a hypocrite. Pretending that you are innocent makes you a hypocrite and if you hide behind that wall, you are forgetting the Gospel
  - ii. Repent, embrace God's grace, move on
    - 1. No condemnation (Romans 8:1), faithful to forgive (1 John 1:9)
- d. **Respond to false accusations with grace and patience**
  - i. Father forgive them
  - ii. They need forgiveness - salvation
  - iii. If they did this to Jesus they will do it to his followers
  - iv. God is your judge, not men
- e. **Defuse accusations with integrity or repentance**