

A Man Full of Faith

“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”
Acts 7:59 (NIV)

When the early church was being organized, “**the Twelve gathered all the disciples together**” in order to determine who would look after the day-to-day operations of the church, so they could “**give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.**” (Acts 6:2,4 NIV) The first one they chose was “**Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.**” (Acts 6:5 NIV)

We're not told a lot about Stephen, but what we are told, is that in spite of the danger to himself, he bravely shared the story of Jesus Christ.

We know that he performed great signs and wonders, “**Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.**” (Acts 6:8 NIV)

We're also told that he was dragged before the Jewish council and false witness was made against him. By this time, Stephen was so empowered by the Lord that, “**All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the**

face of an angel.” (Acts 6:15 NIV)

Then, full of the Holy Spirit, Stephen gave a progressive, logical presentation of the full history of Israel. As soon as he was finished, he said, “**Look...I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.**” (Acts 7:56 NIV)

“**At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.**” (Acts 7:57-58 NIV)

What we learn from this incredible story is that when we come to a difficult situation that demands courage and clear thinking, we can count on the amazing grace of God to make us equal to the matter at hand.

As it is written, “**So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen**

you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10 NIV)

As we read about Stephen, let's be inspired to trust the Lord for all the situations we may encounter. Then, when it's our time to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we can fully trust in Him.

Jesus has promised to be with us always, “**And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**” (Matthew 28:20 NIV)

Whatever issues we may face today, let us go to the Lord in prayer and ask for the spirit of Stephen. As the Lord gave generously to Stephen He shall do the same for us. And, like Stephen, we shall see the hand of the Lord in the trial. We shall have grace to fulfill our mission, whatever it happens to be.

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