

Stephen

“Young Lions”

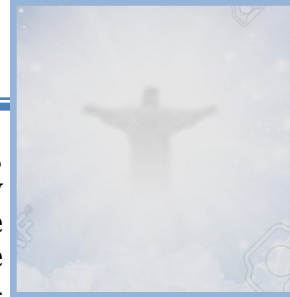


“And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, (Stephen) saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”
Acts. 6:15

After Christ died, the disciples grew in number and their message was being spread, but they needed help. They called a meeting and called seven men to help them in other areas instead of just praying and preaching. Those seven men according to them were “of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” They called them deacons. The first one chosen was a man named Stephen, a man “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.” We don’t hear much about these men. Stephen is only mentioned in Acts, but his work had lasting tributes. Due to the work

“When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’”

Acts 7:54-56



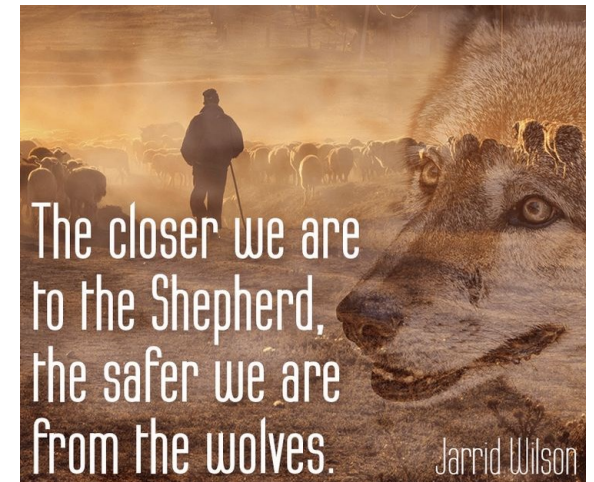
of these deacons, the numbers grew and many more people were able to know about Jesus and His work on earth.

Stephen is the first one listed in the Bible, but he had another first. Stephen had a passion for his ministry and men in power felt threatened. According to Acts 6, Stephen was full of faith and power and was able to do miracles and wonders. The authorities were not “able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.” Acts 6:10. The authorities had a problem and so did Stephen. The local authorities couldn’t find anything that he had done wrong, but they felt threatened, and he was a threat to their control over the people. They just couldn’t “compete” with him.

They accused him of blasphemy and took him in front of a council in the synagogue, but he did not back down. He was talking about Jesus of Nazareth

and even Moses. According to Acts 6:15, his face looked like the face of an angel. Stephen probably realized he was not going to get out of there alive, but he was not willing to back down. He had a great opportunity to witness, and he took it. In chapter 7 of Acts we read his response to their accusations. “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.’” Acts 7:55-56.

What could they do? So they cast him out of the city. It was customary for the people who were stoning to lay their clothing at the feet of a primary witness who was one of the leaders of the rebellion. They did this so they did not get blood on their garments during the stoning. That revolutionary leader was a man named Saul. As Stephen was being stoned, he said



The closer we are
to the Shepherd,
the safer we are
from the wolves.

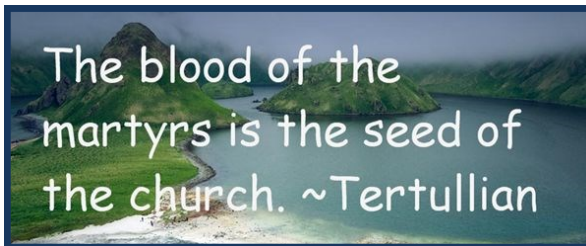
Jarrid Wilson

“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.”
Acts 7:59-60



“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”
Acts 7:59. Some men who believed the message of Stephen carried him to his burial after he was stoned.

But Stephen’s ministry carried on after his stoning. According to Scripture, because of his persecution many others became believers. His blood was not shed in vain.



However, the one man that really changed was Saul, the one who had witnessed the entire confrontation because he felt Stephen was a threat. Stephen's last words were to ask God that his murderers be forgiven, including among them, Saul the Pharisee, who, after his later conversion, became

known as the apostle Paul. His guilt would follow him and his mentioning of Stephen was one of the times that Paul’s life was threatened. In Acts 22:20 Paul writes *“And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.”*

There is no doubt about Stephen's exceptionally good character, and the miraculous power that he had been given by God. It's interesting to note that although Stephen was "just" a deacon, he certainly had gifts and powers from God that were at least equal to that of the apostles. Today there is a worldwide ministry group called Stephen Ministry that reaches out to others and helps them to heal and believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. The ministry of Stephen, a man only mentioned in one book of the Bible, continues around the world today.

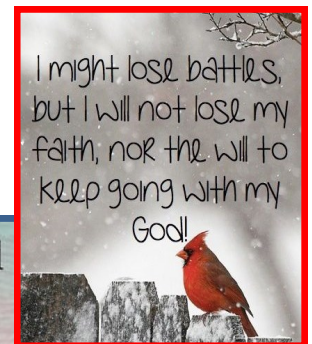
There is an old hymn that tells about our mission, whether like that of Stephen in one small place, or around the world. The first verse of “I’ll Go Where You Want Me to Go” says

*“It may not be on the mountain’s height,
Or over the stormy sea;
It may not be at the battle’s front,
My Lord will have need of me;
But if by a still, small voice He calls,
To paths that I do not know,
I’ll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in Thine,
I’ll go where You want me to go.”*

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to be one of Your deacons and continue to spread The Good News today as Stephen did in his day. Help us to not be afraid to witness and help us to live for You each day. Amen

1. Are you a deacon for your Savior, Jesus Christ?
2. Why was Stephen so zealous for his Lord?
3. What does a deacon for Jesus do?
4. Are you able to be a minister as Stephen was for those who need to know the Word of God today?
How can you do that?

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How cool
is it that
the same God who
created mountains
and oceans and
galaxies looked
at you and thought
the world needed one of you,
too.