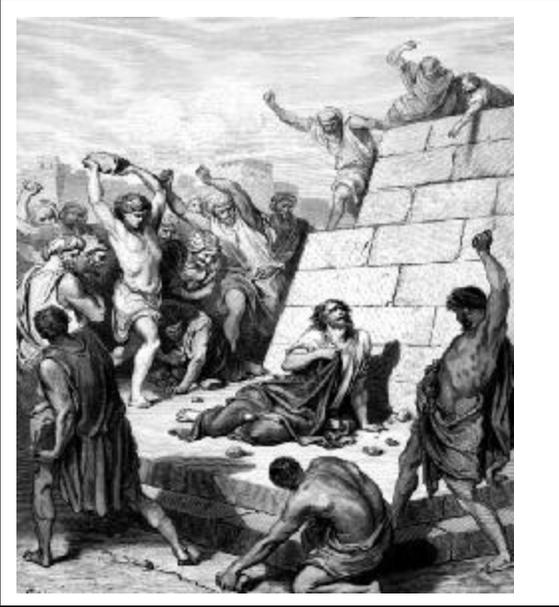


# Stephen

Acts 6-7



Why does the truth sometimes hurt?

Where should I turn when I feel that I have been wronged?

## Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father: As we review Your word and study the early Christian church, guide us to a better understanding of Your will. Help us to understand what it takes to be Your disciple and strengthen our love so that we may be Your children for life. Through Jesus Christ Your Son and our Savior. Amen.

## The Story - Acts 6-7

6:1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying..... 8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. 10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.

11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." 12 And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. 13 They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; 14 "for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this

place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." 15 And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

7:1 Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

*(From verses 2-50 Stephen delivers his defense before the high priest and the Jews. Using Scripture Stephen proves his defense namely "...that the Savior, Jesus, had come into the world, as promised." Stephen concludes his remarks by pointing to the Jews and reminding them that they did believe in the fulfillment of all of God's promises.)*

51 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. 52 "Which of the prophets did your fathers not



persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, 53 "who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."

54 When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the

right hand of God!"

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

### Recalling Details

1. Why did the Jewish leaders continue to persecute the young Christian congregation?
2. Describe Stephen's character?
3. Through the wonders and miracles that the Lord allowed Stephen to perform, what happened?
4. What were the charges brought against Stephen?
5. Before what group of leaders was Stephen to defend himself?
6. What did Stephen use as his defense?
7. What did Stephen ask the leaders to do?
8. How did the Lord provide encouragement to Stephen while he was on trial?
9. What did the Jewish leaders do that showed that they could not listen to any more of the truth?
10. What last request did Stephen make of Jesus before he died?

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## Outer Aim

Through the example of His young Christian congregation the Lord strengthens us by reminding us that those who stand with Him will be saved no matter what man tries to do to them.

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## Discussion Questions

1. In our society, are Christians protected by law from being attacked as Stephen was? Since Satan and his crew do their dirty work anyhow, what might happen to a Christian in any of the following situations,....and how would YOU handle a bad response?
  - > A Christian student shows disapproval of the dirty talk and jokes of other students.
  - > A Christian student has a quiet moment of prayer at the lunch-table.
  - > A Christian is asked his opinion on socially-acceptable sins such as abortion, alcoholism, gambling, drug abuse, living together without marriage, etc.
  - > A Christian business-person makes the Savior known among the other office personnel.
  - > Co-workers enjoy discussing a subject that God answers in the Bible.
  - > A Christian delivery van driver shares Bible testimony with customers on his route.
2. How do you, as a young Christian, feel about your parents (or your pastor or teacher) talking with you about something you did that needs correcting?
3. If you get into trouble because of your own sinfulness, might you feel "persecuted"? What causes a person to become angry -- such as the council members were -- when you are scolded or disciplined?

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## Inner Aim

We should look to our Lord in everything we think, we do, and we say -- no matter the situation.

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## Passages

Luke 12:8 Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God.

Matthew 5:44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

I Thessalonians 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Luke 2:29-32 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation, Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

2 Timothy 4:18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

## Hymn/Prayer

Hymn 447 verses 1,2,4

Fight the good fight with all thy might;  
Christ is thy Strength and Christ thy Right.  
Lay hold on life, and it shall be  
Thy joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race thro' God's good grace;  
Lift up thine eyes and seek His face.  
Life with its way before us lies;  
Christ is the Path and Christ the Prize.

Faint not nor fear, His arms are near;  
He changeth not, and thou art dear.  
Only believe, and thou shalt see  
That Christ is All in all to thee. Amen.