

Acts 6:1-15, 7:54-60 5, The Spirit Empowers

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Contents

- Walk through the passage...
- What was Stephen like?
- How God's Spirit empowers Stephen (and you and I)

Acts 6:1

Trouble at the food bank?

*In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the **Hellenistic Jews** among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their **widows** were being **overlooked** in the daily distribution of food.*

Acts 6:2-4

Called to wait on tables??

*So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to **wait on tables**. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this **responsibility over to them** and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”*

Acts 6:5-6

Stephen's appointment

*This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose **Stephen**, a man **full of faith and of the Holy Spirit**; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*

Acts 6:8

Stephen's work at the food bank :-o

*Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power,
performed great wonders and signs among the
people.*

Acts 6:9-10

Stephen opposed

Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

Acts 6:12-13, 15

Stephen accused

*So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They **seized Stephen** and brought him before the **Sanhedrin**. They produced **false witnesses**, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.*

*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 7:1-53

Stephen's challenge / provocation

*“Because the **patriarchs were jealous** of **Joseph**, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles.*

*“This is the same **Moses they had rejected** with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush.*

*Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? ... And now **you have betrayed and murdered [the Righteous One]**— you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”*

Acts 7:54

The religious court responds

*When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were **furious** and gnashed their teeth at him.*

Acts 7:55-56

Stephen's vision

*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 7:59-60

Stephen's final words

*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 8:1

The early church scattered

And Saul approved of their killing him.

*On that day a great **persecution** broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were **scattered** throughout Judea and Samaria.*

What was Stephen like?



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What was Stephen like? (1)

Full of the **Spirit**
and **wisdom**

full of **faith** and
of the Holy Spirit

full of **God's grace**
and **power**,

He **spoke...**

and was **hard to beat**
in a religious debate

performed great
wonders and **signs**

his face was like
the face of an **angel**

Prayed same prayers
as **Jesus** when dying

saw the **glory** of **God**, and
Jesus standing at the right
hand of God

???



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What was Stephen like? (2)

Hellenistic Jew

Good at food
distribution

Full of God's Spirit
=> A bit like **Jesus**

Full of God's grace
=> **Loving, gracious**

Full of wisdom
=> **Knows scripture**
& sees things from God's side

Full of faith
=> **Trusts** God
& wouldn't keep **quiet**

Performed great wonders and signs
=> Fed the **hungry** and healed the **sick**

Prays the same prayers
=> **Copying** Jesus

Saw the glory of God...
=> Had a clear **vision of Jesus**

Why was Stephen like that?

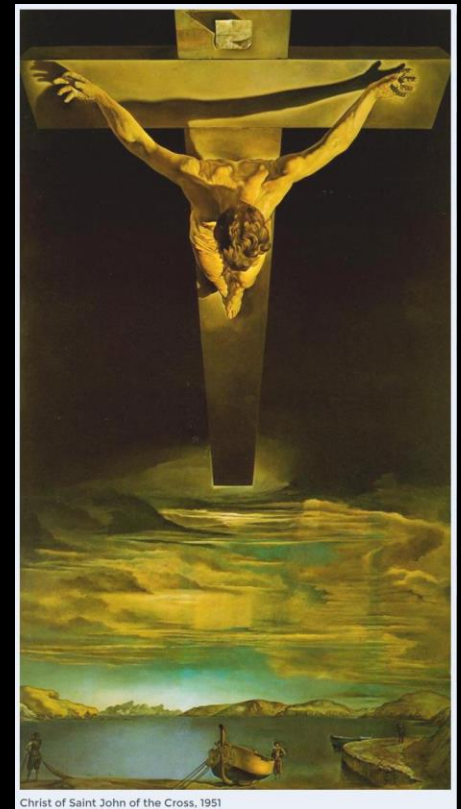
*But Stephen, **full of the Holy Spirit**, looked up to heaven and saw the **glory of God**, and **Jesus** standing at the right hand of God.*

Stephen had a **vision** of **Jesus**

That helped him **be** like **Jesus**

gentle and **humble** in heart

(Mat.11:29)



Christ of Saint John of the Cross, 1951

God's Spirit empowers Stephen ...and you and I

- God's spirit empowers us to **LOVE** like **Jesus**, by giving us a **VISION** of **Jesus** (that puts everything else in perspective).
- What is our **vision** of **Jesus**?
 - How can we get a **clearer** vision of Jesus??
 - Prayer, solitude, fellowship, scripture, examples, ...
- How does our **vision** of Jesus make us **more like Jesus**?
 - How do we **express** God's **love** in our lives?
 - How do we live out our **trust** of God?
E.g. what **risks** do we take for and with God?