

Acts 6:8-15

Stephen Sets an Example
for All Followers of Jesus



Stephen exemplifies gospel grace and boldness (6:8)

⁸ And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.

- *“full of grace and power”* – grace does not indicate softness and niceness, but fullness of God’s favor that exudes the unwavering power of our God
 - The purpose of performing *“great wonders and signs among the people”* is not for self-aggrandizement
 - God empowered *“great wonders and signs among the people”* of the city of Jerusalem, bringing a grateful reaction and drawing some to Jesus as Lord and Savior
- The work of God through Stephen also arouses resentment and hatred
- Any of us can be filled with grace and power

Opposition increases and grace increases even more (6:9-10)

⁹ Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called),

- The attendees of this synagogue had been Roman slaves, or were the descendants of Roman slaves, who purchased or were granted freedom

and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia,

- Members of this synagogue were Hellenistic Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia
- This may have been the synagogue Stephen attended and continued going there to share with them about Jesus

Opposition increases and grace increases even more (6:9-10)

rose up and disputed with Stephen.

- The truths about God's saving purpose being accomplished through the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ finds some hearts that are less than receptive
- The exposure of their sinfulness and misdirected ideas stirs up the defenses of some of the men in the synagogue
- Bible study is a regular part of the lives of these Jews
 - They are blind to the fact that their grid of interpretation only gets thicker and wider as time goes on
 - Matthew 15:1-9
 - These Jews crucified Jesus, but they cannot keep Jesus or His teaching down

Opposition increases and grace increases even more (6:9-10)

¹⁰ But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

- It is empowering to keep one's focus on Jesus, trusting the Spirit to grant wisdom and truth to His people
 - Ephesians 1:16–23
- Stephen, Paul, and Ephesus are not sounding the retreat when opposition builds
- It is time to pray up, stand up, and keep looking up when boldness in wisdom and truth are needed
- As the Lord was with Stephen, so the Lord promises to be with His people, empowering our perseverance and witness
 - John 14:18–20
 - Acts 1:8

Insecurity arouses tyrants to be deceitful and dastardly (6:11-14)

- Just as happened with Jesus, their accusations against Stephen contain some truth, but mixed with the poison of lies
- ¹¹ Then they secretly instigated men who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."*
- Biblical wisdom and Scriptural knowledge don't always get you accolades
- When biblical wisdom and Scriptural knowledge expose misunderstandings and sinfulness, opposition is a common reaction
 - Stephen did not speak blasphemous words against Moses or God
 - Stephen presents Jesus as the fullness of all the Law teaches, and to exalt Jesus is to exalt God
 - Matthew 5:17-19
- Their accusations are lies

Insecurity arouses tyrants to be deceitful and dastardly (6:11-14)

¹² 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, ¹³ and they set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak 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 will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.

- Their purpose is to whip the people up into a frenzy through lies – “*false witnesses*”
- Stephen never communicated what these accusations imply
- Stephen taught what Jesus taught

Proactive gospel ministry reflects the glory of the Lord (6:15)

¹⁵ And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

- Having leveled their false charges against Stephen, they glare at him, wondering if he will fear that they have sealed his fate
- What they see is a countenance that reflects the glory of God with unflinching resolve
- Stephen displays a countenance of undaunted boldness and assurance
- His passion for Christ-centered truth and righteousness shine with revitalized assurance

Proactive gospel ministry reflects the glory of the Lord (6:15)

The example of Stephen:

- Come to Jesus with repentance and faith
- Walk in the Spirit, growing in biblical wisdom
- Humbly serve the body of Christ, promoting and protecting unity
- Boldly live and share Jesus as your mission in life
- Be confident of the presence of the Lord in all of life
 - Psalm 23

Questions to Consider

- How does the example of Stephen encourage you?
- What will having the fullness of grace and power look like in your life?
- How will you find confidence when people dispute the gospel truth you share?
- Why do you want to be known as having the face of an angel?

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