

ACTS: To the Ends of the Earth

Study 15: Stephen: The Spirit-filled Martyr

READ Acts 7:54-8:1 and **LISTEN** to the [sermon](#) by Pastor Craig.

The martyrdom of Stephen provides for us one of the starkest contrasts in Scripture between the hostile, Christ-hating world and the gentle, loving, Spirit-filled people of God who confront the world. Stephen shows that standing for Christ is risky. But the earthly risk pales into comparison to the eternal reward. While Stephen was rejected by the world for standing for Christ, he was enabled, comforted and commended by Christ, assured of heaven and mightily used for Christ's glory.

Big idea: Suffering for faithfulness to Jesus will be rewarded with His eternal commendation and consolation, knowing that He will use our suffering for His purpose and glory.

Questions:

1. From the passage, as well as 6:10-15, what are the contrasting characteristics of Stephen and those who oppose Him.

2. From a theological perspective, why do you think standing for Jesus is risky? Write down Scriptural passages to back up your answer.

How can we know if we're truly suffering for the gospel or if we're suffering because we are being obnoxious and insensitive?

3. How do the Psalms that invoke judgement upon one's enemies fit in with the idea of loving those who persecute you? Do they apply today (see Rev. 6:10)?

4. What did Stephen see when he gazed into heaven? Normally Scripture presents Jesus as sitting at the right hand of God. From the following verses explain why Jesus is sitting:

Heb 1:3:

Heb 8:1:

Hebrews 10:12-13:

Why do you think Jesus was standing when Stephen saw Him and not sitting?

5. **Challenge:** Why do you think the Sanhedrin reacted so violently to Stephen's vision? See Daniel 7:13-14 and Matthew 26:64.

6. How does Stephen's vision and declaration, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (v. 59), give us confidence as we approach death? See 1 Cor 15:25-26; 54-57.

7. Do you think Stephen suffered in vain? Why or why not?

8. Should every believer be "radical" for Jesus? How can we shake off the lethargy of worldliness and be fully committed to following and standing for Christ?

STOP AND PRAY:

Glorify: Christ for His completed redemptive work and continual rule over everything

Thank: the Lord for His continual presence while we are suffering for faithfulness

Pray: for the grace, conviction and resolve to stand for Jesus each day