

Faithful Servant

Key Verse:
*“Stephen, full of
faith and power,
did great wonders
and miracles
among the people.”*
—Acts 6:8

Selected Scripture:
Acts 6:8-15; 7:53-60

STEPHEN WAS ONE OF seven chosen to be a deacon, a servant, chosen to do servile work in the church, one rendering free service without particular reference to its character. Of Stephen we are told, he was a man ‘full of faith and power.’ During this early time, the deacons were empowered to do wonders and miracles among the people they were ministering to.

The first authentic account we have of Stephen is in Acts 6:5. In the distribution of the common fund that was entrusted to the apostles for the support of the poorer brethren, the Hellenists complained that partiality was shown to the natives of Palestine and that their own widows were neglected. The apostles took measures immediately to remove the cause of the complaint. Unwilling themselves to be taken from the work of the ministry, they advised the church to select seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, for this business. (vs. 3) The brethren proceeded immediately to select the prescribed number, among whom Stephen is first mentioned. The newly elected deacons were brought to the apostles, who ordained them to their work. (vs. 6) From the first, Stephen occupied a prominent position.

We find that, in the early days, deacons did much more than wait on tables and take care of the widows. They also did evangelistic work. In Acts 6:9, we find those of the synagogue called Libertines (Freedmen), perhaps freed Roman slaves who built their own temple. These, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians were disputing God's Word with Stephen, but these were not able to resist the wisdom and Spirit by which Stephen spoke.

We read in Luke 21:15, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Those who truly have faith and trust in God's wisdom will always be able to claim this text.

As the Adversary will often do, he found men who would stir up the people by saying that Stephen had blasphemed Moses and God. (Acts 6:11) These set up false witnesses, claiming Stephen was speaking against the synagogue and against the Law. They brought him before the council, accusing him of saying that "Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place" and "change the customs" brought by Moses. Those there saw Stephen's face "as it had been the face of an angel."—vss. 14,15

Stephen next gives his audience a brief outline of the plan of the ages, beginning with Abraham and ending with the condemnation of the Jews for killing the "Just One."—chap. 7:1-52

The Truth proclaimed in God's Word often causes persecution. Stephen's holding to the Truth of God's Word caused his death. Even during his stoning Stephen prayed for those who were stoning him saying, "Lay not this sin to their charge."—vs. 60

Persecution and even death are the concomitants of the life of a Christian. (Matt. 10:16-19,22,24,25) "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10) Let us emulate that faithful servant of the Lord!

