

Acts 6: Stephen Serving.

The Hellenists were those Jews who embraced Greek culture and were mostly from all over the Roman Empire. Some of the Hellenistic Jews (widows) complained that the others receiving better care so the solution was to find men who could do the job best, seven of them.

The apostles are far more concerned with the spiritual quality of the men than their outward appearance or image (of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom). The idea behind full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom is that these men should be both spiritually minded and practically minded. This can be a hard combination to find!

- i. Full of faith; belief, trust and confidence in God.

Faithful; keeps his word, accomplishes assigned tasks and can be relied upon whenever needed. Eg Daniel, Moses, Timothy, Tychicus...

***Luke 16:10** - "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."*

Proverbs 28:20a - A faithful man will abound with blessings...

- ii. Full the Holy Spirit; the presence and work of the Holy Spirit was evident in His life...

***Galatians 5:22** – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness and faithfulness.*

- iii. Full of Wisdom; knowledge of God, His Word and the application of it in day to day life.

***Proverbs 9:10** - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."*

- iv. Full of God's Power; God was doing great wonders and signs

Stephen's face reflected the perfect peace and confidence of one that knows and trusts his God. His face was not filled with fear or terror, because he knew his life was in God's hands and that Jesus never forsakes His people.

May God fill us with faith in Him, with His Holy Spirit, with His knowledge and wisdom and with His supernatural power.

Acts 7: Stephen Dying.

Stephen was accused of speaking against the Holy Land, the Law given by Moses and the Temple (similar accusations against Jesus). The Jews held their Land, the Law and the Temple so highly that they forgot about the God who gave it to them, they had become idols. Stephen tears them all down and points them to Jesus Christ, who was the real substance.

i. 1-36: The Land.

Stephen assures them that much as God gave them the Land, it wasn't the blessing in itself. He informs them that God blessed Abraham and his descendants in Egypt, at the Red Sea and through the desert, outside the Promised Land.

ii. 37-43: The Law.

Stephen then reminds them that much as they held the Law that God gave them the Law through Moses; their forefathers weren't obedient as required; so their Hope for salvation wasn't in Moses or the Law.

iii. 44-53: The Temple.

Lastly, Stephen declares to them that much as the Temple was dear to them, God is too big to fit in it. In fact, when Jesus died, the Temple curtain that separated the people from God was torn and everyone has access to God through Jesus Christ.

In summary, Stephen states that the Land, the Law of Moses and the Temple weren't the entirety of God's blessings upon them, but Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and God the Father whom they had rejected.

iv. 54-59: Stephen Stoned.

Death will ultimately reveal what each of us is. Stephen lived last hours as Christ would and did. He spoke his last words as Christ would and did. He died a martyr's death as Christ would and did. He stood tall through the matchless grace of God. If today were our final day, what would others write about us? R. Kent Hughes.

He heeded not reviling tones...though cursed and scorned and bruised with stones. But looking upward, full of grace, He prayed, and from a happy place God's glory smote him in the face. Tennyson.

Stephen saw the reigning Christ, *standing* to receive him, what an honor.

Psalm 116:15 - *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.*