



**The International Day Of Prayer
For The Persecuted Church**



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More than 124,000 Christians were forcibly displaced from their homes because of their faith, and almost 15,000 became refugees.



The Martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution of the early church.

ACTS 6:9-14

⁹ Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) ... who began to argue with Stephen

¹⁰ But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.



The Martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution of the early church.

ACTS 6:9-14

¹¹ Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." ¹² So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.



The Martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution of the early church.

ACTS 6:9-14

¹³ They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. ¹⁴ For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us."



The campaign to silence Stephen

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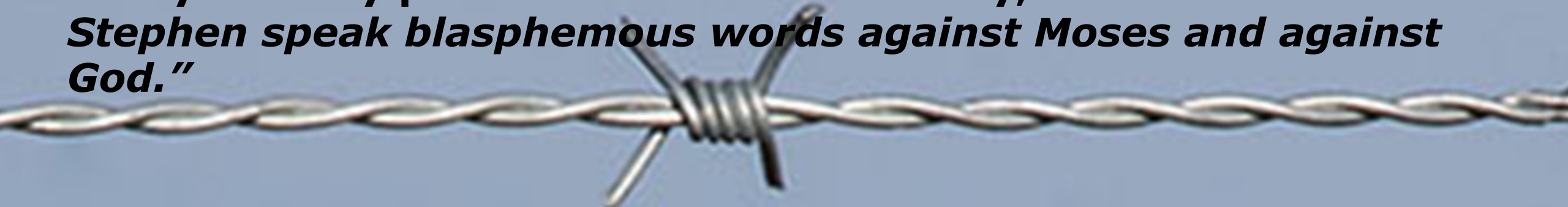
First, there is serious debate of ideas. (v.9) *"Stephen's opposition began to argue with him."*

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At the hearing, they manufacture lies to smear and defame (v.11)

"They secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."



Acts 7:51-60

51 “You stiff-necked people! ...You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him.”

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

55 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.



Acts 7:51-60

⁵⁶ “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

⁵⁷ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

⁵⁹ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he said this, he fell asleep.



Pray that those who suffer for the sake of Jesus will:

1. Be filled with the Spirit and given the right words to speak as they testify before their accusers.

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Mark 13:11-13

¹¹ Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

¹² "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ¹³ Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.



Pray that those who suffer for the sake of Jesus will:

2. Gain a clear vision of the glory of God and the approval of Jesus.



Pray that those who suffer for the sake of Jesus will:

3. Receive Christlike love for their enemies and not seek to retaliate under the stress of persecution.



ACTS 7:59-60

“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”



Pray that those who suffer for the sake of Jesus will:

4. Have the conviction that God will use their sacrifice to empower others and grow His church.



ACTS 8:1-4

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. ⁴ Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.



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Acts 8:14 says; **“Samaria accepted the Word of God”**



First, Let's remember the martyrs - past and present and tell their stories to our children and each other.



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Second, Let's pray, and let's work on behalf of Christians around the world who are being persecuted simply for professing their faith in Jesus.



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Communion

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Is the cup of blessing which we bless not a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is the bread which we break not a sharing in the body of Christ?

Since there is one loaf, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one loaf.



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1. Be filled with the Spirit and given the right words to speak as they testify before their accusers.

2. Gain a clear vision of the glory of God and the approval of Jesus.

3. Receive Christlike love for their enemies and not seek to retaliate under the stress of persecution.

4. Have the conviction that God will use their sacrifice to empower others and grow His church.

