



Prayer Emphasis Month

Chester ARP Church, January 2024



Learning to Pray from Stephen

- Stephen teaches us how to pray for ourselves when persecuted and for the persecutors of God's people.
 - We pray submissively.
 - We pray compassionately.
- “And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘For Jesus, receive my spirit.’ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them’” (Acts 7:50-60).



Who Was Stephen?

- Stephen was a one of the first deacons in the Church.
 - He was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit (6:5).
 - He was full of grace and power (6:8).
 - He did great wonders and signs among the people (6:8).
- Stephen was arrested by the Sanhedrin after he successfully debated the Jewish leaders regarding faith.

Stephen's Defense



- The History of Israel points to Jesus (7:2-50).
 - Abraham
 - Joseph
 - Moses/Exodus
 - Tabernacle

Stephen's Defense



- Stephen Confronted the Jewish leaders (7:51-53).
 - “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”



The Condemnation

- You're stiff-necked (prideful/stubborn/haughty).
- You resist the Holy Spirit.
- You are just like your fathers who killed my fathers.
 - Jewish leaders acted like the hard-hearted leaders of ancient Israel.
 - Stephen acted like the prophets of old as he proclaimed the One about whom they prophesied.



Enraged Jewish Public

- The councilmen were enraged.
- The scribes were enraged.
- The general public was enraged.
 - They gritted their teeth.
 - They covered their ears.
 - They screamed.
 - They cast him out of the city and stoned him.



God's Grace for Stephen

- Stephen had a vision of Jesus standing on the right hand of the Father (7:56).
- Stephen prayed a prayer of submission as he died (7:59).
- Stephen prayed a compassionate prayer at the point of his death (7:60).
- The Lord answered his prayer specifically (7:58; 8:1; 9:5-9, 20).



How Do We Pray for Persecutors?

- The Bible never promises a life without persecution or hardship at the hands of others.
 - We pray submissively asking the Lord to be the Lord of our lives as we follow him.
 - We pray submissively asking God to be gracious to our brothers and sisters who undergo persecution.
 - We pray compassionately for those who persecute us and other believers because we never know when God will answer our prayers and save the persecutors.