Scattered, but Not Defeated: The Witness and the Cost of Martyrdom

Acts 6:8-7:60 · Kaká Monteiro · August 16, 2026

The servant full of the Spirit, the face like an angel's, heaven opened over the first martyr

THE CENTRAL IDEA

"Filled with the Spirit, Stephen faces lies with truth and death with forgiveness."

Stephen wasn't the most educated in the group; he was the most filled with God. Falsely accused, he doesn't try to win the argument: he tells the story of a God who always sent deliverers and a people who always rejected them. And under the stones he does what he saw Jesus do: he commits his spirit and asks forgiveness for those who kill him.

THE MESSAGE IN 3 MOVEMENTS

01 Being filled with the Spirit is not talent.
The text doesn't credit Stephen's victory to intelligence or training, but to the Spirit with which he spoke. The same source is available today: whoever lives with the Lord can be wiser than many gray heads.

02 God doesn't fit in a box, and good things become idols.
The temple was a gift from God, but it became absolute. As Tim Keller reminds us, idolatry is turning good things into ultimate things: marriage, comfort, money, recognition. The Sanhedrin's problem wasn't lack of information, it was resistance of the heart.

03 The believer doesn't die: he falls asleep.
Stephen echoes Jesus on the cross: he commits his spirit and forgives. It is said that if he hadn't prayed, the church might not have had Paul. To be a disciple is a call to die to self, and death, for those in Christ, is sleep awaiting the awakening.

READING THE TEXT · ACTS 6:8-7:60

Acts 6:8-15 · Full of grace and power
Stephen performs signs among the people. Men from the Synagogue of the Freedmen argue with him, but can't stand up to the wisdom and the Spirit with which he speaks. So they bribe false witnesses and take him to the Sanhedrin, where everyone sees his face like the face of an angel.

Acts 7:1-53 · The history that accuses
Stephen retells Abraham, called out of his land; Joseph, rejected by his brothers and made a savior; Moses, rejected twice and sent anyway. "The Most High does not live in houses made by human hands." And he concludes: you always resist the Holy Spirit, just like your ancestors.

Acts 7:54-60 · Heaven opened
Furious, they gnash their teeth. Stephen sees the glory of God and Jesus standing at the Father's right hand. Dragged out and stoned, in front of a young man named Saul, he prays: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit... do not hold this sin against them." And he falls asleep.

QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP

To open: tell about someone you met who had "peace on their face" even in the middle of a very hard situation. What struck you about that person?

1. Stephen's opponents lost the argument and turned to false accusations. In your difficult conversations (at home, at work), do you go in to win or to get to the truth? What changes when winning stops being the goal?
2. Stephen wasn't the most educated; he was the most filled with the Spirit. What do you think it means, in practice, to be "filled with the Spirit" on an ordinary Monday?
3. The temple was a gift from God that became an idol. Which good things in your life risk becoming absolute: marriage, career, comfort, recognition? How can you tell when that happens?
4. Stephen died praying for those who stoned him, and Saul was there. Who is God asking you to pray for, even if that person has hurt you?

KEY PASSAGES

Luke 23:34, 46, "Father, forgive them..." / "Into your hands I commit my spirit." Stephen doesn't invent a new virtue: he repeats what he saw Jesus do.

Isaiah 66:1, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me?" The quote with which Stephen dismantles the accusation about the temple.

Matthew 12:34, "The mouth speaks what the heart is full of." Under the stones, what comes out of Stephen is forgiveness, what had always been inside him.

TO CLOSE

A step for this week. Take the idol test: ask yourself what, if it were taken away, would make you feel life had lost its meaning, and give it to God in prayer. And pray, by name, for someone who has hurt you.

Prayer. Thank God for the hope that, in Christ, death is sleep. Ask to be filled with the Spirit, to answer lies with truth and stones with forgiveness.

Watch the message again: point your phone camera here.