



The Power of Praying and Preaching

Acts 6:7–10; 7:54–60

But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” (Acts 7:55-56—ESV).

To refute the lies and false charges brought against him, Stephen preached a short summary of the teachings in the Hebrew Scriptures beginning with Abraham. Then he concluded like an Old Testament prophet proclaiming, “You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it” (Acts 7:53). Using false charges to murder Jesus “legally” through their religious court system certainly violated the Law of God. Murdering Stephen, without arresting him and bringing him to trial, certainly proved that rather than repent they preferred to disobey the Law of God, the Law of Love.

Those who heard Stephen’s defense “became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen,” but the Holy Spirit filled Stephen once again and the heavens opened so he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Jesus stood and approved Stephen’s defense of his faith. Jesus encouraged and honored Stephen for speaking the truth and for his fearless testimony. The Father approved Stephen’s calling to moral accountability and repentance those who murdered His Son. After Stephen’s death a severe persecution began against His church. But the

Holy Spirit helped Christians pray, and He empowered them to keep spreading the good news of God's love and Jesus' coming around the world.

Though Stephen died, God honored his teaching and his call to moral accountability. God answered Stephen's prayer and did not hold this sin against those who murdered him.

Furthermore, God began a work of deliverance in some of those who approved Stephen's death. We do not know how many repented of their sins and came to faith in Jesus after they murdered Stephen. We do know that Saul heard Stephen preach and pray. We do know he approved of stoning and watched Stephen die. We do know that Saul later repented and became the Apostle Paul, whose letters still lead many to saving faith in Jesus.