

“A FACE LIKE AN ANGEL”

Acts 6:8-15

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

Does your wife/child have the “face of an angel”?

*Here we have the turning point of the **Book of Acts**.*

- Persecution for the Church
- The Spread of the Gospel
- The Salvation of the Gentiles
- Saul’s conversion.

The Person who was involved in this significant change was not one of the 12 apostles—but one of the **elders**—Stephen. Don’t sell yourself short as to what the Lord can do with your life!

Note also, that Stephen’s life was not very long, and that he had not been a believer for very long.

A LIFE DOES NOT HAVE TO BE LONG IN ORDER TO BE IMPORTANT AND EVENTFUL.

Here we see the Power of Stephen, the Persuasion of Stephen, the Persecution of Stephen, and the Proclamation of Stephen.

I. THE POWER OF STEPHEN (8)

A. The Source of his Power—the _____ of God as in 18:27

- _____ laid hold of divine grace which in turn released the _____ of God.
- The “ordination” he had received (v. 6) was the human channel of divine power and spiritual gifts.

B. The Result of his Power—“He was performing great signs and wonders among the people.”

Because Stephen had such divine power, he was also able to speak with great persuasion.

II. THE PERSUASIVENESS OF STEPHEN (9-10)

A. The Identity of the Debaters (9)

- Saul was from Cilicia; he may have been a member of this synagogue.
- Alexandria was Stephen’s home.
- Compare the “arguing” also in 9:29 of Saul (Paul) likely with these same Hellenistic Jews.

B. The Helplessness of the Debaters (10)

1. Against Stephen’s _____ (fulfills Matthew 10:19-20)

2. Against the _____—a reference to the Holy Spirit; He enabled Stephen to speak fluently and with persuasion (see vv. 3, 5—filled with the Holy Spirit).

Through the Holy Spirit, Stephen had both power and persuasiveness. Because of these he necessarily had to face persecution.

III. THE PERSECUTION OF STEPHEN (11-14)

They underhandedly “instigated” slander against Stephen (11) that resulted in accusation, anger, exaggeration, and contempt.

A. Accusation (11, 13, 14)

1. Stephen’s blasphemous words against _____ (cf. “against the Law” in v. 13 and “alter the customs” in v. 14).
2. Stephen’s blasphemous words against _____ (Moses put on a level with God; cf. “against this holy place”—temple, God’s house in v. 13 and “destroy the temple” in v. 14).
 - These were half-truths; but half-truths are hard to refute.
 - Stephen had profound insight into dispensational changes.
 - Stephen is thus the theological forerunner of Paul.

B. Anger: of both the people and the Pharisees (“elders and scribes” 12)

- The common people, who up to this point had been favorable to the apostles and Christians, now were agitated against Stephen.
- The Pharisees up till now had been non-committal toward the movement.
- They “came upon him” suddenly and hostilely.
- They violently “dragged him away.”
- They brought him before the Sanhedrin.

C. Exaggerations: “They put forward false witnesses.” (13)

- Jesus likewise had been accused of threatening to destroy the temple (Jn. 2:19-21; cf. Mt. 26:61—the same accusation at Jesus’ trial.)

D. Contempt for Jesus (14)—He is called “this Nazarene, Jesus.”

Yes, Stephen was the brunt of violent anger and persecution. Now that the accusations had been leveled against Stephen, it was his turn to respond. How would he respond?

IV. PROCLAMATION OF Stephen (15ff)

- His words actually follow in chapter 7, and provide the longest speech in the book of Acts.
- Compare Stephen and Jesus: captives, on trial, standing alone, false accusations against them, accused of blasphemy (cf. 7:56), accused of saying that He would destroy the temple. **It is a good thing to stand where Jesus stands!**

- The council members “fixed their gaze on him”.
- They saw his face “like the face of an angel”.

What does it mean that his face was like that of an angel?

- He was like Moses—compare Ex. 34:29-35.
- This shining face indicates God’s _____ upon Stephen; he was not anti-Moses!
- Compare the glory of Christ’s transfigured face in Mt. 17:12.
- Stephen’s face shows calmness, strength, grace, and beauty. Compare the discussion of the greater glory of Christ over Moses in II Cor. 3. The **ministry of the Spirit** (see v. 10) **supersedes the ministry of the Law!**
- At the end of his speech, Stephen saw the **glory of God and Jesus standing at the Father’s right hand.**
- Here his face shines like that of the angels who stand in the presence of the Lord.
- As Peter later states, “the Spirit of glory and of God” was resting on him (I Pet. 4:14).
- _____ of Tarsus was here **permanently impressed** by that look on Stephen’s face. It was “burned” into Saul’s soul until he also turned to Jesus and experienced glory on the road to Damascus! Then he could write about this glory in II Cor. 3.
- _____, **NOT GAMALIEL, WAS SAUL’S TRUE MENTOR!**

CONCLUSION

We need to look at His glory and mirror His image.

We must be changed to be like Him!

Are you growing into His likeness?

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