

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time*

Strength for Today (5-24-2012)

Stephen: Godliness in Suffering

“But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”

- Acts 7:55

Because Stephen was so consistently Spirit-filled, it was natural for him to react in a godly way to persecution and death.

The cliché “Garbage in, garbage out” provides a good clue to the essence of the Spirit-filled Christian life. Just as computers respond according to their programming, we respond to what fills our minds. If we allow the Holy Spirit to program our thought patterns, we’ll be controlled and renewed by Him and live godly lives. And that’s exactly how Stephen consistently and daily lived his life.

The expression “being full” is from a Greek verb (pleroo) that literally means “being kept full.” Stephen was continuously filled with the Holy Spirit during his entire Christian life. This previewed Paul’s directive in Ephesians 5:18, “but be filled with the Spirit.” These words don’t mean believers are to have some strange mystical experience, but simply that their lives ought to be fully controlled by God’s Spirit.

Stephen gave evidence of his Spirit-filled godliness as He was about to die from stoning. Acts 7:55-56 says he looked to Jesus and let his adversaries and any witnesses know that he saw Christ standing at the right hand of God. Stephen did not focus on his difficult situation but fixed his heart on the Lord, which is what all believers must do: “Keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Col. 3:1-2).

Stephen’s spiritual sight was incredible and enabled him to see the risen Christ and be certain of his welcome into Heaven the moment he died. We won’t have that kind of vision while we’re still on earth, but if we are constantly Spirit-filled like Stephen, we will always see Jesus by faith and realize His complete presence during the most trying times (John 14:26-27; Heb. 13:5-6).

Suggestions for Prayer:

Pray that God would direct your mind away from mundane distractions and toward Him throughout this day.

For Further Study:

Stephen established a magnificent pattern during his short ministry in Acts 6. Read that chapter, and jot down several positive things you see about how he did things.

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