

The Stoning of Stephen

Scripture Reading — Acts 7:51-60

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” — Acts 7:59

In our story today we face the grim reality that people with evil intentions can commit terrible crimes. The stoning of Stephen was the first recorded murder of someone in the -early church of Christ.

Stephen’s speech to the religious leaders of his day was a powerful summary of God’s loving-kindness toward his peo-ple, but it was also a clever way of turning the accusers’ charges against them. Stephen passionately drew his listeners’ attention to the history of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, and as he did that he showed how the accusers incriminated themselves as they repeatedly resisted the work of the Holy Spirit.

Then, furiously, these religious leaders exposed their bias against Christ and murdered Stephen. How could the high priest and the other leaders be so blind and so cruel? Their hearts of stone led them to cast stones.

Though his stoning was undeserved, Stephen showed that he had a heart filled with the Spirit of God. Nothing—not even stoning—could stamp out the Spirit-filled, Christlike trust that Stephen demonstrated.

If a moment like that ever comes for us, we can do the same—in God’s strength.

Prayer

Lord, deliver us from whatever might harm us in body, mind, and soul. Forgive us when we unwittingly resist your Holy Spirit. Fill our hearts so that in every circumstance we will reflect the love of Jesus and stand firm in faith, by your power. Amen.

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