

A New Face

Acts 6:8-15

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As we look at the story of Stephen, we get a sense of his belonging and commitment to the church and her mission, his giftings being utilised for the glory of God, and the scope of flourishing he brought.

Stephen: Administrator, Apostle, or Angel?

1. A Familiar Ministry

Stephen was engaged in the familiar ministry of the apostles (v. 8). A familiar response had also arisen: resistance (v. 9). The people resisting Stephen's ministry were Hellenists like Stephen: immigrants that had settled in the city of Jerusalem. The apostle's delegation had such an impact on Stephen; he was released and empowered. While overseeing the daily distribution, he was also ministering to people and shining brightly for the gospel (Matt. 5:14a, 16). Flourishing is not first about impact – Flourishing is about being a light! Stephen was engaged in holistic flourishing. Jesus can use anyone to be a light for Him.

2 Pitfalls (Christians have with being a light)

#1 Compartmentalisation – we only allow our light to shine in certain 'acceptable' areas of our lives.

#2 Over-strategising – we only allow our light to shine when we are very sure we *will* make an impact.

What God desires for us is just to be a faithful light wherever He has placed us.

2. A Familiar Tactic

The people who resisted Stephen's ministry resort to a familiar tactic: they secretly instigated men and stirred up people against Stephen. An angry mob had gathered against Stephen, and they brought him before the council (vv. 11-12). False witnesses had also come to bring charges against Stephen (vv. 13-14). The charges against Stephen were like those brought against Jesus the night before His crucifixion (Mark 14:57-58). Beneath the familiar tactic is a demonic agenda to depict truth as toxic, to discredit the evangelist, and to discourage the messenger from his mission. The Enemy is in the business of shielding darkness away from light. Don't let the enemy put your light under a basket; fight to keep it shining!

3. A New Face

Stephen's face shone like an angel's (v. 15), and like Moses' (Ex. 34:29). God was declaring Stephen innocent of the charges against him. The brightness of Stephen's face and its alteration is also meant to remind us of Jesus, whose true glorious and radiant face was revealed for a moment (Luke 9:28-29). God was not just declaring his acceptance of Stephen, but also his delight for Stephen. Stephen was living out the very words from Matthew 5:14-16. As a member of the church body, you are meant to shine! God is the One who makes His face shine upon us and who is first gracious to us. He is the One who lifts His countenance upon us and gives us peace (Num. 6:24-26). Being a light is not about the hard work it takes, but about the God

who blesses us and makes us a light that shines.