

Still Called, Still Sent (6)
Faith That Stands the Test
Text: Acts 7:54–60

Introduction: Life is often an endurance contest—especially in later years. Like marathoner John Stephen Akhwari, we are not just called to start the race of faith, but to finish well. In Acts 7:54–60, Stephen’s story shows us what enduring, Christlike, legacy-leaving faith looks like. Even in our latter seasons of life, we are still called and still sent to live for His glory.

I. A faith that endures under trial:

Stephen’s Perseverance

A. Stephen’s enduring faith

1. Stephen boldly confronted the Sanhedrin; their response was furious (Acts 7:54).
2. He endured hostility, false accusations, and stoning.
3. Instead of panic, Stephen stayed calm because he fixed his eyes on Jesus (v. 55).

B. The eyes of Stephen

1. Stephen didn’t recant or retaliate.
2. He looked heavenward while stones flew. Hebrews 12:1–2 teaches us to run with perseverance, fixing our eyes on Jesus.
3. Stephen endured suffering by focusing on Christ, trusting God’s promise.
4. His endurance declared his God was worth dying for.

C. The endurance of our faith

1. We may not face a stoning, but trials still come—illness, grief, aging, loneliness.
2. James 1:12 promises a crown of life to those who persevere under trial.
3. Our endurance is a sermon to the next generation. Isaiah 46:4 – God promises to sustain us to old age.

DR. David Jeremiah comments: *Stephen’s example assures us that no matter how fierce the trial, the believer’s end is not defeat but victory and rest with the Lord.*

II. A faith that reflects Jesus to the world:

Stephen’s Christlike Witness

A. Stephen’s character

1. Stephen’s final words echoed those of Jesus on the cross. He forgave his attackers and committed his spirit to Christ.
2. This grace was only possible through the Holy Spirit.

B. Stephen’s Christlike example

1. Under pressure, what was inside Stephen came out—and it looked like Jesus.
2. He was an ordinary man made extraordinary by the Spirit.
3. His death reflected Christ. (Lk. 23:34, 46)

C. Our Christlike witness

1. Ephesians 4:32 – Forgive as Christ forgave you.
2. Your responses in adversity reveal Christ to others.
3. Let your later years reflect His beauty.

Imitating Jesus is a lifelong journey, and it’s never too late to cultivate a more Christlike spirit. In doing so, you show the world the character of the God you trust.

III. A faith that finishes well and leaves a legacy:

Stephen’s Lasting Impact

A. Stephen’s Passing -Stephen’s martyrdom was not a defeat but a triumph in God’s eyes.

B. God’s providence

1. Stephen’s death planted a seed in Saul, who became Paul. (Acts 9)
2. His final words and actions may have pricked Saul’s conscience. (26:14)

C. The church’s scattering, preaching, and progression (Acts 8:1, 4)

1. Persecution spread the gospel further. (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 2:14; Phil. 1:12-14; Acts 12:24; 19:20)
2. Bible expositor Wiersbe: 'Persecution does to the church what wind does to seed.' Stephen’s blood became the seed of the church.

D. Stephen’s heavenly honor

Jesus stood to receive Stephen – a rare and beautiful image of divine approval. Finish well to honor God and inspire others.

How we finish our race can inspire others and advance God’s work in ways we might never see in our lifetime. (2 Tim. 4:7-8; Ps. 71:18; 92:14-15)

MacArthur said, *“When somebody tells me, ‘Be like Jesus,’ that’s hard... So I’m not going to say ‘Be like Jesus.’ I’m going to say, ‘Be like Stephen.’ ... Stephen was like Jesus.”*

Conclusion: Will your faith stand the test? Will you endure, reflect Jesus, and finish well? Like Akhwari, finishing the race is victory. Stephen’s name means 'crown' – and he received the crown of life. So can you.

May we all be able to say at the end of life: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” By God’s grace, may we all be able to say that – and hear our Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”