**LESSON-33**

Stephen

**Objective *We shall learn about Stephen who was of honest report***

***and full of Holy Spirit and wisdom- He became the first Christian martyr.***

Introduction

The name Stephen means 'Crown'. In the first century Church, the apostles had to make certain arrangements regarding the daily distribution of food. The apostles were unable to pay equal attention on all matters both material and spiritual. Therefore, they selected seven spirit-filled men to carry out other responsibilities in the Church. Stephen was one among them. Let us study some characteristics of Stephen.

Spirit filled and of honest report (Act. 6:3,5)

The apostles put a proposal before the Church at Jerusalem that seven men must be chosen for the administration of temporal matters in the Church. Their qualifications were as follows:

1. Must be of honest report
2. Full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom

Thus, when they chose seven men of such repute, Stephen was first in the list. He was well-reported by others. He was also full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Do you know what was the source of his wisdom? He was well-versed in the Scriptures. See his speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts Chapter 7). Let this be a guide to our life also.

His ministry by signs and wonders

Stephen was chosen by the church to be a Deacon. But God began to use him wonderfully with great miracles and signs. If we are faithful in our small duties, God will entrust greater ministry to us. Stephen took the Gospel to the people with signs and wonders. Then, oppositions arose from members of the synagogue. The opponents came to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against his wisdom or the spirit. So they caught hold of him and brought him before the Sanhedrin, the religious court of the Jews. They also produced false witnesses against Stephen.

Stephen's convincing speech

When Stephen stood before the Sanhedrin Council, his face shone like that of an angel. In answer to their false accusations, he began to say boldly about Jesus Christ. He also said that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus Christ. If we carefully look at the speech of Stephen, it was fully based on the Old Testament Scriptures. Stephen made good use of that opportunity in speaking the Word of God. He was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. As the result none could outwit him. All were put to silence.

The first Christian Martyr

As the members of the council listened to Stephen, they became furious and angry at him in an But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit looked up to heaven and saw God's Glory. He also saw Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God. Isn't it something strange? On one side, the member the council grind their teeth. On the other side, Stephen looks up to heaven and sees God's Glory Stephen did not keep mum about it but said: "Look! I see heaven opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand side of God!" How wonderful! The heaven was opened for Stephen *'v* stood firm for the Gospel truths.

As soon as Stephen said that he saw the heaven opened, the members of the council cried aloud covered their ears with their hands. They all rushed at him, threw him out of the city and stoned him no time, sharp stones hit hard on his head and all over the body. Then he knelt down and pray "Lord Jesus receive my Spirit! Lord! Do not remember this sin against them!" He said this and died

Stephen was the first Christian martyr. He went ahead of all the martyrs of Christ during the Chu age until this time and even to the second coming of Christ. Following Christ and being a t Christian involves great faith and sacrifice. The Church history is full of records of great men of f and sacrifice. Not everyone has the same kind of suffering. But everyone has to go through suffering. Are you willing to sacrifice your life for Jesus Christ's sake? Make your decisions and upon them.

***Reference: Memory Verse***

Acts 6:3-5, 8-101 7:1-60 **"And you will be hated by all for my name's sake, but a**

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**hair of your head shall be lost. In your patience posses your souls" (Luke 21:17-19) *Exercise:***

*1. What is the meaning of Stephen?............................................................
2 What were the qualification of the man chosen for administration in the church?..............
3. Describe the death of Stephen..............................................................*

-74‑