

## Summary

Saul witnessed Stephen's stoning, which led to his transformation by God's power. Stephen's death initiated the Christian diaspora, emphasizing God's vastness, dwelling in believers' hearts, and all glory belongs to God.

Welcome all to our shared worship.

## LET'S PRAY:

Father God, we ask for your presence with and within us. Bless our time of worship, and strengthen our lives as followers of Jesus, your Son. Forgive us Lord, our shortcomings, and renew us in the spirit to again go out proclaiming the news of our Lord Jesus Amen

## A Word of Wisdom

Lets begin with a word from the wisdom material:

PROVERBS 16:16

How much better to get wisdom than gold  
To get insight rather than silver

HYMN: *AHB 85 by William Howard Doane 1832-1916*

1. To God be the glory, great things he hath done!  
So loved He the world that he gave us his Son,  
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin,  
An opened the life-gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Let the earth hear his voice  
Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, let the people rejoice,  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,  
And give him the glory great things he has done.*

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
To every believer the promise of God,  
And every offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.
3. Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,  
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son,  
But purer and higher, and greater will be  
Our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

© public domain

## Scripture

- ACTS 7:54—8:3

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.”

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord do not hold this sin against them”. When he had said this he fell asleep.

And Saul approved of their killing him.

On that day a great persecution broke out against the Church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the Church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

- MATTHEW’S GOSPEL 8: 5—13

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a Centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord” he said, “My servant lies at home paralysed, suffering terribly” Jesus said to him “Shall I come and heal him?”

The Centurion replied “Lord I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.”

## Message: To God Be The Glory

Acts tells us that Saul was present – a witness to the cruel, brutal killing of Stephen. One wonders how it would be possible to watch such a horrific thing. Saul, in his role as the crusading Rabbi, the “bounty hunter” for the Jerusalem temple, was, no doubt, currying favour with the chief priest and other officials of the Jerusalem Synagogue.

But the experience must have left its mark on Saul, hardened though he may have been to the plight of “followers of the way”. Within a short time Saul himself would be struck down by God’s power in Christ. AND recruited to the very cause for which Stephen died --. To God be the glory – who else could have changed such a man? This is what the centurion is on about. He understands that only a man (like himself) empowered by a higher authority could perform such miracles. TO GOD be the glory.

This raises another question. How can such a powerful, vast God be contained, incredibly in a man? The answer can be found in 1Kings 8:27 God, in all his glory, dwells in the hearts of

men. He is so vast and can't be contained in the temple yet through his Son and the Holy Spirit he dwells in the hearts of men.

Stephen's death marks the commencement of the Christian diaspora. And therefore the early "Church" movement throughout the Roman world. God on the move in the hearts of men.

When we say "to God be the Glory" we acknowledge that it is only by/through God's mercy that we accomplish things, and NOT by our own power. So with every success in life, every feat, it is right to say that all glory goes to God, not self.

But even more, it is delightfully, salvationally(?) persona. Back to Stephen. When death stared him in the face he had a rare, unique glimpse of heaven. V55: "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven, and saw the glory of God, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" – so much for that tired old line – there's no afterlife, no heaven, who's seen it? To God be the Glory.

Amen

### SONG: AHB 451 "LORD JESUS CHRIST" – Patrick Norman Appleford 1925-2018

1. Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, you are one with us, Mary's Son;  
Cleansing our souls from all their sin, pouring your love and goodness in  
Jesus, our love for you we sing, living Lord.
2. Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day, teach us how to pray, Son of God  
You have commanded us to do, this, in remembrance, Lord, of you:  
Into our lives your power breaks through, living Lord.
3. Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, born as one of us, Mary's Son,  
Led out to die on Calvary, risen from death to set us free,  
Living Lord Jesus, help us see, you are Lord.
4. Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you, live my life for you, Son of God,  
All your commands, I know are true, your many gifts will make me new,  
Into my life your power breaks through, living Lord

© Words: 1960 Josef Weinberger Ltd. Used by permission CCLI 509237

### Prayers for the world: Barnabas Focus Senegal

Father, God our thoughts turn to Senegal, poor, divided, and struggling. We pray for the Catholic and other small Christian communities dealing with corruption, violence and harassment. Still, Lord, trying to be your word in a hostile place, where Islam prevails.

In Jesus name, we pray. Amen

### Blessing of the word:

To God Be the Glory, and may, in Jesus, renewal, mercy, and peace be yours,

*This service prepare by Grant Jewell for HopeNet SA Inc*