

brightest visions come to us in the hours of our greatest trial and danger. Jacob at Bethel, John on Patmos. Stephen standing before the Sanhedrim by which he is soon to be condemned to death has given to him a most stirring view of heaven. The things which meet the eye of his faith are a greater reality to him than the assembled court before which he stands, or the rocks in the valley by which his life is soon to be crushed out. To the eye of faith the spiritual world is always near. God, heaven, eternity are far more real to it than this world's gold or pleasures are to the natural eye. One day when Father Taylor was leaning back in his chair with closed eyes and a happy smile playing about his mouth, his daughter asked him "Are you dreaming, father?" "I am in heaven a little way" he answered. This vision granted to Stephen at this peculiar time was no doubt given with the design of increasing the strength of his faith in this trying hour, and of imparting to his final testimony a ring of triumph.

4. *Praying for his enemies.* To what degree of Christlikeness has Stephen attained. Our Lord not only taught His disciples that they should pray for their enemies, but he set them a glorious example. The prayer of Stephen for his murderers is an echo of the prayer of his master. "Father, forgive them." How hard it seems for christians to rise to the true and Christlike way of dealing with enemies. Amid showers of hard names and unjust accusations which hurt more than stinging blows, it does not seem easy to say "Father forgive them." One should remember that every hard word flung back, every unkind retort only increases the evil and never conquers the enemy. As Latimer says, "let our hearts be like the broad and open shore, offering no resistance to the sea of malice as it dashes its waves above us. They will then not only break harmlessly, but cleanse and beautify the shore of our being." No one can tell how many of the enemies of Christ present when he uttered that prayer on the cross, were among those converted on the day of Pentecost. We can never forget that the voice of Stephen's last prayer never ceased to echo in the soul of at least one who heard it, and who became in after days a mightier advocate of the truths of the gospel that he whose prayer was answered in his conversion.

If St. Stephen had not forgiven and prayed for his persecutors, the church and the world had not heard Paul's voice in proclaiming Christ as the Saviour of the world.

5. *Death to the Christian is as a Sleep.* Under the dispensation of the gospel the term sleep is frequently used to denote death. In the case of the ruler's daughter our Lord said "the maid is not dead, but sleepeth," again in speaking of the death of Lazarus, He said "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." So the sacred historian in describing the death of Stephen says "he fell asleep" so calmly he laid down his life. The term *sleep* as applied to the death of the believer, not only intimates the peaceful departure but it also expresses the expectation and hope he has of a future resurrection. We lie down to rest in sleep, expecting to rise again refreshed and strengthened for the duties of another day. So he only sleeps, he lays his head upon the lap of earth. The tomb is the resting place, the couch on which the body reclines, until resurrection morn, then shall the slumbering dead arise.

6. *God can overrule evil for good.* The martyrdom of St. Stephen was the prelude to a terrible persecution of the early church. The condemnation of St. Stephen to death by the Sanhedrim might be supposed to involve a legal decision on the part of that court that christianity was blasphemy and a capital offence, to be punished by death. If this were so it was indeed a very critical time for the infant church, and that it was so to at least a certain extent was manifested by the effort to exterminate christianity. The death of St. Stephen and the subsequent persecution and scattering of the disciples of Christ were but examples of what so frequently happens. The real victors were those who had seemingly suffered defeat. What a glorious illustration we have of this in the death of Christ. The most powerful blow the kingdom of satan ever received was by that apparent victory. So in the death of Stephen and the persecution, the jewish priests and rulers seem to gain the victory. But they were doing that which would in time bring defeat to their own purpose. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Paul was one of the first fruits that sprung from the sowing—the persecuted disciples scattering in