

WHICH WAY OUT

WHEN YOUR WAY OUT IS NOT WHAT YOU HOPED FOR

Every test that you've experienced is the kind that normally comes to people. But God keeps his promise, and he will not allow you to be tested beyond your power to remain firm; at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out. **1 Corinthians 10:13 (GNT)**

...others were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Some faced jeer and flogging... even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- ³⁹ These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰ since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. **Hebrews 11:35b-39. 40 (NIV)**

STEPHEN'S ADVICE TO EXPERIENCING A BETTER THAN HOPED FOR WAY OUT

1. _____.

Stephen ...was a man full of faith... **Acts 6:5a (GW)**

The person who is right with me will live by trusting in me. But I will not be pleased with the one who turns back in fear." ³⁹*But we are not those who turn back and are lost. No, we are the people who have faith and are saved.* **Hebrews 10:38, 39 (ERV)**

2. _____.

Stephen ...was a man full of ... the Holy Spirit... **Acts 6:5b (GW)**

Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him ⁵⁸ and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died. **Acts 7:57-60 (NLT)**

Don't live under the control of your sinful nature. If you do, you will think about what your sinful nature wants. Live under the control of the Holy Spirit. If you do, you will think about what the Spirit wants. ⁶ The way a sinful person thinks leads to death. But the mind controlled by the Spirit brings life and peace. **Romans 8:5, 6 (NIV)**

3. _____.

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia--who began to argue with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. ¹¹ Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." ¹²*So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin.* **Acts 6:8-12 (NIV)**

Just remember, when the unbelieving world hates you, they first hated me. If you were to give your allegiance to the world, they would love and welcome you as one of their own. But because you won't align yourself with the values of this world, they will hate you.... ²⁰ So remember what I taught you, that a servant isn't superior to his master. And since they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. **John 15:18-20a**

I've told you this so that my peace will be with you. In the world you'll have trouble. But cheer up! I have overcome the world. **John 16:33 (GW)**

My friends, do not be surprised at the painful things you are now suffering. These things are testing your faith. So do not think that something strange is happening to you. **1 Peter 4:12 (ICB)**

4. _____.

Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked to heaven and saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right side of God. ⁵⁶ "Look!" he said. "I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right side of God!" **Acts 7:55, 56 (GNB)**

Stephen found comfort as he kept his focus of Jesus. He saw...

- His _____ . "I see heaven opened..."
- Jesus' _____ . "I see ...the Son of Man standing..."
- Jesus' _____ . "I see... Jesus at the right side of God."