

The Ultimate Safety Net!

Acts 7^{55-end}; [Psalm 31¹⁻⁵; 1 Peter 2²⁻¹⁰] John 14¹⁻¹⁴

*Do not let your hearts be troubled.
[John 14¹]*

The worse life is, the more faith matters. As we've said before, there are no atheists at 30,000 feet when the engines fail.

Stephen, from the reading from Acts demonstrates this in extremis.

- ✦ He had annoyed the authorities because **they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke** [Ac 6¹⁰].
- ✦ Their frustration at not being able to either silence or better Stephen boiled over and **they covered their ears and with a loud shout all rushed together against him** and then **they began to stone him**.
- ✦ His response to this was to pray **Lord Jesus receive my spirit**, to recognise that there wasn't anything he could do to change the situation, so **he knelt down** and then (as if to annoy the crowd even more) cried out, **Lord, do not hold this sin against them**.

He was sustained in all of this by a vision of what was to come - **I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God**.

Our vision of heaven comes in Jesus challenge to us, **do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me**. He then goes on to state, **in my Fathers' house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?**

- ✦ Any comfort from our faith comes from the certain knowledge that God in Christ is with us now and that God in Christ will always be with us - **I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also**.

It is Stephen's situation that helps us make sense of Jesus statement, **I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it**.

- ✦ When I was a lad the SNP were formed and, being naive and innocent, I wanted to associate with them. It wasn't anything to do with politics, but all to do with the simple black and yellow badge. It cost 20p but I know I couldn't ask for the money as the politics of the household didn't and would never support that party. So it is with our prayers - we cannot ask for anything that the household of God wouldn't support.
- ✦ The promise of being with Christ shows us that we cannot pray for an endless life on earth - that isn't the best for us. The very best for us is ultimately to be in God's presence.

Our vision of what is to come, that vision of being with God, isn't hindered if God doesn't answer our prayer to win the lottery, or to make us live without any negatives (the pain of loss; of grief; of illness; of struggle day to day) - it is the vision that helps us live with the difficulties, knowing that they will pass and we will be with God.