

Acts 22:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

Analysis

When the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed—The Greek 'martys' (μάρτυς) means witness, later taking the meaning 'martyr' because witnessing often led to death. Paul admits he was **standing by, and consenting** (έφεστώς καὶ συνευδοκῶν)—both physically present and morally approving. The participle 'suneuedokeō' indicates active agreement, not passive observation. He **kept the raiment** (φυλάσσων τὰ ιμάτια) of the executioners, facilitating murder. This confession reveals Paul's full culpability, yet demonstrates grace's power to save 'the chief of sinners' (1 Timothy 1:15). Stephen's dying prayer—'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge' (Acts 7:60)—found answer in Paul's conversion.

Historical Context

Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7) occurred circa AD 33-34, possibly triggering Paul's broader persecution campaign. Stephen's speech emphasized Israel's rejection of prophets and the temporary nature of the temple, themes Paul would later develop. Stephen saw Jesus standing at God's right hand (Acts 7:56), prefiguring Paul's Damascus road vision.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's reference to Stephen's martyrdom demonstrate the long-term effects of faithful witness, even unto death?
2. In what ways might your past sins uniquely equip you to minister grace to others?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ὅτε ἐξεχεῖτο τὸ αἷμα Στεφάνου τοῦ μάρτυρός^{της}
And when was shed the blood Stephen martyr
G2532 G3753 G1632 G129 G4736 G3588 G3144

σου καὶ αὐτόν ἦμην ἐφεστὼς καὶ συνευδοκῶν τῇ
of thy And I was standing by And consenting G3588
G4675 G2532 G846 G2252 G2186 G2532 G4909

ἀναιρέσει αὐτόν καὶ φυλάσσων τὰ ίμάτια τῶν
death I And kept the raiment G3588
G336 G846 G2532 G5442 G2440

ἀναιρούντων αὐτόν
of them that slew I
G337 G846

Additional Cross-References

Acts 7:58 (Parallel theme): And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Acts 8:1 (Parallel theme): And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Revelation 2:13 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Romans 1:32 (Parallel theme): Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

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