

## **Acts - The Gospel in Motion**

[Acts 6:8-15](#)

This week, we find ourselves back in our Acts sermon series, "The Gospel in Motion." We also enter into the second part of the series, called "Courage under Fire." Along with that, Tuesday the 6<sup>th</sup> is Epiphany, an occasion celebrated by the church every year on this day to celebrate the magi's visit to the newborn Jesus. The new year is always a good opportunity to examine our practices and consider better ways of being in the world. We can heed the advice from Paul in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." **Consider the opportunity that the new year offers to you. What would you like to give up? What would you like to add to your habits?**

Stephen, the main figure in today's passage, "full of grace and power" and "did great wonders and signs," was menacingly brought before the council by intolerant Jewish leaders. Lacking any other strategy against "the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke," their best strategy was simply to squelch his voice. Banning or cancelling opposing ideas is obviously not a new strategy, though it does often feel that our society continues to reach elevated levels of intolerance. **What do you tend to do when you disagree with someone's ideas? What strategies would you like to try for 2026?**

Allen cites a few examples across scripture of those who, like Stephen, are described as having "the face of an angel." Esau, even after having his birthright stolen from him by his brother, years later welcomes Jacob back with the "face of God." While Esther waits to talk to the king, risking her life to save the Jews, she is said to have "the face of an angel." In the book of Daniel when three young men are caught not bowing down to the king's statue, even inside the lion's den their faces appear as "the faces of angels." Under the stress and strain that our own lives bring, our hope can only come from the same God who "lit up" these brothers and sisters of so many years ago. **2026 provides us with a new opportunity to ask ourselves how we might go deeper into devotion, compassion, and courage this year. Guided by the words of Romans 12:2, how might you *renew your mind* for the year ahead, with the God who *lights us up* on your side?**