

"Internal Problems"

Part 2

Acts 6:1-7

Introduction: Last week in our study of Acts we stepped into Acts 6 where the church was faced with a problem. There was a division between two groups of believers.

Notice Acts 6:1

The Grecian Jews were complaining against the Hebrew Jews because the Grecians widows were not getting the proper care. There is really within these two problems. First there was the division and second there was the murmuring. This means people were complaining among themselves and this then added to the division. There was the sowing of discord in the church.

Application:

The sowing of discord is something that is hated by God.

Proverbs 6:16-19

¹⁶ These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

¹⁸ An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

¹⁹ A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

When there are offenses among believers, we are to go to the person who has offended us. We are not to go to others and sow discord. This only results in division, and it gives Satan a foot hold in the church.

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

¹⁶ But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

¹⁷ And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Getting back to the point, this was a serious problem in the church.

Notice Acts 6:2-3

The twelve apostles were very wise and determined that the disciples would choose 7 men who would be able to see that the widows were well taken care of. These men had to meet the qualifications here in verse 3.

1. They had to be from the church.
2. They had to be well known and of a good reputation.
3. They had to be men.
4. They had to be controlled by the Holy Spirit.
5. They had to be full of wisdom which is the ability to apply knowledge.

This was the first deacon board. They would have been responsible to distribute basic needs and money and these men conducted their ministry very well because we never hear of this being a problem again. This then is where we stopped last week.

I. The Insight

Notice Acts 6:4

This verse helps us to see that the apostles had great insight. They were able to see the problem for what it really was and that was a possible distraction. Satan had stirred up the division and the murmuring with the attempt to get the apostles away from the Word of God and prayer. But the apostles would not be pulled away. They knew what they had been called to do and they would stay true to their calling. Let us remember what the Lord had exhorted Peter to do.

John 21:15-17

¹⁵ So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

¹⁶ He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

¹⁷ He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Application:

We considered this many times in our studies so I will not go too far with it again, but I will say that the pastor's responsibility to the congregation that is entrusted to him is to teach them the Bible. He is called to study the Word and spend time in prayer and then to bring back to the people the meat that God has given to him from the Word. Too many pastors have forsaken the Word of God and prayer and made the choice to entertain the sheep instead of feeding the sheep. The result of this is larger churches and very shallow sheep. There are several reasons why pastors have gone this direction.

1. It is appealing to the worldly and they desire to have larger churches.
2. It is easier to entertain the sheep than it is to feed the sheep.

J. Vernon McGee said the reason pastors do not feed the sheep is because they are lazy. It is work to labor over the Word for days looking at cross references and word meanings. It would be much easier to tell stories and give short sermons. But that is not what God calls pastors to do. Notice what Paul said to the elders at Ephesus.

Acts 20:27-28

²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

²⁸ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Notice the words of Charles Woodbridge as he exposes the strategy of Satan here in Acts 6:

"Unable to corrupt the Church by inciting Ananias and Sapphira to deceit, he [Satan] determined to confuse the Church by persuading the Apostles to abandon their initial resolve and to direct their efforts into channels of service which were important, but secondary."

Back to our point, the apostles had insight to see how this problem could distract them from their calling.

II. The Results

Notice Acts 6:5

Each of the 7 men had Greek names which showed the wisdom of those who chose them. These men all spoke Greek and it was the Grecians who were complaining so it was very

appropriate to choose Greek speaking men. Two of these men we will learn more about. That will be Stephen and Philip. We know nothing about the other 5.

Application:

This is often the way God works. He will work through people the world would consider to be nobodies. None of these were nobodies in God's eyes. They were men whom God used in mighty ways. They were men whom Jesus died for. While we are told nothing else about the 5, we do know they did what they were called to do by taking care of the widows and this allowed the apostles to stay focused upon the Word and prayer. This alone is commendable.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

We need to be reminded that we do not need to be anyone special to be used by the Lord. He chose farmers, tax collectors, fishermen and terrorists to accomplish His will. Therefore, He can certainly use us if we make ourselves available to for use. We need to be as willing as Isaiah was.

Isaiah 6:5-8

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

⁸ *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

Notice Acts 6:6

The apostles prayed for the deacons and laid hands on them showing they were all in unity.

Notice Acts 6:7

There are three remarkable results in this verse.

1. The Word of God increased.

This was the result of the apostles having the time to pray and to study the Word of God. This is what happens in churches where the pastor is given time to study and pray. This is also what happens when the people in the church carry their weight, and everyone works together as they exercise their spiritual gifts.

2. The number of believers increased.

When the Word of God increases then you can be sure the number of believers is also going to increase.

Romans 10:17

¹⁷ *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

3. A great company of priests were saved.

This is a point we need to consider. These priests were the enemies of the Gospel. Notice the words of Whitcomb:

"Within the nation of Israel there was a superstructure of administration led by the godless, wicked, apostate Sadducee priests who denied the resurrection of the dead and the existence of angels. They were liberal heretics, and even though they were a small minority, and their views were at odds with the majority of the Jews, yet they held important positions in the Temple, and in the ruling body of the Jews (the Sanhedrin). The fact that many priests believed may also imply that many Levites believed. The priests were a small subset of the Levite tribe, having descended from Aaron, a Levite. There may have been as many as 8,000 Jewish priests serving in the Temple at different times, and out of these "a great company" trusted Christ as Savior."

But what was it that changed their view of Jesus Christ? Many of them were in Jerusalem for Pentecost and therefore they were aware of the events that had taken place. They

heard the preaching of Peter and John. They were aware of the healing of the lame man. Yet there was something else that would have probably brought them to Jesus.

Matthew 27:50-53

⁵⁰ *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

⁵¹ *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;*

⁵² *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,*

⁵³ *And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

The veil in the temple being torn from top to bottom would have certainly grasp the attention of the priests. Notice the words of Oswald Chambers:

"The Holy Place in the temple was divided from the Holiest of All by a great and beautiful veil. It was suspended by hooks from four pillars of gold. It measured sixty feet long by thirty feet wide, worked in seventy-two squares, and was reputed to be as thick as the palm of the hand. So heavy was it that the priests claimed it took three hundred men to handle it. The purpose of the veil needed no explanation. It was not a gateway, but a barrier. It effectively excluded the ministering priests from entering the Holiest of All. Only once a year was it drawn aside to admit the High Priest--on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus chapter 16; and compare Hebrews 9:1-8). He entered the sacred Presence-chamber to sprinkle the mercy-seat with blood, making atonement for his own sins and those of his people. For centuries the veil had hung gracefully in its place, but suddenly, at the very moment the Crucified uttered His loud, expiring cry, the ministering priests heard a tearing sound, and as if an unseen hand severed it by starting at the top, the veil fell apart before their awe-stricken gaze. Who could express the solemnity of the moment when they found themselves gazing into the sanctuary where for centuries God had deigned to dwell, and into which none had dared enter under pain of death. Tradition has it that the priests, unwilling to accept the implications of this divine act, sewed up the curtain and resumed their ritual, as though no world-shaking event had taken place."

Conclusion:

God can reach even the hardest of hearts in ways that we could never imagine. Therefore, let us not give up on those we know who are not saved.