



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

ACTS 6:1-8

LESSON: CALLED TO SERVE —August 6, 2017

INTRODUCTION:

Chapter 5:27-42 Peter and the apostles were questioned by the high priest. They were strictly forbidden to teach in that name, but there they were again in front of the temple teaching. They didn't even want them to say Jesus' name, but Peter and the apostles replied, that they rather obey God than men (**5:27-29**).

Peter continued to speak the message before the Council and tells them that they had killed the God of their ancestors; killed Jesus and hanged Him on the tree (5:30). As Peter spoke about Jesus, he let them know that it was God's power that has raised Jesus. God exalted the man Jesus, whom they had rejected, to be seated at His right hand (a place of all authority) to be Prince (Ruler) and Savior (Deliverer), to save God's chosen people, so that the people of Israel would have the opportunity to repent and have their sins forgiven. And the reason these apostles speak these things is because they are God's witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given them (**5:30-32**).

The Council's immediate reaction cut them to the heart, that they set their minds to killed the apostles. But a voice of reason by the name of Gamaliel, who was a Pharisee of the Sanhedrin; one who had a good reputation commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while as they took heed to what they were about to do. He began to remind them of two revolutionist, Theudas and Judas the Galilean, who rose up on two separate occasions, persuading many followers, but, after a while, it came to nought. They were killed and their followers were scattered. The point is that, if they are not of God, they will soon disappear from the scene. And, if they are of God, all the forces of the world cannot overthrow them, and you can be found fighting against God Himself. It's one thing to listen to the voice of reasoning, but you also have to follow it (**5:33-39**).

The Council agreed on the *"wait and see"* policy, but they still had the apostles beaten, charging them not to speak in the Name of Jesus, and then released them. After being beaten, can you imagine the apostles went from the Council's presence rejoicing? Rejoicing because they were counted worthy to suffer shame; rejoicing because it was a real honor to be dishonored on behalf of the Name of the man the Sanhedrin dishonored; rejoicing in the Temple and from house to house while they held on to their faith, teaching even more; announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ! (**5:40-42**).

LESSON: I. A CHURCH PROBLEM Acts 6:1

6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. As the church grew with many disciples multiplying, an internal problem developed with the Grecians against the Hebrews in this early church because their widows were being neglected in the daily administration of food or relief. Two basic groups or cliques were seen in the church, and one was complaining and grumbling

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about the actions of the other.

1. There were the Hebrews, Jews born and reared in Palestine and spoke Aramaic. They rejected, despised, and hated all Gentile and Greek culture completely, and used only the Hebrew Bible in its original Hebrew language.
2. There were the "*Grecian Jews*" were the *Greek-speaking* Jews who had come to Palestine from other nations and may not have spoken Aramaic. They were also known as the "*Hellenists*", Jews who were scattered, deported, and dispersed all over the world by the Romans. Many of them would return for the great Feasts of Pentecost and the Passover. Apparently some had been converted on the day of Pentecost or thereafter, and had either delayed their return home or decided to move back to Jerusalem; they had responded to the gospel.

The Hebrew Jews, having always been taught to reject and despise Grecians, and were probably having difficulty getting rid of all their prejudice. The resulting language barrier led to the reject of some needy widows. Perhaps they felt that the Hellenists or Grecian Jews were not due as much attention or as many rights as they were. Cliques and groups are dangerous. There are sins common to cliques that must be guarded against, the sins of...

- being exclusive and shutting others out.
- believing one has more rights than others.
- feeling superior and above others.
- thinking one is due more attention than others.

The leaders of the church did not have enough help to look after every member, and so, there was a division in the church— grumbling, complaining, and gripping against the Hebrews because their widows were being unfairly treated; they were neglected in the daily distribution of food. Why? -The lack of enough leaders to meet all the needs and the apostles need to share the gospel was not met.

II. AN APOSTOLIC PROPOSAL Acts 6:2-4

6:2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. It appears that up to this time the apostles took care of the business affairs of the church, which included the ministry of the Word of God and the care of the needy (4:37). Attending to the physical needs of the new church (e.g. waiting on tables) absorbed too much of the apostles' time. The twelve leaders (apostles) called the Greek speaking community together to explain the situation. They didn't deny that there was a problem. The church was called together and was involved in the matter. The leaders wisely sought everyone's thoughts, advice, cooperation, and counsel as they declared to them that it's not reasonable that they should neglect the teaching of God's Word and attend tables. Their primary call and mission was to concentrate on the Word of God, its study and proclamation. The meaning of to "*serve tables*" meant sitting and listening or serving and meeting the needs of the needy. If the church had been smaller, the apostles could have met these needs themselves. But when the church became larger, there were just too many people. Trying to do too much will also cause a problem.

6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. The twelve leaders (apostles) determined that they were the problem because they took examination of the ministry. The solution of the matter meant they had to delegate responsibility to others. They told the brethren to look out among themselves and find

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seven men with these required qualification: **7 men of honest report**, and **full of the Holy Ghost** and **wisdom** (meaning controlled by), that they could appoint over this business of the widows. The men would also be called "deacons" and minister, take time to share and look after the needy (widows) of the church. Having wisdom and understanding what to do with it can cut down many problems. We all can't be the main event!

6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. The great ministries of the church are twofold: prayer and the ministry of the Word.

- It is in prayer that the believer reaches up and talks to God.
- It is in the Word of God that God speaks to the minister, to the flock, and to the world. The minister must spend hours and days seeking God, finding out what God wants to say to him, the church, and the world.

Now, the twelve leaders (apostles) could give themselves continually to prayer and in the ministry of the Word! "*Continually*" means steadfastly; to persevere; to continue on and on, stick to it. And the seven deacons have their job to do in the affairs of the church; none overlapping the other.

III. A CONGREGATIONAL CHOICE Acts 6:5-6

6:5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:— This saying or this proposal was unanimously agreed upon by the whole body. This meant that apostles and Grecian believers (thousands of them) responded in love and humility. What an example! The body had reunited as one in spirit and purpose, worship, and ministry. They selected Stephen, a man we would come to know; a man controlled by a firm faith and controlled by the Holy Ghost, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch (a former convert to Judaism and then to Christ). The fact that they were all Grecian believing Jews points toward God moving the church out into the whole world. These seven men could touch the Gentile world. These seven men chosen were unknown except for Stephen and Philip. The point is that they were men who had the qualities given in verse three. God was preparing the church without their knowing it for the day when they were to be scattered all over the world.

6:6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. This was a definite ordination service; a specific moment when the newly excited seven men were set apart for their ministry.

1. The church set them before the apostles and "set" the men apart for God's use.
2. The church went in prayer; the ministers (apostles) led all in prayer.
3. The ministers (apostles) laid their hands upon the newly appointed men.

The laying on of hands symbolized blessings and the imparting of the Holy Spirit's power upon them.

IV. A FAVORABLE RESULT Acts 6:7-8

6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. The favorable result of these men's appointment brought increase. to take care of the needy widows, three things occurred:

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1. The Word of God increased as never before, for the apostles were freed to concentrate on prayer and the Word. There was a new power in their witnessing and teaching.
2. The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem; church growth.
3. A great number of priests were being reached for Christ and were obedient to the faith; that is, to receiving and following Christ. They embraced the gospel and lived the gospel!

6:8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Stephen was one of the chosen from the Grecian community. His name means "*crow*n." Three things stand out in this verse.

1. He was full of faith (grace); **FULL ASSURANCE IN THE HEART=FAITH.**
 - a. Of God's love, favor, gifts, and blessings.
 - b. His godly, gracious character and behavior.
2. He was full of power (dunameos); **PUSHING OUT WILLFUL ENEMIES' RE-OCCURRENCE=POWER.**
 - a. The Holy Spirit is the Divine...
 - i. His Presence iv. His Might
 - ii. His Power v. His Strength
 - iii. His Force vi. His Energy
 - b. He lives and acts through believers. The Holy Spirit is the One Who...
 - i. influences ii. controls iii. produces iv. effects
3. He did great wonders and miracles. Both grace and power (the Holy Spirit) is necessary before a person can serve God effectively.
 - c. He is the work of God both within and through the believer. It is not man, but the Holy Spirit alone who has the power to save and mature, and work miracles among men. Stephen's faith was not in himself, but in the grace and power of God that filled him.

SUMMARY:

As the church grew with many disciples multiplying, an internal problem developed with the Grecians against the Hebrews in this early church because their widows were being neglected in the daily administration of food or relief (**6:1**).

The twelve apostles summoned the general body of the disciples and addressed them by saying that it wasn't reasonable that they should neglect the teaching of God's Word to attend tables. They proposed to the brethren to look out among themselves and pick out seven men of good reputation and full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom they would appoint over this need. Then the apostles would be able to continue in prayer and to the ministry of the Word of God (**6:2-4**).

This proposal was unanimously agreed upon by the whole body. The seven men chosen were all Grecian believing Jews whom they ordained—sitting them before the apostles as they prayed and laid hands upon them and commissioned them for service; would be called deacons later (**6:5-6**).

As a result of the seven men appointed to take care of the needy widows, the Word of God increased, the church grew, and the priests were obedient to the faith. Stephen was one of the chosen from the Grecian community full of the faith, power, and performed great wonders and miracles among the people (**6:7-8**).