

Acts 6

- I. 6:1-7 Appointing the Seven
- II. 6:8-15 The Ministry of Stephen

Introduction: Three Tools of Satan against the Church: Persecution, Corruption and now **Dissension**

- I. 6:1-7 Appointing the Seven

- A. 6:1 *disciples ... multiplying* 5000 men in 4:4, now more along with growing pains. A task that at one time was very doable is becoming less so for the apostles.

Hebrews Jews who maintained Semitic language and culture.

Hellenists Jews who had adopted Greek language and/or culture. A few centuries earlier, Alexander the Great conquered from Greece to India. Eastern Mediterranean now spoke Greek, especially outside Israel. Jewish diaspora was Greek speaking.

- B. 6:2 The twelve apostles don't want to get distracted. They need to focus on God's word – preaching and teaching. Please don't read into this an attitude of superiority.

- C. 6:3 *brethren seek out from among you* from among the multitude of disciples.

The qualifications center on the character and spirituality of the men. See Romans 16:1 for a later example of a *deaconess*.

- D. 6:4 Prayer and the Word – the priorities of the apostles.

- E. 6:5 All seven have Greek – not Hebrew – names, indicating a Hellenist background. Since the Hellenists had the complaints, they should solve the problem.

Application: When God shows us a need, it's often one of the first steps in His leading us into a ministry. He may eventually call us to do something about it.

i. We'll hear more about Stephen and Philip.

ii. There is a theory that Nicolas later founded a fringe sect called the Nicolaitans. They come up in Christ's letters to the churches in Revelation.

- F. 6:6 The twelve prayed first – probably over the selection of these men – and then they laid hands on them confirming them in their ministries.

- G. 6:7 The results of the decision. Continued multiplication of disciples.

Conclusion: This passage is key to the structure of leadership in the church. From this point on into the epistles, church leadership is characterized by the ministry of both elders and deacons. More on that in a moment.

II. 6:8-15 The Ministry of Stephen

- A. 6:8 *stephanos* = crown, not of royalty, but the laurel leaf crown worn by winners in the Olympic games.

Revelation 2:10 (NKJV) Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. ... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Stephen no doubt received that crown. Stephen came into ministry by means of his service for widows, but his ministry certainly didn't stop there.

Application: Many people get started in ministry by serving in any way that's needed. Others never get started because they are not willing to serve except on their own terms.

- B. 6:9-10 *the Freedmen* Those who were once slaves of Rome, but were now free.
- i. This synagogue was apparently started by Jewish former slaves who settled in Jerusalem – “Synagogue of Freed Slaves” (NLT). They were from around the empire, and many were no doubt *Hellenists*.
 - ii. Paul was from Tarsus in Cilicia, and may have been among those who first disputed with Stephen. He will be present as Stephen is martyred at the end of Chapter 7. Stephen's death was prominent in Paul's mind even later and so probably made a big impact on him. See Acts 22:20.
- C. 6:11-15 Stephen got the same treatment as Christ.
- i. They hired false witnesses
 - ii. They made false accusations
 - iii. They gave him an unfair trial

Elders and Deacons

*Philippians 1:1-2 (NKJV) Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the **bishops (overseers) and deacons:** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Deacon = Diákonos = servant, one who executes the commands of another
Diakonía Acts 6:1, 4 diakonéo Acts 6:2

*1 Peter 5:1-4 (NKJV) The **elders** who are among you I exhort, I who am a **fellow elder** and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers**, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the **Chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown [stephanos] of glory that does not fade away.*

Leadership separated into *shepherds and servants*

See **1 Timothy 3:1-13** and **Titus 1:5-10** for qualifications

Using Our Gifts

God gives each of us gifts. There are no gift-less Christians

*1 Corinthians 7:7 (NKJV) ... **each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.***

*1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (NKJV) ⁴There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷But the manifestation of the Spirit is given **to each one** for the profit of all:*

Gifts are something we need to use intentionally.

Every Christian has a gift, but not all use them.

We need to “stir them up” and make sure that we don't neglect them – just as Paul had to encourage Timothy.

1 Timothy 4:14 (NKJV) Do not neglect the gift that is in you, ...

2 Timothy 1:6 (NKJV) Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you ...

A sample passage about spiritual gifts:

Romans 12:4-8 (NKJV) ⁴For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Other important chapters 1 Corinthians 12 & 14

Steps to Satisfying Service

- Pray about your gifts
- Seek out your gifts
- Try out different ministries to help determine your gifts
- Prioritize your service in accordance with your gifts.

Gifts Test: www.spiritualgiftstest.com