

“THE PASTOR’S HELPERS”

Acts 6:1-7

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INTRODUCTION

Along with the growth came problems. So it is in ministry.

- Persecution was from without.
- Ananias and Sapphira’s deception came from within.
- Now, **Grumbling** came from within.

As is often the case, this first significant problem related to **money and women!**

The Christian life and ministry are not just great spiritual victories, but mundane problems; the routine of life is not always enjoyable!

Is this problem a trifling one? Hardly!

Church growth demands prompt and wise solutions to problems by leaders and people.

And, an important part of that is understanding our priorities as a church and as pastors.

I. REASONS FOR THE PROBLEM (1, 2, 4)

A. Huge increase of converts—_____ (v. 1)

B. Diversity and _____: Greeks and Hebrews (v. 1)

- Does not say that the widows themselves complained, but that the complaint concerned them.
- The perception was that the Hellenistic widows were being “neglected”
- The word for “serving” here is *διακονη* from which we get “deacon”.
- Taking care of widows was a prominent responsibility as given in the Old Testament, inter-testament times by the temple proceeds, and now by Christians (cf. James 1:27—evidence of true religion.)

C. Apostles’ Primary Task (2, 4): **Teaching, _____, Prayer: “Prayer and the ministry of the Word”**

1. Not *Desirable* for us: that is to God—not pleasing to Him—“to neglect the Word of God in order to serve tables.” It is not that serving tables was unimportant—but rather that ministering the Word was far more important. **The entire passage shows that taking care of material needs was important!**
2. Necessary for them to devote themselves to the word and prayer.
Both are genuine “**ministries**”

So, there was a legitimate problem; what was the solution?

II. THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM (3-6)

Notice that the problem is not denied—it is dealt with promptly!

A. The Parties involved: Apostles and People. *While apostolic authority is here recognized, yet congregational involvement is included!*

B. The Program Initiated: **Select _____ qualified men to do the job.** (3)

1. Why Seven?

- Not because there are *7 gifts of the Spirit*.
- Not because there were *7 districts in Jerusalem*.
- Not because there were *7 house churches*.
- Not because their organization was derived from Roman official groups—the church would hardly be so influenced by Roman organization.
- Rather, because of the special place of the number 7 among Hebrews in the OT; compare the 12 apostles (12 OT tribes) and 70 helpers for Moses with the 70 sent out by Jesus.

2. What Qualifications?

- a. _____—“of good reputation” [The word means “to be the subject of testimony”; **How we need to gain a testimony!**]
- b. _____—“full of the Spirit” (v. 5 shows the reference to be the Holy Spirit. **They are under the Spirit’s control, not controlled by the spirit of alcohol, demonic spirits, or an uncontrolled human spirit!**
- c. Practical—“full of _____”; guided by wisdom
“full of _____”; controlled by faith. Stephen, and also the other men (v. 5).

3. What office is this?

- a. Not Really Deacons
 - The word is not used here.
 - Philip was one of the 7 (21:7) and he was an evangelist
 - It is true that the duties described here are like those that deacons now have responsibility for.
- b. A special and unique office
 - It is likely that other “ministers” (deacons) served under them.
 - They were next to the apostles in importance.
 - Stephen and Philip were both leading figures in the church.
 - The office seemed to eventuate in the eldership (see 11:30 where we have the first mention of elders in the church.)
 - Surely, deacons would not be appointed before elders.

I LIKE TO CALL THESE MEN “eldeacs”!

C. The Persons Inducted (5)

Notice that **the congregation approved the suggestion! The apostles were not dictators!** Then **they chose the seven qualified men.**

THIS IS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH GOVERNMENT; we will see such throughout the book of Acts.

Also notice that all the names here are Greek! Let us solve our problems in this way!

D. Powers Granted (6) [The people brought them; the apostles appointed them.]

The appointment was made by **prayer** and the **laying on of hands**.

1. _____

2. _____ and gifts of God

3. _____—appointing God’s functionaries **But such was done only through the hands of the apostles—not today.**

This passage shows us the importance of these appointed helpers!

III. THE RESULTS FOR THE CHURCH (7)

A. The _____ Spreads (“it kept on spreading”)

B. The Number of _____ continued to Increase **Greatly** in Jerusalem.

C. Numerous _____ were saved.

- They “became obedient—transfer of loyalty to Christ!
- This gave additional ties to the temple for believers
- Such changes resulted in even **greater hostility** from the Sadducees.

This movement among the Hellenists provided for the later expansion of the gospel beyond Jerusalem.

CONCLUSION

The importance of Deacons! (and other workers in the church)—real men of God

The important work of Pastors! (ministering the Word and prayer) Such must never be sacrificed!

The Importance of Congregational response:

To Leaders’ direction.

In selecting the right leaders.

In squashing abuse, prejudice, and murmuring.

In volunteering.

The importance of the “hearing of faith” (Rom. 1:5)—Being Saved!