

Putting Feet to Your Faith

Acts 6:1-15

- Another church crisis is going to occur, this one differs from the one concerning Ananias-Saphire, where they schemed and lied to the Lord and the Apostles and it cost them their lives. Here it's a cultural disagreement between two groups in the church that needs to be addressed quickly before it spreads further into the church and affects others within the church. God never hides the flaws-failings of man whether its Moses, David, or the Apostle Peter, He's honest with us in order to give us instruction to properly navigate the personal landmines that we'll all face.

V1-15

- **V1** Satan has attempted to cause confusion and chaos through both **opposition** and **intimidation** from **without**, now he is looking to **corrupt** the church from **within**. The church is multiplying rapidly, and as you know with growth oftentimes comes growing pains, and that's exactly what's beginning to happen. The Greek speaking Jewish widows called "**Hellenist**" who had come to Palestine from other nations felt like they were being neglected in the daily distribution in favor of the "**Hebrew**" or Jewish speaking widows who dwelt in Jerusalem.
- It's essentially a culture war breaking out amongst the ladies in the midst of a move of God within the city streets of Jerusalem. What's interesting is they were both in the same situation, and of the same nationality, the only difference is one grew up in Jerusalem speaking Aramaic and steeped in Jewish custom, while the other grew up in Greek culture speaking Greek and raised in Gentile customs instead of Jewish traditions, this caused a rift between the two groups. I read a commentary that says some churches never survive Acts chapter 6, as accusations can easily turn into people taking sides which leads to splits, divisiveness, and ultimately collapse.
- **V2-4** the leadership is called in to solve the problem and after studying the issue declare that to focus on serving and looking over the fairness of which group is getting more than the other that it would be best if **7** men are picked out so that they would oversee the ministry and make sure that things are done in a fair and equitable manner. There are a couple of important lessons found in this problem > **1st** as growth occurs others must step up and be used, **2nd** the main job of the pastor is to pray and study to teach the Word, nothing should cause me to neglect these.
- To show how important every ministry is, just to serve the widows Peter tells the church to pick out men who had a **good reputation**, were **filled with the Holy Spirit**, and **full of wisdom**. Each one of these correlates to the other, a good reputation meant you could trust them with the finances, **full of the Holy Spirit** shows itself by being **full of wisdom**, as wisdom follows a person who is under the control of God. These men are commonly called the first deacons because the Greek noun "Diakonos" (administration) and verb "diakonan" (serve) is used in **Acts 6:1-2**.

- **V5-6** you can't always say it was a good decision because the people liked it, but here God confirmed the wisdom of the Apostles through agreement among the people. Here is wisdom as all seven of the men had Greek names meaning they were all Greek speaking Jews so they couldn't be accused of siding with the Hebrew speaking widows, and once the Apostles approved them by laying hands on them then they were ready to go to work for the Lord.
- **V7-10** because the situation was handled with wisdom and sensitivity to those who were offended, a potentially divisive issue was defused and all that could have gone wrong with Satan attacking through division, the Lord turned what he wanted for evil into something that was good. For the Word continued to spread, the disciples were multiplying, and ministry doors were opening. We were first introduced to Stephen as one of the seven, now we see he's also sharing the gospel with people from the Synagogue, notice people who are genuinely filled with the Holy Spirit don't follow after signs and wonder, but signs and wonders follow after them.
- **V9 "Dispute"** > to question jointly, or discuss and reason, so what was needed was not a **fighter** for the **gospel** but an **expositor** of the **gospel** > **1Pet 3:15**. **V10** because the Spirit is linked to wisdom, their unable to give a reasonable answer against **what Stephen said**, and **what he was doing**. This proves that you can have more than one gift which allows you to perform more than one duty, as Stephen doesn't just have a heart for the pantry, but also the pulpit.
- **V11-14** defeated by the Word those who rejected the truth sought to indict on lies, just as they did when they put Jesus on trial > **Math 26:59-61**, **Jn 15:18-20** a servant must be like his master. **V15** is always fascinating to me because one of the hardest things to do as a human being is to sit quietly while people are falsely and blatantly accusing and lying on you. But Stephen after being brought before the Sanhedrin council the same one that Peter and John faced earlier and pronounced judgment upon our Lord and upon the disciples are now sitting to judge him.
- This treatment parallels how they treated Jesus and how the world will treat us, and the best way for us to handle this is to trust that God is in control. If I'm going to be undisturbed by the lies and attacks of the enemy I must believe that the battle is not mine but it is the Lord > **2 Chron 20:15**. Stephen instead of giving the council an angry scowl or look of disgust sits there and lets the beauty and glow of the Lord to ascend off of his face, which allows the Lord to begin to speak to the people without Stephen uttering a word wow!