

Acts, Sermon #14

Acts 6

Last time – we talked about the persecution of the Church, and after the Apostles were arrested, and beaten, they obeyed God rather than men.

Acts 5:42 was the result –

I challenged us all to witness to 6 people – one for each day – Monday-Saturday

How many of us made an effort to witness to at least 1 person in the last 2 weeks?

Trouble from without and today we are going to look at trouble from with in

Acts 6:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word

Acts 6:1-4

I have entitled today's message: "**Doing the Right Things**"

Let us pray

You may be seated

“Doing the Right Things”

New chapter and a new phase in the life of the early church -- Another threat to the ministry of the Word of God.

Vs. 1 – internal matter – the crisis is described as a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews.

How many of us have ever murmured about anything; about our spouse, our job, about our church, about our pastor?

We need to realize that we are not dealing with an American church where all the people have an opinion and a mindset of personal rights.

Look at this church –

- Acts 1:14 – 120 – with one accord in prayer
- Acts 2:1 – all with one accord
- Acts 2:44 – over 3,000; – vs. 44 says –; vs. 46
- Acts 4:32 – church is over 8,000 people

Chapter 6 is a grave threat that jeopardizes a beautiful unity among thousands of people.

Unique Unity – not one of us has ever been in a church with such an accord. I’m not talking about just getting along; much deeper. They were working together toward the right things.

II. What caused this threat, this crisis of murmuring? – Two things:

First, vs. 1 – the number of the disciples was multiplied, more people, more problems. The larger the church the larger the work, and the result of that was

#2 – neglected ministries, things being overlooked

This kind of thing occurs repeatedly in local churches. Churches grow and in the midst of that growth, some things are neglected and until the church adjusts to the volume/capacity. There will be problems. The church had not kept pace with its rapid expansion.

When people are neglected, over-looked—very frequently there is this murmuring, grumbling – speak privately, in a low voice, to utter discontent, to express complaints

Now the Apostles dealt with this in a very wise way. They realize there is a much larger threat than just the murmuring and that is indicated to us in Vs. 2e.

Vs. 2 – So they called together the entire church; at least 8,000 people

It is not “Reason”, Fitting – it is not “Pleasing” – are they talking about themselves, their pleasure or God’s pleasure?

► The larger threat that they were faced with and the church ever since has faced is that of neglected primary ministry.

Leave (forsake, abandon) the Word of God / and serve – Deacon/,minister – the tables.

This is what the adversary has been trying to accomplish all along. That was the point of the persecution; to cause these men to abandon the praying and teaching and preaching and witnessing of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is his effort towards us, to cause us to abandon what we are suppose to do

The persecution didn’t accomplish that: what we have here is something much more sneaky – internal, more subtle.

Internal murmuring – destroys the unity of the church, distorts the character of the church and to dissipates the energy of the church

The Grecians widows were Jewish people who had been Hellenized, Greek speaking Jews. Often times they had moved back to Jerusalem. The Jewish people who had not been Hellenized – called Hebrews here – were orthodox, natives, Aramaic speaking.

The Hebrew Jews were receiving favoritism or preference over the Grecian Jews. The complaint obviously was justified. The apostles never denied it and took immediate steps to rectify the problem. But the oversight must certainly have been accidental

Talking about widows – literally the putting of food on the table for people who cannot provide for themselves – not talking about table waiters in a restaurant sense – providing finances, needs of widows.

There are not too many things in the life of the church that would take precedence over the feeding, clothing, and sheltering of God's people.

Yet the Apostles saw that the Good and important ministry of the widows threatened the giving out of the Word.

So they suggested a solution that is found in vs. 3-4.

#1. They direct these people to divide the ministry. This is why **all** believers are to be in the ministry, serving. Church people must assume positions of responsibility. When one decides he is not or she will not, others have to cover and things are neglected.

It is obvious up to this point that the Apostles had not only given the Word, engaging in prayer, but they were the ones where monies and possessions were laid at their feet. These 12 were overlooking the distribution of funds in the church.

At this point, they are going to divide the ministry and they direct the people to choose out 7 men – additional ministers, laborers, and to appoint them over this business.

The ministry of which they are speaking is a ministry just as giving out the Word of God is a ministry. We can serve God through serving the Word. We can serve God through serving people!

Vs. 1 and vs. 4 – says ministry too – same thing – ministry.

There is a ministry of serving tables, a ministry of teaching/preaching the Word.

The two are spoken of here on the same level. It is not a question of one ministry being inferior to the other. It is simply a matter of two different ministries, demanding two different kinds of people, with two different sets of gifts, two different focus' on what they are doing.

In addition to this, we have the qualifications that were demanded for the ministry of 7 men.

Three qualifications – Not any old person, any warm body will do, not a stranger, but one from among you, from amongst the believers, the disciples, saved people

1. **“Of honest report”** – public credibility – dealing with money – character – a servant is chosen not because he has a lot, speaks a lot, or is successful. We must have men of integrity; not liars, luster's, schemers but good honorable men, trustworthy and performing men.
2. Men **“Full of the Holy Spirit”** – Men who look after the physical affairs of a local church must be filled with the Spirit of God just like the men who minister the Word. Same Qualification – because it is MINISTRY.

3. Men **“Filled with wisdom”** – decisions made – wise, discerning and judicious way of handling things – need insight, skill, ability, knowledge – greater results.

Vs. 3e-7 – men whom we may appoint over this business of serving tables

James, the half brother of Jesus, who is at this meeting, said in his epistle:

James 1:27 – Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Spiritual ministry, a regulated ministry – 1 Timothy 5:3-16 – extended section that teaches how the widows was to be taken on to the church roll.

These 7 men in this passage are not called deacons but this is the passage that is looked to as the roots from which deacons came.

Deaconing Tables -- The office itself is not referred to but the work of the office is.

I Timothy 3 – 8 qualifications for Deacons – 4 for his wife – 12 in all plus these 3

We are dealing with a very demanding ministry, a very important ministry.

Now notice in Vs. 4 –

Notice their determination – the determination of the Apostles concerning their own call, ministry, work

- “We will” – give our strength, to be diligent, earnest, devoted, – strong toward – They are going to put their energy toward the ministry of prayer and the Word of God.

What a great need there is for that today. We are lacking in this today.

What a great tragedy that this is misunderstood by the men in ministry, by those going into ministry and the church people.

The priority of the pastor today is prayer and the ministry of the Word. Churches, when looking for a pastor, have all kinds of ideas for what they want in their spiritual leadership. The key cogs are to be a heart of prayer and working in the Word to bring to bear upon the local Church of God.

Much emphasis on hosts of ministries for the pastors of the church. Sometimes by the church people, sometimes by the preachers themselves. This must be the pastor's philosophy of ministry – his own philosophy of ministry.

Vs. 5 – the saying pleased the whole multitude.

The important matters must never replace the **most** important matters. The secondary must remain secondary. This has always been a major problem in the church.

Let me give reasons/observations of why God's leaders do not give themselves to these 2 things of vs. 4.

#1. They have a flawed philosophy of ministry which leads to a flawed emphasis of ministry

Good pastors ground the flock in the Word of God; time with God in prayer and time with the Word. God's people need to hear from the Lord and that place ought to be in the pulpit of our local churches. When God's preachers have been with God and with His Word, they will have power in their preaching.

#2. Why such flaws in spiritual leaders?

1. Ignorant of their role
2. This is strenuous spiritually – what is the hardest spiritual discipline? Prayer
3. Does not produce, quick enough

There is an allurements to the administrative side of ministry – CEO mindset
 Produces more quickly – numerically and more visible results

That's why we have seen the secular business principles invading sacred work,
 DIFFERENCE between business organization and church organization

1. The church is a volunteer organization – coerce people to serve/like the army OR buy their service. Give time, talent, treasure – voluntarily.
2. The Nature of the Work – The work of the church is winning of souls, building of the saints and the labor is prayer and the ministry of the Word,

Prayer is the work! When we gather on Wednesday nights, the church is at work, we come to work.

3. Differs in the credentials for its workers – I Cor. 4:2, “a man be found faithful” – faithfulness. If the church is thinking right, a church will value faithfulness above talent. A secular business does not; just win baby, just produce
4. Ultimate objectives are different – stock exchange – goes up or down. Business world – use people to get things done –

Church world – the ultimate objective is not so much the work it gets done but the work that gets done on them; use things to get people done. The construction of this building is to build people.

When we don't understand this, vs. 4:

- We turn away from ministry of the Word – away from the invisible and unseen engine of prayer.
- We don't wait on the Lord – impatient and doubt – instead of walking by faith and turn to walking by sight.

We must have a proper philosophy of ministry and we get that from the Word of God.

We must be careful of encroachment of secular principles and human wisdom, business and management guidelines/philosophies, invading the work of the Lord.

Let us dedicate ourselves and our strength to the ministry that God has given us to do whether it's a tables or the Word.

Do what we can do and to it to the glory of God!

It is not a lack of time, it is lack of priority and focused importance.

It is a lack of principle, discipline, conviction, planning, diligence. It is not a lack of time. We have time for what is most important.

We have plenty of time for all our God given work – “Doing the Right Things”

Let us stand for closing invitation, every eye closed.

Doing the Right Things

Kids into all kinds of activities. Parents, what about spiritual activities?

Men so concerned about their job, good income, providing for themselves and the family, that they neglect the most important matters, providing the spiritual needs of the family first.

We read all kinds of material. What about the Bible?

We talk to all kinds of people. What about God the Father?

Are we keeping the priorities of our life?

Are the most important things really the most important things?

Gospel