

Acts 6:1-7

- **THE WORK OF GOD...**

- Arrested for Jesus...

- The amazing MIRACLES [shadow of Peter] were gathering a LOT of attention...
 - People were coming from ALL around Jerusalem - and EVERYONE was getting healed...
 - And the CHURCH was GROWING - countless people were putting their FAITH in Jesus...
 - This was in direct CONTRAST to the COMMAND of the High Priest - **Acts 4:18**
 - So the SANHEDRIN [Sadducees] were filled with RAGE - and arrested the APOSTLES...
 - But God sent an ANGEL and set them free [Sadducees did not believe in angels]!

- Bold for Jesus...

- After re-arresting them - the High Priest demanded to know why they had DISOBEYED...
 - Peter was BOLD to answer - they will obey GOD and not MEN...
 - The counsel had MURDERED Jesus - whom God RAISED [they did not believe the resurrection]
 - And God had PROVEN Jesus was the ONLY way by their TESTIMONY and the HOLY Spirit...
 - At those words - the SANHEDRIN was FURIOUS [διαπρίω] - and wanted to kill the APOSTLES!

- Work of Jesus...

- One of the SANHEDRIN - a PHARISEE names GAMALIEL stood up and stopped them...
 - If this was a work of MEN - it would come to NOTHING [Theudas and Judas]
 - But SINCE [indicative] it was a work of GOD - they did NOT have the POWER [δύναμις] to stop it
 - GAMALIEL knew about the healing of the LAME man - being set free from PRISON [angel]
 - So the SANHEDRIN beat and threatened the APOSTLES - but set them free...
 - And the APOSTLES continued to TEACH and PREACH in the name of Jesus!

- **1ST - NEW PROBLEM... vs. 1**

- 1st - Growing church... vs. 1

- Disciples...
 - Now in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplying!
 - After the SECOND arrest of the APOSTLES...
 - Their REFUSAL to obey men - but instead continuing to PREACH and TEACH Jesus...
 - The RESULT was people were getting saved in RECORD numbers...
 - But not just SAVED - they were becoming DISCIPLES [μαθητής] of Jesus...
 - DISCIPLES [μαθητής] - the word means to LEARN - or GROW in understanding [of Jesus]
 - ONLY the SECOND time this word is used in Acts [Upper room] - **Acts 1:15**
 - But it will be used THREE times just in this CHAPTER!
 - When we think about church GROWTH - we tend to look at NUMBERS...
 - And while it is true that when God is working - the church will be GROWING...
 - It is NOT just limited to how many people come to church...
 - More important it is the MATURITY of those who are coming...
 - Jesus did NOT command us to go out and get a LOT of people to come to church...
 - He commanded [imperative] us to make DISCIPLES [μαθητής] of Him!
 - **Matthew 28:19** - "Go therefore and make disciples [μαθητής] of all the nations!"
 - Church Growth...
 - This is the FOURTH time in Acts the book talks about the church GROWING...
 - After the day of PENTECOST - the Lord ADDED daily - **Acts 2:47**
 - After the FIRST arrest of Peter and John - FIVE thousand were saved - **Acts 4:4**
 - Then after the death of Ananias and Saphira - the Lord increasingly ADDED - **Acts 5:14**
 - Now after the SECOND arrest - the LORD MULTIPLIED the DISCIPLES [μαθητής]!

- If we do a GOOGLE search for - HOW to grow a church...
- We will see that there are THOUSANDS of results - PRACTICAL tips...
- Everything from being FRIENDLY - to having ENGAGING music...
- Interestingly the ONE thing we will NOT see - it any mention of Jesus!
- The church today is filled with WORLDLY ideas on how to GROW...
- They treat it like a BUSINESS - come at the problem with COMMITTEES...
- Then wonder why it is so HARD - and why it takes so much EFFORT to maintain...
- The answer is because they are going about it all WRONG - the church belongs to God...
- And when a church makes DISCIPLES of Jesus - teaches them His WORD...
- That is when a church will GROW - even MULTIPLY - because God is the one doing the work!

o 2nd - Partiality... vs. 2

- Different culture...
 - There arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists.
 - Because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution!
 - Along with the GROWTH in numbers - came NEW problems...
 - There was a COMPLAINT [γογγυσμός] - to quietly murmur...
 - The Greek speaking [Hellenist] Jews - were NOT happy with the Hebrews speaking Jews...
 - Because when the food was served [διακονία] there was PARTIALITY...
 - The Jewish WIDOWS [χήρα] were getting preferential treatment – most of the food...
 - While the Hellenistic widows were ignored – because they were different!
 - It is our nature to be skeptical of people who are DIFFERENT than us...
 - If you do NOT look like me - talk like me – then I want NOTHING to do with you!
 - The Lord has blessed us with a DIVERSE church...
 - We come from DIFFERENT backgrounds - even speak DIFFERENT languages...
 - Which is why it is important to be color blind - culture blind - **Romans 2:11**
 - It does NOT matter if we are tall or short - rich or poor - light or dark...
 - When we walk into the church – we should ALL feel like we are at home!
- On the offensive...
 - Satan does not give up easily – if he fails in ONE area – he will try something else...
 - Satan tried to INTIMIDATE the church with the arrest of Peter and John - **Acts 4**
 - Satan tried to COMPROMISE the church with Ananias and Sapphira - **Acts 5**
 - Now he tried to DIVIDE the church by focusing on their differences!
 - More than anything satan wants to keep us from Jesus...
 - He will try to INTIMIDATE us – stir up people around us to CONVINCE us not to go to church...
 - But if satan CANNOT intimidate us – then he will try and COMPROMISE our walk ...
 - Get us so busy that we do not have any time for Jesus...
 - Ever notice that when we want to read our Bible - go to church - life gets EXTRA busy...
 - But if that does NOT work – then satan will try to DIVIDE us!
- The opportunity...
 - Rather than be INTIMIDATED - COMPROMISED - or DIVIDED ...
 - The church instead used each attack as an opportunity to run to Jesus...
 - In the end what satan meant to destroy the church – instead made it STRONGER!
 - Satan is NOT creative - he has been doing the same things for THOUSANDS of years...
 - We have TWO options when he comes knocking at our door...
 - We can allow ourselves to be distracted by his tactics – giving him the victory...
 - Or we can ask Jesus to answer the door – and watch satan run away!
 - **II Corinthians 2:11** – “Satan will not outsmart us. We are very familiar with his evil schemes.” [NLT]

● 2ND - MANY HANDS... vs. 2-4

- o 1st - Teaching and Prayer... vs. 2
 - The Apostles...
 - Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said:
 - It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables!
 - The TWELVE [οἱ δώδεκα] - only time in Acts this title is used for the APOSTLES...
 - CALLED [προσκαλέω] the many DISCIPLES [μαθητῆς] within the church...
 - And told them it would NOT [Οὐ] be pleasing [present] to the Lord...
 - If they LEFT the teaching of the Word of God - to serve [present] tables!
 - I love to sweat – let me swing a hammer – let me sweep the floor...
 - The problem is if a pastor spends ALL day making the church look nice – NO time to study...
 - Come Sunday morning the message would be VERY short - and NOT very good!
 - The number ONE responsibility for a PASTOR is to teach the WORD and PRAY...
 - A pastor must TEACH the word so that people can KNOW Jesus...
 - A pastor must PRAY so that he knows where the LORD is leading His church!
 - Still Servants...
 - I Corinthians 4:1 – “[We are] servants... who have been put in charge of explaining Gods secrets.” [NLT]
 - Being in CHARGE does NOT mean a PASTOR should NOT serve...
 - Just the opposite - PASTORS are called to be SERVANTS...
 - SERVANTS [ὑπηρέτης] - the word means the UNDER rower!
 - In a roman ship - the SERVANTS [ὑπηρέτης] were the ones under the deck...
 - They made sure the ship moved forward - but they were NEVER seen [no glory]!
 - Pastors are FIRST and foremost to be SERVANTS – they are the EXAMPLE for the church...
 - They should be the FIRST one to pick up the broom - the FIRST to clean the toilet...
 - But there needs to be a BALANCE – they cannot allow those things to take ALL their time...
 - Because they also need to study the Word – and PRAY so they can be led by the Lord!
- o 2nd - Two roles... vs. 3-4
 - Deacon...
 - [Seek out seven men] whom we may appoint over this business!
 - In order to have the time to study and teach the WORD of God and PRAYER...
 - But still be able to take care of the PRACTICAL needs within the church...
 - There needed to be others RAISED up to HELP out...
 - So the Apostles established TWO leadership roles within the church...
 - FIRST - there are DEACONS who take care of the PRACTICAL needs...
 - DEACONS [διάκονος] - the word means SERVANT!
 - While we may NOT use the title much within the church today...
 - The role describes those who are taking care of the DAILY needs of the church...
 - Setting up for services - repairing the facility - picking up the trash...
 - Greeting the people [usher] - being a part of the worship team!
 - Pastor...
 - We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word!
 - SECOND - are the PASTORS who take of the SPIRITUAL needs of the church...
 - Those who are DEVOTED to teaching the WORD and PRAYER!
 - STUDYING so they are prepared to TEACH and FEED the people...
 - PRAYING for guidance for the church - and for those who are in need...
 - Giving Biblical counsel to those who looking for Godly answers!
 - God of order...
 - Imagine if there was no ORGANIZATION within the church...

- There was NO one leading – and NO one was overseeing the practical needs...
- We would walk in on a Sunday morning - and NO chairs would be set up...
- There would be NO snacks - NO toilet paper in the bathroom...
- NO one would know who would be speaking - or WHAT they were going to be talking about...
- It would be chaos - and ministry cannot happen effectively in chaos!
- **I Corinthians 14:33** - “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace... But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.”

• 3RD - THE QUALIFICATIONS... vs. 3

o 1st - From the church... vs. 3

- Seeking...
 - Therefore brethren - seek out!
 - Since God does not work in CHAOS - and there was a need for more people to HELP...
 - THEREFORE [οὕτως] - the church was to SEEK others who were willing to SERVE...
 - SEEK - upon [ἐπὶ] close examination [σκοπός]
 - NOTE - it was NOT the apostles who were to CHOOSE - it the CHURCH...
 - The DISCIPLES were called to EXAMINE and see who among them was CALLED to SERVE...
 - But they were given FIVE characteristics to look for!
- Among you...
 - From among you!
 - FIRST - a SERVANT is to be from within the CHURCH...
 - Because how could they EXAMINE [σκοπός] the person if they were from the OUTSIDE!
 - Too often churches today when there is a NEED - they ask for applications [résumés]
 - But God raises up SERVANT for the church from WITHIN...
 - All we need to do is look at how God is using someone - where is the FRUIT!

o 2nd - Seven men... vs. 3

- Not just men...
 - Seven men!
 - SECOND - the SERVANTS were to be MEN [ἄνδρας]
 - The number SEVEN is commonly used in the Bible to represent completion - **Genesis 2:1-2**
 - The idea being that once the church had DEACONS - the leadership would be COMPLETE!
 - It is important to NOTE - this does that mean WOMEN cannot SERVE...
 - Phoebe is called a DEACONESS [διάκονον] in the Church of Rome - **Romans 16:1-2**
 - The example of Phoebe shows that women CAN also be DEACONS in the church!
- Except pastors...
 - **I Timothy 2:12** - “I do not permit a woman to teach - or have authority over a man.”
 - The ONE exception is WOMEN cannot TEACH or have AUTHORITY over men in the church...
 - To understand WHY we need to answer FOUR questions...
 - FIRST – is this written to WOMEN [γυνή] or WIVES [same word in Greek]
 - The answer is WOMEN - because marriage is NOT mentioned in I Timothy...
 - The whole context of the book is how a CHURCH should operate!
- Authority...
 - SECOND – what does it mean to NOT be allowed to TEACH or have AUTHORITY...
 - Most churches define this as being the role of a PASTOR [title]
 - But women can TEACH and have AUTHORITY over women and children!
- Cultural...
 - THIRD – many churches argue this is cultural [only for the times of the New Testament]
 - This is VERY dangerous – it allows us to reject anything we do NOT like in the Bible...

- It makes the Word subject to our opinion – negating its authority!
- Example
 - FOURTH – some argue this means women seem LESS than men...
 - Pointing out that Eve was deceived and NOT Adam - **I Timothy 2:14**
 - But ask any HUSBAND who is SMARTER - and almost all of them will point to their WIFE...
 - And the Bible has NO problem with women leading OUTSIDE the church [Deborah] - **Judges 4**
 - So since women are at least equal in capability - why does God give this command!
 - **Men are called to LEAD in their homes – Ephesians 6:4**
 - **Therefore God sets MEN as an example within the church** [encourage men to lead at home]
 - **But we are all EQUAL before God - all of us are saved by the same GRACE - Galatians 3:28**
- o 3rd - Good reputation... vs. 3
 - **Of good reputation!**
 - THIRD - a SERVANT has to have [passive] a GOOD witness [μαρτυρέω]!
 - **People do NOT see the Lord - but they do listen to and follow SERVANTS in the church...**
 - **If a SERVANT [deacon] is having a bad day - people might mistakenly think God is too...**
 - **That is why they will receive greater judgment - because of their influence on others...**
 - **Therefore SERVANTS must have a good WITNESS [μαρτυρέω] - people are watching!**
- o 4th - Full of the Spirit... vs. 3
 - **Full of the Holy Spirit!**
 - FOURTH - a SERVANT has to be FULL of the HOLY [ἅγιος] Spirit...
 - This might come as a SURPRISE - but we must be filled with the SPIRIT to take out the TRASH...
 - But it ties back into the previous requirement - having a GOOD reputation...
 - The ONLY way we will have a GOOD witness - is if we are FULL of the SPIRIT!
 - **How much is a CLAY pot worth - a few hundred pesos...**
 - **Fill that POT with DIRT - and it becomes worth - less [dirty pot]**
 - **Fill that POT with GOLD - and suddenly it becomes PRICELESS - because of what is in it!**
 - **II Corinthians 4:7 - “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.”**
 - **We are just CLAY pots - the question is what do we have inside of us...**
 - **Are we FULL of ourselves [worthless] – or FILLED with of the Spirit [priceless]**
 - **If we are FULL of ourselves - we are NOT going to be a good WITNESS...**
 - **But if we are FILLED with the Spirit - we are going to be an incredible WITNESS for God!**
- o 5th - Full of wisdom... vs. 3
 - **And wisdom!**
 - FIFTH - a SERVANT is to have WISDOM [σοφία]
 - The problem is there are TWO sources of WISDOM in this life - ABOVE and BELOW...
 - WISDOM from BELOW [earthly] is focused on the things of this life...
 - Believing that the more EDUCATION - more MONEY - more POSSESSIONS we have the better...
 - But in contrast WISDOM from ABOVE [heaven] is focused on being HOLY [ἅγιος]!
 - **James 3:15-17 - “Wisdom [that] does not descend from above [is] earthly... but the wisdom that is from above is first [holy].”**
 - **Put all FIVE qualifications together and we get a good PICTURE of who is called to SERVE...**
 - **SERVANTS need to come out of the church - so we can see [σκοπός] their FRUIT...**
 - **FULL of the HOLY Spirit - who gives them WISDOM [σοφία] - SETS them apart [holy] for God...**
 - **So they can have a GOOD witness [μαρτυρέω] - and therefore be a GOOD example for the church!**
- 4TH - CALLED TO SERVE... vs. 5-7
 - o 1st - Seven men... vs. 5
 - Good solution...

- The saying pleased the whole multitude!
- The instructions [ὁ λόγος] of the TWELVE pleased the WHOLE [πᾶς] church...
- Because it was NOT their idea - it came from the WORD [ὁ λόγος]
- What could have been a DISASTER - division because of DIFFERENCES in the church...
- Instead became an OPPORTUNITY for the church to raise up new SERVANTS!
- Steven and Philip...
 - They chose Stephen -a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit!
 - Their FIRST two choices were STEVEN [Στέφανος] - his name mean CROWN [στέφανος]
 - He had the REPUTATION of being FULL [adjective] of FAITH [πίστις]
 - And as a RESULT - he was also FULL of the HOLY Spirit...
 - He would become the first MARTYR of the church because of his WITNESS - **Acts 6-7**
 - Philip - [Φίλιππος] - lover of horses - became the only man called an EVANGELIST - **Acts 21:8**
 - Because he would bring the Gospel to Samaria - and a Eunuch - **Acts 8**
- Five others...
 - Prochorus [Πρόχορος] - towards [πρό] the chorus [χορός] - perhaps the worship leader
 - Nicanor [Νικάνωρ] - whose name means VICTORIOUS [νικάω]
 - Timon [Τίμων] - whose name means HONORABLE [τιμή]
 - Parmenas [Παρμενᾶς] - whose names mean to [παρά] ABIDE [μένω]
 - Nicolas a proselyte from Antioch [Νικόλαος] - victory [νικάω] for the people [λαός]
 - Although all FIVE of these men are ONLY mentioned here in the Bible...
 - Their names give us some insight into their CHARACTER...
 - Men who WORSHIP - are VICTORIOUS - ABIDE - and are HONORABLE...
 - And do NOT miss - they were NOT just JEWS - Nicolas was a Gentile [proselyte]!
 - When the CHURCH choses men whom the SEE [σκοπός] have a GOOD witness..
 - They end up with SERVANTS who have a GREAT character...
 - And they are DIVERSE - people who come from EVERY walk of life!
- o 2nd - Anointed... vs. 6
 - Laying Hands...
 - Whom they set before the apostles - and when they had prayed - they laid hands on them!
 - When the SEVEN men the CHURCH had chosen were set before the APOSTLES...
 - They LAID hands [indicative] on them - PRAYING [participle] for them...
 - FIRST time in the Bible we see LAYING on of hands to recognize a CALLING...
 - The purpose was to identify the deacons with the Apostles...
 - Showing the church they had been given the AUTHORITY to be a part of the ministry!
 - Calling of God...
 - It was not to APPOINT - they had been serving BEFORE they laid hands on them...
 - The laying on of hands was to CONFIRM the work God was already doing!
 - Laying hands on someone does not make them a SERVANT...
 - We should ONLY be laying hands on people who are ALREADY doing the work...
 - We laid hands on them to RECOGNIZE [confirm] as a body that they are CALLED!
 - **I Timothy 5:22** - "Do not lay hands on anyone hastily."
- o 3rd - Multiplication... vs. 7
 - Word spread...
 - Then the word of God spread. The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem!
 - As a RESULT of there being new SERVANTS in the church...
 - It gave TIME for the APOSTLES to STUDY the WORD and TEACH...
 - Therefore - the WORD of God continued [imperfect] to SPREAD [αὐξάνω]
 - **Romans 10:17** - "Faith comes by hearing... the word of God."

- Even priests...
 - A great many of the priests were obedient to the faith!
 - MANY of the priests LISTENED [ὑπακούω] and OBEYED [imperfect] the FAITH...
 - The people who had ARRESTED the APOSTLES - **Acts 4:1**
 - Were now coming to put their FAITH in Jesus!
 - When the disciples ran to Jesus after being PERSECUTED – the church GREW – **Acts 4:4**
 - When the believers refused to COMPROMISE - the Lord ADDED to the church – **Acts 5:14**
 - But because of being able to focus on the WORD – the DISCIPLES [μαθητῆς] MULTIPLIED!
 - There is nothing quite as wonderful as seeing people step up and help in ministry...
 - There is only so much that ONE man can do - so many hours in ONE day...
 - But as people step up to help out - the work of the ministry EXPANDS...
 - God rarely does a work through just one person - God uses an army!