**Servants Are Chosen**

**Introduction:**

The church of our Lord was growing rapidly. Rapid growth meant more people. More people meant the greater possibility for problems to arise. But wise leaders responded to these problems in a timely and effective manner.

**Text:** Acts 6:1-15

**Body:**

1. **Seven Servants Selected** (Verses 1-7)

**Verse 1** Acts 6:1 “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” NKJV By this time, the early church possibly had 20,000 to 30,000 Christians. They were called disciples – learners, followers. With this many believers, it was easy for some to fall through the cracks. Church at this time consisted of native Jews who spoke Aramaic and Hellenistic Jews who spoke Greek. This latter group had come from outside Israel and been converted. Some widows [Hellenistic] were being neglected in the daily serving of fool. Provisions were made for the needy. (Acts 4:34-35) “Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. NKJV This neglect or oversight could threaten the unity of the church. Something needed to be done!

**Verse 2** Acts 6:2 “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.’ ” NKJV The apostles acted quickly. To delay could be disastrous. They showed sensitivity and wisdom by calling all the disciples together. The apostles did not have time to distribute the food themselves because their primary purpose and function was teaching and preaching.

**Verse 3** Acts 6:3 “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;” NKJV The apostles wanted the congregation to do the choosing of seven men. Seven were needed to do the job of distributing to those of need. They were to select seven men for a specific task. The seven chosen were to possess certain qualifications – spiritual in nature. They were to have a good reputation, to be men of good standing. “Good character is more to be praised than outstanding talent.” John Luther These men were to be full of the Spirit, spiritually mature, followers of the Holy Spirit’s teaching. They were to be full of wisdom, good judgment, practical, and could be trusted to get the job done.

**Verse 4** Acts 6:4 “but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” NKJV The apostles realized both tasks were important: meeting physical needs and meeting spiritual needs. (Matthew 25:34-35) “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;’ ” NKJV They understood the need to delegate duties so all the needs of the disciples would be met. There are no little [unimportant] jobs in the church. (Matthew 10:42) “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” NKJV Each member is vital. (I Corinthians 12:18-19, 27) “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” NKJV

**Verse 5** Acts 6:5 “And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.” NKJV The whole group liked the idea! Seven men were chosen but no details about the process are given.

**Verse 6** Acts 6:6 “whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.” NKJV A ceremony was needed to show the seriousness of the task. Laying on of hands was a way to set apart someone for a special service.

(Acts 13:2-3) “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.” NKJV They were possible given miraculous powers now. (I Timothy 4:14) “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” NKJV

**Verse 7** Acts 6:7 “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” NKJV The Word of God spread like ripples in a pond. The number of disciples greatly increased including many priests. Priests served in the temple two weeks out of every year. It is estimated that there were possible 18,000 priests at this time. Note: One becomes a disciple by being obedient to the faith – the body of teaching. (Jude 3) “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” NKJV

1. **One Servant Arrested** (Verses 8-15) **Verse 8** Acts 6:8 “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.” NKJV One of the seven men, Stephen, is now described as one who performed miracles among the people. His name, Stephanos, means “crown of victory.” (Revelation2:10) “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” NKJV Obviously he had a powerful and influential ministry.He was filled with God’s favor. **Verses 9-10** Acts 6:9-10 “Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.” NKJVStephen did more than serve tables. He went into synagogues with the Good News. “Freedmen” were those freed from slavery. His message angered some. He possible taught that one could not be saved anymore by following the Law of Moses. But Stephen stood his ground. He was speaking the truth and it could not be defeated. (Luke 21:14-15) “Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.” NKJV **Verses 11-12** Acts 6:11-12 “Then they secretly induced men to say, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’ And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.” NKJV They could not silence him with words so they looked for another way. They used “underhanded” methods and claimed that Stephen spoke contemptuously of God and divine things. He defamed God. This was similar to what was done to Jesus. (Matthew 26:59) “Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death.” NKJV The accusations worked! He was seized and taken before the Sanhedrin. **Verses 13-14** Acts 6:13-14 “They also set up false witnesses who said, ‘This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.’ ” NKJV Stephen’s words were twisted and misrepresented. Jesus had spoken against the Jewish traditions but not the Law of Moses. (Matthew 15:3) “He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?’ ” NKJV He had also said that the temple would be destroyed, (Matthew 24:1-2) “Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’ ” NKJV but not that He would destroy it. **Verse 15** Acts 6:15 “And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.” NKJV Everyone turned to see Stephen’s reaction. He knew he was innocent and he was not at all intimidated. Rather his face reflected the glory of God.

**Conclusion:**

All churches experience problems, but following God’s Word can solve them. The church needs servants of all kinds to do the work of the church. Sometimes this work brings persecution.

Bobby Stafford August 9, 2015 [Evening] Acts: Lesson 18 Acts 6:1-15