

## The Reality of Complaints and the Importance of the Word, Prayer and Serving

Acts 6:1-7 “Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” <sup>5</sup> And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup> These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

### ❖ Intro



### ❖ Recap



### ❖ Complaints Will Continue to Arise in the Church

- a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

#### ➤ Happened Then

- **Christians from different cultures...**
  - Although the church at this time was primarily Jewish...
  - There were different groups
- **Hellenists were Greek speaking Jews...**
  - They likely had been part of the dispersion of the Jewish people
  - They were scattered throughout the greek and roman empires
- **And they were back in Jerusalem...**
  - And they spoke and though like greek speaking people...
  - There was a large number of them
- **There were also Hebrews... Armaic speaking Jews...**
  - And the complaint is against them...
- **The Hellenist Widows were being neglected...**
  - Why?
  - Why is not as important as is the complaint and the solution
    - ◆ But it likely had to do with the language and cultural barrier b/w the two types of Christians
    - ◆ So there was a big problem
- **The Church wanted to care for the needy**
  - So, this issue was a big one...
  - Because they wanted to provide for their own
- **This problem could have blew up in the face of the church...**
  - It could have caused a rift between the Christians...
  - The church could have split into the Hellenistic Church and the Hebrew Church...
- **And it would have likely been a terrible witness to the world...**
  - If the church that God is working signs through can not get along...
  - Many would have thought negatively about them...

#### ➤ Happens Now

- Complaints happen all the time in the church... in all churches
  - I get multiple complaints throughout each month...
- **Complaints are not Necessarily Bad**
  - **This was a good complaint...**
    - Their were widows being neglected...
    - So they were going without... and that was not good
  - **There are many good complaints...**
    - Like... We need more space... more room to teach the people we have...
    - That is a good complaint...
  - **Anytime, there is something that needs to be done...**
    - It is a good thing to say something about it...
  - **This does not mean we should look around the church**
    - For all the things we should be doing better, and start complaining
    - Don't be that person that wants a thousand programs and ministries
    - But is not willing to lead it, not willing to serve in it, not willing to give towards it
  - **This has occurred to me so many times...**
    - And I know, they are complaining about me...
    - And I am too nice to say... Well... that sounds like a great ministry opp for you...
  - **But, if there is a problem in the church...**
    - Let the right people know...
- **How Should We Complain? (By taking the complaint to the right persons)**
  - **Nothing is more destructive and frustrating in the church**
    - Than for people to be complaining to the wrong people
    - I say this from vast experience...
    - **Getting on the phone and complaining about this person or that person**
      - ◆ That is divisive...
      - ◆ That is cowardly
      - ◆ That is division
    - **That causes division b/w people people that should not be divided...**
      - ◆ And I get into a lot of trouble when I hear complaints
        - And I try to go right to the source...
        - And one person or another does not want the other person to know they were complaining
          - Then do not complain in the first place.
        - **If you are not ready to confront a person about with a complaint...**
          - Do not open your mouth to your friend...
          - It is not edifying to do it this way...
    - **Scriptures Teach us to Edify:**
      - ◆ 1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."
      - ◆ Ephesians 4:29 <sup>"29"</sup> "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."
  - **The Hellenists took the problem to the right people**
    - The twelve.
    - They had a problem and they took it to the leaders...
    - **And that is where it should be taken...**

- ◆ Not from cell phone to cell phone
- ◆ Until everyone is up in arms about it...

➤ **On a Very Personal Note...**

- **If you have a complaint for me, or another leader in the church**
  - Bring it to us... Please do not bring it to our wives...
  - There is no need to give it to them, so they can fix us
- **We have handled many complaints...**
  - Will not be our first, or our last...
  - No need in upsetting our wives with negative things you could bring to us...
  - That is very destructive for the relationship b/w a Pastor and his wife
  - Or an elder and his wife
  - Or a S.S. teacher and their wife/spouse

➤ **Remember:**

- Take the Complaint to the Right place...
- Sometimes that is a person... Sometimes that is directly to the Lord

❖ **The Importance of The Word and Prayer**

- <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.
- <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

➤ **It is not proper that we should leave behind or leave undone**

- The Preaching of the Word... or of the Gospel
- To serve... To minister to tables,

➤ **For The Apostles...**

- They saw it as a bad idea to forsake their calling, their role within the church
- To take care of other very important parts...

➤ **Taking care of believing widows is a God commanded job...**

- And the apostles would have been seen as kind and compassionate and caring
- And the church should take care of their own...
- James tells us
  - James 1:27 <sup>27</sup> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.
- So it is a good thing...
  - But...

➤ **There are Different Body Parts in the Church Body**

- Everyone can not do everything.
- **Not everyone is called to Pastor, or to be an elder**
  - S.S. Teacher, Finance Team Member, Awana Servant...
- **It would be mass chaos if everyone was expected to do everything...**
  - Paul Reminds us in 1 Cor that the body has many parts
  - And they are all important... the eye, the ear, etc... All important
  - There is no greater honor in being a pastor as there is for serving in any other God led way in the Church
    - ◆ All the honor comes from God
    - ◆ Sometimes we who receive honor from men
    - ◆ Will receive less from God
  - **God will honor those who are faithful to what He called them to**
    - ◆ And I find myself lacking in many areas

- **1) Some are Called to the Ministry of the Word and Prayer**
  - And that was the calling of the apostles...
  - And it was extremely important as you will see again
- **These Men...**
  - Should be allowed to fulfill their calling to God
  - It is good for the Church of God
  - It is good for the people in the church
  - It is glorifying to God
- **What was at stake?**
  - Preaching the Word
  - They were called to preach the Word of God..
    - And that took and still takes a bunch of time in Prayer and in the Word
    - So
- **They Decided they would devote themselves to Prayer and Ministry of the Word**
  - Preachers of the Word do not just repeat a bunch of facts...
    - They do not just explain what is going on in the Bible.
      - ◆ They have to Read the Text
      - ◆ They Have to Explain the Text
      - ◆ They have to Apply the Text
  - **So it takes a lot of preparation and prayer**
    - Every crowd is different...
    - So God may want you to make a point of certain areas for one group
    - And the application is different for some people
  - **The Word of God is living**
    - And it can be applied to the believer of 30 years
    - And the unbeliever with a hard heart
    - Or even the young child
- **Study is important**
  - When I was in Seminary... I was encouraged to spend an hour studying
    - For every minute I was going to preach...
    - I am assuming these guys did not preach that long,
    - Because that is difficult...
  - But I have found it to be true that I need at least 30 min of studying per minute of sermon
- **They were called to the ministry of the Word and Prayer**
- **The Word**
  - **Paul instructs Timothy**
    - 2 Timothy 4:2 **“<sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”**
  - **Again he tells him to be in the word**
    - 2 Tim 2:15 **“<sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”**
  - These guys needed time in the word
  - **Scriptures Teach us that those who are called to that should be taken care of by the church**
    - 1 Timothy 5: **<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup> For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”**
    - **Twice Paul has said this... Once in Corinthians and He got it from Deuteronomy**
      - ◆ So the lesson is to make sure wherever you serve now or in the future

- ◆ That those who labor in teaching and preaching
- ◆ Are taken care of
- **When Paul mentioned it first in 1 Corinthians... He goes on to say**
  - ◆ 1 Corinthians 9:14<sup>14</sup> In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.
- **In the same way serving Tables was going to hinder the Apostles time in the Word and Prayer**
  - Those that make their living by the gospel
  - Because God has called them to it...
  - Should never worry for money...
- **Paul taught this:**
  - Yet at the same time... He went without
  - He told them, He was not going to make use of His rights to this...
  - He wanted nothing to hinder or put in obstacle in the way of the gospel
  - So, He built tents...
- **Nonetheless...**
  - The church is called by God to take good care of their pastors
  - And honestly... it is usually better for the church
  - **Because... They need time to devote themselves to the Ministry of the Word and prayer**

#### ➤ **Prayer**

- **Paul Made a habit to not only pray for himself and what He would say**
  - He prayed for the people he had helped reach
    - ◆ You read of him saying how much he prays for them
- **The Holy Spirit instructs us through Paul**
  - Eph 6 to be praying at all times
  - Again in Thesselonians we are instructed to: Pray without ceasing
- **Jesus taught us the importance of prayer**
  - Mark 1:35<sup>35</sup> And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.
- **Prayer was so important to the disciples**
  - Because it was their life line to Jesus
  - It was their way of communicating to God
  - And having Him communicate back to them...
  - Prayer was how they begged God for the souls of the men they were preaching to
- **These guys needed time to pray**

#### ❖ **The Leaders Delegated Responsibility**

- <sup>3</sup>Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men.... <sup>5</sup>And what they said pleased the whole gathering,

#### ➤ **Delegation was key in the early church**

- It is not up to the main leaders to do everything in the church

#### ➤ **Moses went through this in the wilderness...**

- His father in law helped him learn to delegate better

#### ❖ **The Importance of Serving Tables**

- <sup>3</sup>Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.

#### ➤ **So Important, that the best men were appointed to it**

- Qualities of Leadership

- Men
- Good Repute – people speak well of... have a good reputation
- Full of the Spirit – these guys lives demonstrated they had been filled with the Spirit
- Full of Wisdom – they were wise... filled with rational thought

➤ **What Kind of Men were These Guys?**

- Stephen
  - Stephen was an evangelists
  - Preached and taught and died because of it
- Philip
  - Philip was out on the road reaching people for Jesus
  - Ethiopian Eunuch

➤ **The Importance of Serving was demonstrated to us by Jesus**

- **Mark 9:35<sup>35</sup> And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.**
- Jesus got down on His knees and washed his disciples feet...
  - He served them... and gave himself to them
  - And we are called to do the same thing

➤ **These men were not just people that served a few people by handing out food**

- They understood the importance of a balanced Christian walk
- They helped people with their physical needs
- And they helped people with their spiritual needs...

➤ **Please Notice:**

- No where in this text does it say:
  - The disciples did not serve tables
  - Or that these new leaders only served tables
- We know from numerous places how much of a servant all of these guys were
  - But we also see how important it was for them to reach the lost
- Therefore...
  - Do not pigeon hole yourself into one thing only within the church...
  - And say... ill clean the bathroom
  - And I am not responsible for telling my friends about Jesus...

❖ **The Work of the Church Continues to be Reaching the Lost**

- **<sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.**

➤ **In all the things that went on...**

- The work of reaching unbelievers was continuing...
- Nothing was getting in the way of that

➤ **Satan had tried a number of things**

- Tried to scare them
- Tried to arrest them
- Tried to beat it out of them
- Tried to cause sin to grow among them with Annanias and Saphira
- Tried to sow discord among them when it came to meeting needs of the widows

➤ **When things were put in their proper order...**

- The work of the Lord continued...
- The apostles being freed up from making sure widows got what they needed...
- Gave them more time to give themselves to preaching the gospel

➤ **Connection b/w the apostles devotion to the Word and disciples multiplying**

- See verse 2 and 4 and now verse 7

❖ **Our Church Needs to See the Connection**

- 1) The Ministry of the Word and Prayer Are of Utmost Importance
- 2) The Ministry of Meeting Needs is of the Utmost Importance
- 3) The Reaching of the Lost is the Goal

➤ **Invitation**

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