

Acts 6:1-7 Distraction Avoided

In the last few chapters of Acts we have started to see some possible barriers to the Unstoppable message of Jesus. We've seen outward, persecution, inward corruption now we have another internal problem.

In the thick of the trouble we are to see God in the trouble of the early church.

1. Let the Good times role

Read: 1

These are GOOD TIMES. The disciples are still 'increasing'. The message is still having an impact and turning around lives to Jesus.

The Church is abounding. There New Christians everywhere. The growth isn't a result of transfer growth. New lives being won for Christ. The church is all about 'NEWCOMERS' ministry. This is the biggest and most vital ministry in the church.

It is these days the troubles comes.

2. Troubles in the good times

Read: 1

There always trouble on the inside. The Greek word for 'Complaint' or grumbling is *Gosgusmos*.

God's people have complained right from the beginning. As soon as God's had been saved from slavery to Egypt they began to complaint about God's provision. The complaint is about their situation. The complaint is to the leaders. Thier grumbling is condemned because it is a grumble against God.

What have you got to complain about?

This is life in a church. This is life in any church. This is life in our church.

When I wake up in the morning often the first thing I do is to grumble. Saying something like I had a terrible sleep. It is a habit we all get into.

Not all of you but at least some of you had complained about church recently. Was it a complaint because of something you didn't like? *Wasn't something which was hindering us reaching new people?*

This is criteria we must use.

Coming to Jesus causes us to give up. To SACRIFICE. Sacrifice our needs – wants – desires, having things done my way. It causes us to forget about ourselves especially when we're neglected, rejected, left out. We give up what we think we SHOULD have. Attention, care, pandering to, being listened to, opinions noticed and acted upon. We give all that up.

When we complain we are saying there is something I don't have that I should have. We can continue down that path and keep seeing all the things we don't have. Or we can turn that into seeing what we do have.

This is what Tim Chester says in his book "The Ordinary Hero."

"Our culture expects so much as a right and complains bitterly when life doesn't deliver. Health. Entertainment. Good looks. Education. Work. Prosperity. Holidays. Sex. We expect to be cured. We want cosmetic surgery. Every child should get good grades. Every tragedy should be averted. Someone should give me a job. If I can't afford something, then I'll get it on credit. I deserve it. I need it. I have right to it.

Here's what we have a right to: hell. Anything else is a bonus. So accept health and partial health, prosperity and making do, work and social benefits, holidays and days at home, as good, gracious, undeserved gifts from God. Enjoy them. Don't moan about what you haven't got. Enjoy all that God has given. You don't have deserve it. You deserve hell. Life on earth is a bonus. Life in the new earth will be heaven!"

We need to get to the point of knowing that we have ALL WE NEED is JESUS. We are so convicted of our weakness, helplessness, emptiness because of sin that we need Jesus power, help and joy.

If you are not at that point – PRAY to God and ask him to help you KNOW with all your heart, mind and soul that Jesus is everything you need. Pray it every day.

Human nature is also seen in the form of factions in Acts 6 as well. Human nature that causes to create categories along all sorts of lines. So even in the church where there is unity of Christ we bring in our differences and emphasise them and so create groups. We like this music but you like another kind. We been coming for a while and you are new. What little category are you harbouring in your heart that causes you to be distant from others in church?

Narrowmindedness, double mindedness and small mindedness hinder the unity and so slows down the progress of the Gospel.

We must keep our hearts and minds fixed on Jesus and not get distracted.

Outward persecution, internal corruption and inward navel gazing too distract are Satan's strategies to stop the message going out.

3. The solution

Read: 2-4

The Apostles don't operate in a knee jerk way. They don't see this as a crisis in which they drop everything to give this presenting real need all their attention. They have a proposal for the church to choose 7 men to look after this. Choose certain men that meet the requirements. They must be full of the Spirit and wisdom. They are to be spiritual and practical minded. No degree in social work. Or experience in the area.

Notice from which 2 groups the actual come from. By the Greek names of the men who are chosen we can see they are appointed from the group where the complaint came from. Where the problem came from is where the solution came from. When you see a problem do you see yourself as a possible solution to the problem?

"Church disunity always has the potential to slow down the flow of the gospel, as a fractured church is rarely missionary in focus and evangelistic in orientation." David Cook

Why did the Apostles choose to get this problem sorted out?

4. The main thing must remain the main

Read: v.2

The act on the principle that it would NOT be RIGHT to neglect the word of God.

It is the difference between the Best and the good.

Look at v.4

They operate on principle. We have a job and we need to stick to that.

A need does not constitute a call. Just because there is a need doesn't mean I am the one to meet that need.

They are both important jobs indicated by the fact they are both referred to as 'Diakonia' or service. Both are serving. Serving practical needs. Serving up food or serving up the Word.

But the Word of God must keep going out and it is the power of God for salvation.

This is what Martin Luther said:

"It is not in my power or hand to fashion the hearts of men as the potter moulds the clay and fashions them at his pleasure. I can get no farther than their ears; their hearts I cannot reach... That is God's work alone, who causes faith to live in the heart. Therefore we should give free course to the word and not add our works to it... I simply taught, preached and wrote God's word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept, or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends... the word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing, the word did everything."

A very helpful to help you think through these issues of ministry in the church is the 'The Trellis and the Vine' by Colin Marshall.

If we operate with the principle of the Apostles we will save pastor from an idolatrous ministry and a distracted ministry.

Dad's a word to you as Pastors. The primary calling you have. The primary service you have been given is to pastor your family. To not just serve up the pay cheque as if at the end of the working day your job is done. No you are firstly called to serve up the Word.

As one church historian said:- "The main thing is that the main thing remains the main thing."

Read this book that will help you see your calling and commitment –'Fatherhood' by Tony Payne.

5. State: Results

Read it: v.7

The word cannot spread if the ministry of the word is neglected. Pastors and people need to learn this lesson. Pastors are not Apostles but they are responsible to proclaim and expound the message the Apostles gave us. Pastors get distracted by admin and other things. Go and ask your pastor how you can help be focused on the ministry of the Word?

The consequences are disastrous if they don't. But look. Even priests are turning to Jesus. The priests who came from the group who had been used by Satan to attack the Apostles.

Do you want v.1 and v.7?

Do you want people to come to know Jesus?

Do you want to grow in your relationship with Jesus?

This happens through the preaching of the Word.

6. God is in the troubles and good times

God is in this. Of course he is.

Look at all these phrases:- "Disciples increasing", "daily distribution of food", "ministry of the word of God", "men full of the Spirit and wisdom", "give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word", "man full of faith and the holy Spirit", "prayed and laid their hands on them", "word of God spread", "number increased rapidly", "priests became obedient".

The Apostles recognise their weakness, helplessness and so their need of God. We see that is the fact they pray. So we need to also see that we need something outside of ourselves. The hope of held out in the Bible is that we do have someone – GOD in JESUS.