

Acts 6

Acts 4: 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid [*them*] down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Acts 5: 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.

Results of the second arrest

Acts 5:40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten [*them*], they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

Now in Acts 6:1-7 a more serious problem – division - springs up from within the fellowship. There is no more effective way to kill a Church than partisan sectarian division, a divided Church is powerless. Does the Gospel have the power within itself to heal the wound? Luke intends for his reader to see the Church using the Gospel power of the risen Christ to cure this cancer of division.

Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

“...when the number of the disciples was multiplied ...” before the disciples were spoken of being first individually added Acts 2:47, then in 5:14 “believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” Now in 6:1 great growth is spoken of as “... the disciples was multiplied.”

The very liberality of the believers in their giving aroused cultural loyalties. As the Church meet the food needs of helpless widows, one group one group the Hellenistic Jews was regularly, habitually, repeatedly and intentionally overlooked. Another group the Hebrew Jews was attentively cared for. If one group was neglected only once, it might be accidental. But it was an repeated affair, it was obviously intentional. This is not racial discrimination, they were all Jews. The division was along cultural lines according to where they were born.

“There arose a murmuring of the Grecians ...” “The Grecians” were not Greeks, or Gentiles, but foreign Jews, who were born and brought up out of Palestine, and

spoke the Greek language. This class of Jews was found in almost every city where Paul preached. Cf: Acts 13:14-16. The Hebrews were Jews of the land of Israel only. They held themselves superior to the foreign Jews, and something of this “puffed up” spirit showed itself in the church. The Grecian widows were neglected “...in the daily ministrations.” Which is feeding, the primitive Church fed the poor and widows. “ministrations” is from the Greek diakonia (dee-ak-on-EE-ah) give attendance to, charitable, official service of a Christian teacher, servant and steward of the Lord’s body the Church.

There was “distribution to all men, as every man had need,” not to those who did not need, but to the needy, and the dependent widows would especially need care.

Acts 6:2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples [*unto them*], and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

“Then the twelve ...” This language shows beyond doubt that Matthias who was appointed as an Apostle to fill Judas’ place in 1:26 was recognized as an apostle.

“... Called the multitude ...” The masses or the whole congregation of the church. “And said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables ...” here we see the proper work of Deacons to oversee and do the work of servants including acting as lowly ordinary waiters serving food to the needy, poor, hungry especially widows as stated here: to “serve tables”.

The apostles should not give their time to these matters instead of preaching and they should not have to look after the distribution of food.

Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you ...” The apostles gave guidance to the choice by describing the kind of men that must be chosen ... we have that same guidance today in the New Testament.

“Seven men ...” Why seven is only a matter of conjecture.

“of honest report ...” Men whose reputation was a guarantee that they would handle the trust faithfully.

“Full of the Holy Ghost ...” Whose lives indicated the fruit of the Spirit.

“of wisdom ...” Prudence and sound judgment would be essential.

“Whom we may appoint over this business.” Or as we might say today ordain to

this work. The 7 brethren were selected under apostles direction and the apostle inaugurated them into their office.

Acts 6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer ...” Observe that the apostles regarded prayer of equal importance with preaching.

Every preacher including me ought to give more heed this injunction.

Acts 6:5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus (PROKH-or-os), and Nicanor (Nik-AN-ore), and Timon (TEE-mone), and Parmenas (Par-men-os), and Nicolas (Nik-OL-ahs) a proselyte of Antioch:

“ ... and they chose Stephen” He is specially described on account of the glory of his martyrdom that so soon followed.

“Philip” is distinguished as "Philip the evangelist." He will soon preach the gospel to Samaria, convert the eunuch, and afterwards lived and labored at Cæsarea (Acts 21:8). The others are not again mentioned in the Bible.

“Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch” ... a Gentile (Greek) of the great city of Antioch, who had been converted to Judaism and had been circumcised. This is the meaning of "proselyte" in the New Testament.

Acts 6:6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid [*their*] hands on them.

“ ... When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.” This is apparently the scriptural method of the Apostles inducting someone into office. The prayer and imposition of hands was an appeal to God to give the necessary gifts rather than their impartation. See Num. 27:23 Gen. 48:13 . There has always been some discussion whether these seven were deacons, and whether this is the origin of the office of deacon in the church. They are never called deacons, but the Greek word rendered to *serve* Greek dee-ak-on-ee-ah (verse 2), is the verb form of which the word deacon is the noun So two forms of this word is used in Verses 1 & 2 The usual view among learned men is that they were deacons.

Acts 6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Here the author inserts a summary of the progress of the Gospel into narrative. These are found in Acts 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; & 28:31

“...the number of the disciples multiplied” again we see growth from added (1 + 1 = 2) to multiplied (2 x 2 = 4, then 4 x 4 = 8 then 8 x 8 = 64 ...)

“...a great company of the priests ...” this suggests that the persecuting opposition from the temple big shot high and mighty priesthood boomeranged on them. The kind of blind intolerance of holy and righteous men by the leading priesthood opened the eyes of ordinary priests to the power of the Gospel. Intolerance has within its self the seed of its own downfall.

“... were obedient to the faith.” The word “faith” Greek *pistis* (*PIS-tis*) is often applied subjectively to one’s inner trust with reliance in Christ or God to save us. It is used as a synonym for “belief”. It is also used for what one believes ... our theology which we will discuss in a minute. But first lets discuss our personal faith. How do you get faith ... only one way ...

Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Words related to Faith: Strong’s 3982 *Pitho* (PA-tho), Trust, be persuaded a prime verb to convince by argument

Strong’s word 4100 Belief *pistoo* (pis-TA-o) result of testimony Strong’s 4102

Faith *pistis* (*PIS-tis*) keeps believing and trusting with no proof ...

Faith is our personal trust with reliance in the propositional promises of God ... it is to hear God’s word, believe God’s word and take action or follow the instructions of God’s word ... obey.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Romans 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith [*it is*] impossible to please [*him*]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [*that*] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Faith is not a feeling or an emotion although feelings and emotions can accompany faith. Faith comes only one way

Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Faith is just a little stronger word in English than belief.

Faith is trust with reliance that God in Christ will save you.

Example: Houdini kind of guy with a wheelbarrow on a tight-rope at Niagara Falls ... after many examples of the stunt, he asks do you believe I can do it? ... “yea ... yea ... the crowd all cried ...

OK, Hop in! ... God wants you to hop in ... that’s faith ... hop in !

It’s like ham and eggs for breakfast ... the chicken participates, while the pig is all in and fully committed ... God wants you all in ...

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith can be recognized and being where wonderful things are being done with nothing ... like here at Main Street ...

Faith is the platform your hope rests upon until your hope becomes substance and you can see the evidence of it.

I also like the Phillips translation of this verse:

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see.

Again I want you to understand clearly Faith only comes one way cf:

Romans 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

But faith in other contexts, especially here in Acts 6:7 with the Greek article we translate with the English word “the” ... “the faith” ...

Greek *tis pisteos* (*tees PIS-tee-os*). It is used in the objective sense, meaning the body of truth, the whole system of religion that is taught, believed and practiced by New Testament Christians, the pattern for true 1st century original primitive Christianity.

“The faith” is used to describe a system that superseded and took the place of the Mosaic Law and its religious system cf:

Jesus promised the apostles they would be led into all truth:

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [*that*] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Peter indicates the revelation was complete by the time he wrote 2nd Peter:

II Peter 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [*pertain*] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Again as we have studied about the words “the faith”: in the Greek *tis pisteos (tees PIS-tee-os)*. Does not mean your faith but it is used in the objective sense, meaning the body of truth, the whole system of religion that is taught, believed and practiced by New Testament Christians, the pattern for true 1st century original primitive Christianity.

Galatians 3:23-27 But before (*The*) faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:25 But after that (*the*) faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by (*the*) faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

We do not become the “children of God” by “the law” but by “the faith”, “tis PIS-tee-os” (tees PIS-tee-os). It is “the faith” because there is only “one faith” cf:

Ephesians 4:4-5 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

The term “The Way” and “the Faith” are used in the same sense:

Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the just *is* as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Isaiah 35:8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*.

Jeremiah 32:39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

Matthew 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Luke 18:8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find (the) faith on the earth?

When Jesus returns will there be any original NT Christianity primitive left on the earth?

Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Because of the danger the Church is exposed to by false teachers, hold fast to that truth which you have received. Strenuously contend for only that faith and belief system you have received from the Lord and His Holy Apostles.

Away with the doctrines and traditions of men.

Matthew 15: 7 [*Ye*] hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with [*their*] lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching [*for*] doctrines the commandments of men.

Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

“And Stephen full of faith and power, did great wonders ...” He is the first gospel preacher, not an apostle, whose work is discussed. He is also the first person, not an apostle, under the new dispensation, to work miracles. As far as we know, miracles were limited to apostles, and to those whom the apostles laid hands.

Acts 6:9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called [*the synagogue*] of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

“Then there arose certain of the synagogue ...” This was the ordinary place of worship where Jews met on the Sabbath. The Rabbis say in the Talmud that there were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem.

“Of the Libertines” meaning the freedmen. Thousands of Jews had been carried away captives and sold into slavery by Pompey of Rome in 63 B. C. when he captured Jerusalem. These, or their children, were mostly freed at a later period. Those of them who returned to Jerusalem had a synagogue of their own called “the Libertines.”

“The Cyrenians” a synagogue of the Cyrenian Jews who returned to Jerusalem the city of their fathers, like those of other countries, had their own synagogue. “Alexandrians” were Jews from the great city of Alexandria in Egypt, where Jews were said to be almost one-third of the city’s population.

“Of Cilicia” of this synagogue the brilliant disciple of Gamaliel, Saul who became Paul was born at Tarsus of Cilicia, was no doubt a member, and one of the most active opposers of Stephen cf: Acts 7:58.

“Of Asia” the Roman province in Asia Minor of which Ephesus was capital located in modern day Turkey.

“Disputing with Stephen” These synagogues were all composed of “Grecians,” or Hellenistic foreign Jews. Stephen’s name is also Grecian, and he probably preached especially to his own class.

Acts 6:10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

“Not able to resist the wisdom ...” It is rather remarkable that wisdom should have been ascribed to Stephen ... It implies something higher even than the “consolation or encouragement” from which Barnabas took his name.

It was this great wisdom of Stephen that enabled him completely to vanquish all opponents of the truth he proclaimed.

Acts 6:11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and [*against*] God.

“Then they suborned men ...” They induced men to give perverted false testimony against Stephen ... for they were determined to silence him.

“Heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses ...” This was the same charge they made against Christ. It is likely that just like Paul later, Stephen plainly preached that the Old Covenant had given place to the New, and that God's people were no longer under Moses, but under Christ. This was perverted by false witnesses into blaspheming Moses.

Acts 6:12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon [*him*], and caught him, and brought [*him*] to the council,

“And they stirred up the people ...” By their lies, misrepresentations and false witness against Stephen. Before this the gospel seemed to enjoy great popular favor. In order to arouse the hostility of a Jewish mob they twisted and perverted what was preached. The Pharisees legalists themselves, apparently neutral since Pentecost until now, were aroused by Stephen's attack on legalism.

The elders, and the scribes brought him to the council.

The Sanhedrin court which had murdered the Christ, had recently ordered the Apostles beaten and had commanded the Apostles twice don't preach or teach in this name or in Greek don't let the name of Jesus pass your lips.

Acts 6:13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

“and set up false witnesses ...” false, in that they perverted what he said, so as to give it a meaning he did not mean.

“against this holy place ...” which would be the temple ... He may have said that the Temple would be destroyed as Jesus foretold.

Matthew 24: 1-2 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to [*him*] for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down

“And the law ...” He probably said what Paul so often said.

Galatians 3:24-25 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [*to bring us*] unto Christ, that we might be justified by (the) faith. 25 But after that (the) faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Acts 6:14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

Luke 21: 20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21 Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. 22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

This shows the tenor of his preaching. There should be no doubt he did preach the end of the Jewish dispensation and the reign of Christ had begun, but he neither blasphemed Moses nor God.

Acts 6:15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

“... looking stedfastly on him ...” To see what effect the charges had on him. One of those who looked upon him was Saul of Tarsus. It was probably from Saul/Paul that Luke obtained his account of this trial.

“... saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” His face was radiant, either with his own divinely inspired peace and joy, or shining with a supernatural splendor. I incline to the first view, for had the latter been the case it would have awed the Sanhedrim, and probably suspended their proceedings.

As you face sure and certain death what will be the look on your face?
You can do something about it this morning.

Sources: KJV, theWord.com, Burton Coffman's, Clarke's, World Conquest, Alexander Campbell & B.W. Johnson's Commentaries.