

THE BOOK OF

ACTS

Chapter 6

V. 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.**”*

a) *“because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution”*: According to theologian John Stott, this verse “does not suggest that the oversight _____...more probably the cause was poor administration or supervision.” Remember also that Satan is never above aggravating problems between groups of people. He “loves to use an _____ to begin a conflict. The Hebrews were right in their *hearts*, and the Hellenists were right in their *facts*. These were perfect conditions for a church-splitting conflict” (David Guzik).

V. 2 - 4 *“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.** 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; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

a) *“It is not desirable...”*: “This didn’t concern the actual serving of food and cleaning of dining tables for these widows. This speaks of handling the practical administration of the _____ and _____ details relevant to caring for the widows. “A ‘table’ at that time meant a place where a money changer did his collecting or exchanging of money. The deacons were elected to oversee the distribution of monies and provisions to the needy among the fellowship” (L.J. Ogilvie).

b) *“Seven men”* : were to be chosen to serve tables. It was simple, practical service that they are appointed to; “yet they must be well qualified in a spiritual sense, especially because of “the _____” (David Guzik). Most consider they were the first to fulfill the office of deacon as described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13: *“For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”* The word *deacon* simply means “servant”.

V. 5 – 7 *“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, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, **they laid hands on them.**
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.”

a) “Stephen...Philip, Prochorus”: The seven men all had “Greek names, indicating that they were probably Hellenists themselves. “The people (and the apostles) showed great sensitivity to the offended Hellenists by appointing Hellenists to take care of the widows’ distribution” (David Guzik).

b) “they laid hands on them”: It was important to lay hands on them even if their service was mainly for the practical needs of the widows. _____
 The same Greek word is used for both *distribution* (Acts 6:1) and *ministry* (Acts 6:4). The idea behind the word in both places is *service*, whether in practical ways or spiritual ways.

V. 8 - 10 “*And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.* ⁹ *Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), **disputing with Stephen.*** ¹⁰ *And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.”*

a) “Disputing with Stephen”: Stephen debated with Jews from the Synagogue of the Freedmen. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, “he showed greater _____ than his opponents so that they were not able to resist the wisdom and the _____ by which he spoke”.

V. 11 – 14 “***Then they secretly induced men to say,*** “*We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.”* ¹² ***And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.*** ¹³ *They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.”*

a) “They secretly induced men to say”: The opponents of Stephen could not win a fair fight, so they used lies and secret strategies to _____ against Stephen.

b) “they stirred up the people”: The opponents of Stephen could do nothing against the followers of Jesus until they got _____ on their side. Previously, persecution against the apostles had been limited because popular opinion was with them (Acts 2:47, 5:26).

c) “They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law”: Significantly, many of the same false accusations were leveled against Jesus (Matthew 26:59-61).

V. 15 *“And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.”.*

a) *“And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him”*: Stephen was on trial before the highest religious court he could face; examined by honored, educated, and powerful men. He had been falsely accused and seemed to have lost popular support.

b) *“saw his face as the face of an angel.”*: Stephen’s face did not have that mild, soft, angelic look that we see in so many paintings; nor was it a look of stern judgment and wrath. Instead, his face reflected the _____ of one that knows and trusts his God. His face had the same reflected glory that Moses had as he beheld God intimately.

“The description is of a person who is close to God and reflects some of His glory as a result of being in his presence (Exodus 34:29ff).” (B. D. Marshall).

Pause and Ponder

“Popular opinion can be easily shaped. The same crowds that praised Jesus (Luke 19:35-40) soon called for His crucifixion (Luke 23:18-23). The crowds that loved the apostles (Acts 2:47, 5:26) cry out against Stephen. This is why we should never let popular opinion shape the vision or focus of the church, but let it rest on God’s eternal Word” (David Guzik).

NOTES: _____

Works Sourced:

Acts 6 NKJV - Seven Chosen to Serve - Now in those - Bible Gateway

David Guzik: Enduring Word Bible Commentary Acts Chapter 6 (2018).

_____ +++ _____



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