

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 15TH, 2026 // BOOK OF ACTS

PROBLEM SOLVING (ACTS 6:1-6) NOT JUST CONVERTS BUT DISCIPLES

The early Church was primarily made up of people who loved Jesus, loved one another, and loved the preaching of the Word by the apostles. They were growing not only in number but in faith. They were truly disciples.

- Do we consider ourselves to be **true disciples of Jesus who love Him, His people, His Word, and telling others?**

WITH GROWTH COMES CHALLENGES

Unity is great. Growth is great. But growth can threaten unity. The early Church felt this. Literally thousands had come to faith in Jesus, and the Church was still growing. Nothing like this had ever happened. Questions needed answers: Where to meet? How to pay for things? What about disputes? How are people fairly cared for?

- Practical matters are important in the Church.

THE PROBLEM

Greek-speaking Jews (Hellenists) felt their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food compared to the Aramaic-speaking widows (Hebraic Jews). This could have been a language issue. No matter the cause, the problem was real.

- **Caring for the needs of the less fortunate is an important work of the Church.**

PRIDE OR PURPOSE?

The apostles recognized the problem but also recognized the importance of their work praying and preaching. Waiting on tables was important too, but it could be done by others. Under the leadership of the Spirit, they proposed a solution that pleased both sides of the debate.

- **Every role in the Church is important, but not everyone is called to each role.**

SEVEN SERVANTS

The apostles asked for the people to select seven men "of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom." The apostles would appoint them to take care of the food distribution. All the men seem to have been Hellenists based on their names. Two of them, Stephen and Philip, will play important roles in Acts.

COMMISSIONED

These seven men were then set apart for the work before them. The apostles prayed over the seven and laid hands on them. This wasn't some type of ritual that must always be repeated but a clear commissioning for the task ahead.

- Every Christian is called to serve/minister within the Church. While the tasks may differ, there's work to be done.

POWERFUL (ACTS 6:7-10) RESULTS

Verse 7 is another summary statement by Luke. With the initial problem of the widows' food distribution solved, God's Word spread, the disciples increased, and even Jewish priests came to faith in Jesus.

- **As we sow the seeds, we can expect God to reap a harvest, even from those considered the least likely to believe.**

POWER WORKS BEYOND THE APOSTLES

Stephen, one of the seven, is now pointed out by Luke as full of grace and power; he performs great wonders and signs for all to see. This is one of the first indications that the Holy Spirit works in power not only through the 12 but through any filled with the Spirit.

- **We may not see a "miracle" done through us, but God is at work in us for His Glory.**

SIGNS ARE FINE; DON'T PREACH JESUS

People weren't too concerned with the powerful works Stephen did, but as in all the previous works, they didn't like the focus on Jesus as the Messiah.

- **People don't mind us caring for the poor or serving the community. But they do not like when we say there is only one God and the path to Him is through Jesus alone.**

NOT ALL WILL AGREE WITH OUR MESSAGE

Due to the gospel he preached, Stephen faced opposition from a synagogue comprised of Jewish men from Africa and Asia who had been slaves but were now free. Cilicia was where Tarsus was located, the hometown of Saul/Paul. Paul may have been a part of this synagogue.

- We have no idea what God is doing behind the scenes when we live for Him.

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED

Both the message Stephen proclaimed and the power he demonstrated came from the presence and power of God the Holy Spirit. This made Stephen a formidable opponent.

- In Matthew 10:19-20, Jesus promised that the Spirit would give His disciples the words to speak. **The more we know the Word, the more we can be used by the Spirit.**

OPPOSITION (ACTS 6:11-15) NO LONGER A SECT

The message Stephen and the disciples preached begins to show that being a Christ follower is radically different from being an Old Covenant Jew. While Stephen preached that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Covenant, the Jews heard that Jesus was the destroyer of the Old Covenant, which was given to them by Moses and told how to live lives pleasing to God.

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN, AND IT'S GETTING WORSE

Once again, a follower of Jesus is brought before the Sanhedrin. However, we begin to see that any tolerance for Christianity is beginning to go away. In 4:21, Peter and John are threatened. In 5:40, they are flogged. Soon we will see Stephen (spoiler alert!) martyred for his faith (7:57-60).

- **When arguments don't work, violence may.**

MAKING STUFF UP

When one cannot refute the message, one attacks the messenger. The Jews had to lie about all that Stephen was preaching. And for them, the temple was the center of their Jewish faith. So, if Stephen was attacking the temple, he must be attacking the Jews and their God.

- **Biblical Christianity puts an axe to the root of all other religions.**

VARIATIONS OF OLD ARGUMENTS

It's interesting that the false witnesses used some of the same arguments against Stephen that were used against Jesus (Matthew 26:59-61).

- Christianity has faced some of the most sophisticated arguments against its truthfulness. **For 2,000 years, these arguments have failed, and they will continue to fail.**

THE FACE OF AN ANGEL

After Moses was in the presence of God, his face reflected that reality (Exodus 34:29-35). In Stephen's case, the presence of the Holy Spirit in him produced an angelic effect that was seen by the people.

- Peter and John had been with Jesus and the people knew it (4:13). God's power rested on Stephen. **Who do people see in us?**

A CALL TO SERVE

- Each of us who is in Jesus has been empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve. The work isn't in the hands of a few but the whole.
- The church and community suffer when we aren't serving.
- **Find ways to serve, and your gifting(s) will become evident.**

THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK IN US

- What are ways we are serving that require the Spirit's presence and power lest we fall on our faces and look foolish?
- We should be able to trace God's work in our lives up to today. **Remembering and seeing that work gives us courage for God's future work in and through us.**
- God empowers; we work; **God gets the glory.**

ARE WE READY?

- Can we "**give a defense to anyone who asks [us] for a reason for the hope that is in [us]**" (1 Peter 3:15)?
- Believing in the exclusivity of Jesus (Christianity) is growing more dangerous in an increasingly pluralistic world.
- Even when people disagree with our beliefs, **do they find us to be like Jesus?**