

## A Problem In the Church at Jerusalem

Acts 6:1-7

### Introduction:

1. Often when I think about the churches in the N.T. I idealize them. I tend to look at them as not experiencing the difficulties that we experience today. But a more realistic look reveals that they too experienced challenges, tensions, and anxious moments.
2. Some of them could have resulted in division. One such anxious moment is recorded for us in Acts 6:1-7. In this particular incident the disciples dealt successfully with a problem situation. I believe there are some lessons that we can learn from them that will help us maintain our unity even though we find ourselves dealing with difficult situations.
3. First, we will examine what transpired amongst them and then we will identify some of the lessons that we can learn from their experience.
4. Welcome!

### Discussion:

#### I. The Hellenistic widows were being neglected in the daily serving of food.

- A. A complaint (murmuring) arose.
  1. The Greek word (“gongusmos”) denotes a displeased muttering, grumbling or complaining (more privately than in public).
  2. Perhaps here is our first lesson. Those folks were just like us.
    - a. Have you never been guilty?
    - b. More private than public.
  3. But we might object “Good Christians should not grumble.” Cf. Phil. 2:14; 1 Cor. 10:10. “They need a good lesson about grumbling to put this matter to rest.”
  4. But such a lesson would have been an insensitive approach and probably would have further aggravated the situation.
  5. The complaint became more public. If you had been a guest in an assembly of the church where this complaint was voiced what would your response have been?  
“Oh no, the last church that I was in had problems and now this one does too.”
- B. Who was complaining and what were they complaining about?
  1. Hellenistic Jews are complaining. The Greek here is “hellenistia” meaning “those who speak Greek” and refers to those people who not only speak Greek but have adopted Greek ways. They are Jews from a different culture.
  2. They are complaining against the Hebrews (“Hebraios”). These were Jews who spoke Aramaic, a form of Hebrew. They were the more “traditional” Jews.
  3. The church at Jerusalem had many needy amongst them. Cf. Acts 2:45; 4:32-35.
    - a. The widows evidently fell into this classification.
    - b. And there was a daily serving of food for those in need.
  4. The Hellenistic widows were being overlooked, neglected. Why? I do not know.
    - a. Perhaps those who were serving were Hebrews and were better acquainted with the Hebrew widows, and simply failed to invite the Hellenistic widows.
    - b. Maybe the one who made the announcement about the meals, just left it off the list.

- c. Perhaps the one's preparing the meals were Hebrews and the word got around to them but not the Hellenists.
  - d. Maybe just too many people, so that some were overlooked.
- C. Congregation selected and apostles' appointed seven men to put in charge of the task.
  - 1. Qualifications of the seven.
    - a. Of good reputation. Trustworthy people need to be put in charge.
    - b. Full of the Holy Spirit. People who are giving themselves to doing what the word of God says need to be put in charge. Cf. Eph. 5:18.
    - c. Full of wisdom. People with good judgment need to be put in charge.
  - 2. The congregation's selection.
    - a. Apparently all men of Greek background, one was even a proselyte (a Gentile converted to Judaism) as suggested by their Greek names.
    - b. How appropriate would it have been for them to put Hebraic Jews in charge of concern for Hellenistic widows?
- D. The result: "The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem."

## II. Lessons to be learned.

- A. People who love one another, who sacrifice for one another, who are Christians can overlook things.
  - 1. Were these people who loved and sacrificed for one another?
  - 2. From the beginning (Acts 2:44-45).
  - 3. Sold their property to provide for one another (Acts 4:32-35).
  - 4. Their actions here are testimony to their love.
- B. Confidence in each other.
  - 1. The apostles confident in the congregation. There is trust rather than suspicion.
  - 2. Sometimes suspicion is justified. Careful not to arouse suspicion and distrust.
  - 3. Open communication and cultivation of relationships assists in this. Hard to have confidence in someone you do not know.
- C. Willingness to allow others in positions of control.
  - 1. Apostles willing to let congregation select men.
  - 2. Willing for those selected to be in control of the task.
  - 3. Sometimes individuals are not willing to let others take control. They want to run everything and micro-manage it.
- D. They proved to have a common goal. We need to have common goals.
- E. Worked together as a team.
  - 1. The complainers, the apostles, the congregation, the seven, worked together.
  - 2. Each had their role to play.
  - 3. Each role was important.
  - 4. They did not turn on each other. No evidence of angry tempers. Aggression. Threats. Digging in one's heels. Oppositional behavior.
  - 5. Together they addressed a problem and proved their unity.

Conclusion:

1. These Christians met with a problem.
2. Rather than hostility, anger, and adversarial relations they worked together to solve the problem.
3. Unity prevailed and the word of God kept on spreading.
4. This was not the end of problems. Other problems more severe than this one came up later. Because we successfully negotiate one problem doesn't mean that our trials are over.