

# Solving Satanic Problems

## Acts Chapter 6

Act 6:1

### 1) A Satanic Problem from Within vs 1-8

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing {in number,} a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic {Jews} against the {native} Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving {of food.}

- KJV = the number was multiplying. The church was growing. Some theologians believe the number could be upwards to 20,000.
- Remember some Christians were selling property and laying the money at the Apostles feet for them to distribute as they see fit. One of the needs they cared for was giving food to the widows.  
(1 Timothy 5:3-16)
- A Complaint Arose - Here, a problem in the perfect church? But problems do arise.
  - Remember the Book of Revelation (ch 2+3) how with in the first 100 years there were problems in the Church that Jesus needed to correct.
  - Much of the Epistles were corrective to right the errors in the church. The Corinthian Church is a very good example of a number of things needing correction.
- Hellenists - Jews born in foreign lands. They are more predisposed to Greek language and customs. Hebrews - Jews born in the region of Judea. More traditional in thought.
- Here is a natural division in the church that Satan uses to create conflict. Hebrews would think the Hellenists were compromisers and the Hellenists would think the Hebrews to be strong legalists.
- The problem arose (real or perceived) that the Hellenistic Jews felt their widows were being slighted in the distribution of food.
  - The problem may have actually occurred. Chances are that the problem was not intentional, seeing how quickly a solution is presented rather than a defensive argument.
  - The problem was more of an administration problem that a personal problem.
  - Satan likes to take unintentional mistakes and blow them up to be relationship killers or Church Splits

Act 6:2

So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

Act 6:3

"Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

Act 6:4

"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

- The Apostles use 4 steps in Defusing Conflict
  - **They Listen with Empathy** verse 1-2a
    - a. They heard the concerns and the facts.
    - b. No where are they pointing a finger of blame, especially to punish.
    - c. No where are they defending anyone's position.
  - **They Determine Reasonable Boundaries** verse 2
    - a. They realize a change is needed in how the people were served.
    - b. They also realized they were called to a specific calling and that it too could not be neglected.
  - **They Provide a Corrective Action** verse 3
    - a. Those that were involved with the issue were instructed to select deacons
      - 1. serve = deakoneo to be an attendant, to serve
      - 2. Noticed the deacons were chosen as the need arose. Not the other way around.
    - b. There was a standard applied to the men to be selected
      - 1. They were FROM AMONG THEM - people they knew
      - 2. They were to have a GOOD REPUTATION - Integrity
      - 3. They were to be FULL OF THE SPIRIT - Full not ½ full; Spiritually minded
      - 4. They were to be FULL OF WISDOM - not necessarily intelligent but wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge. Practically Minded
    - c. Those selected would be put in charge over the task.
  - **They Accomplished Immediate Need Without Forsaking the Greater Goal** verse 4
    - a. The solution to the immediate need did not become the movement.
    - b. They realized what the people needed was prayer and ministry of the Word.
      - 1. ministry = same word deakoneo to be an attendant, to serve

2. The apostles did not consider what they did as a more important ministry, but that it was impossible for them to not serve where they were called.
- c. They devoted themselves to that for which they were called.

- Act 6:5** The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.
- The unity is again demonstrated as the whole congregation approves.
  - The wisdom of the “whole” congregation is amazing. This whole congregation is the Hebrew and the Hellenists that were having a conflict.
  - It would be within reason to select 3 Hebrew and 3 Hellenist and 1 to be selected by the 6 chosen. That sounds fair.
  - This “whole” congregation selected 6 Hellenistic Jews and one converted Greek.
  - Stephen we will learn more about in the rest of chapter 6 and 7
  - Philip we will learn more about in chapter 8.
  - What we do see is how the church develops. It develops from within. Here we have guys growing individually. They show spiritual discipline and are known for being spiritual. They are raised to a servant’s position. (serving tables) From there God takes them to a greater ministry.
  - What you do not see is them raising themselves into position.
- Act 6:6** And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.
- All these guys were doing is serving tables. Did it really need all this ceremony? Yes it did. Even the mundane practical service is spiritual service.
- Act 6:7** The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.
- The church grows by spreading the Word of God.
- Act 6:8** And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.
- This is the first mention of miracles done by someone other than the apostles.
  - This shows us that those power ministries can happen even if you are just serving coffee. Someone can get healed, delivered from addictions, can cry out for salvation as you faithfully hand someone a bulletin.
  - Psalm 85:10 *“For a day in thy courts [is] better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”*. It isn’t about serving the church or serving a pastor. It is about having the heart to love God with your serving anywhere He so desires.
- Act 6:9** 2) A Satanic Problem from Without vs 9-15  
But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, {including} both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.
- Act 6:10** But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.
- To have a synagogue you would only need 10 adult men to start one. There could have been a great number of synagogues.
  - Synagogue = congregation or assembly Had a two fold purpose the serve as a gathering place for religious activity as well as civic meetings and a place of prayer.
  - Synagogue of the Freedmen or Libertines (KJV) was either slaves who had been set free and assembled together with a common background or was a group from North Africa.
  - These Freedmen that included those from Cyrenians and Alexandrians argued with Stephen
  - Cilicia - Paul was from Cilicia. (Acts 21:39) Paul was there and was dealing with Stephen but Stephen would leave a lasting effect on Paul.
  - But they could not withstand the superior Spirit with whom they were arguing with. There is no indication that Stephen was educated or had any training but the text stressed it was wisdom and the Spirit that withstood their arguments.

Act 6:11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and {against} God."

Act 6:12 And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council.

Act 6:13 They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law;

Act 6:14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

- If Satan cannot beat the church through intimidation and argument he will hire liars to discredit and incite the people against it.
- "SECRETLY INDUCED" "PUT FORWARD FALSE WITNESSES" This was the tactic used against Jesus in **Matthew 26:59** "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;"
- Even the lies are the same
  - Will destroy this place **Matthew 26:61** "And said, This [fellow] said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days."
  - Seeking to alter the customs of Moses **John 5:18** "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."
- Stephen spoke of the fulfillment of the Law through Jesus and that the perfect sacrifice had come in the Messiah Jesus. But he wasn't speaking against the temple or Moses or the Law. He was declaring the plan of God and the purpose of the Law and Moses to be fulfilled through Jesus.

Act 6:15 And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

- When the congregation chose Stephen to serve according to the pre-requisite set forth by the apostles, they had chosen correctly.
- The Council sneering, and glaring at Stephen with hatred and murder in their eyes all the while Stephen sat revealing the fullness of his heart.
- Face of an angel = The council saw the love and trust and peace and confidence in the will of God in his life.
- What a standard Stephen holds up for us. In the face of lies, false accusations that could lead to tragic consequences, Stephen trusts the Lord Jesus and peacefully waits for the Spirit's next move.

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