

Division and Distraction in the Church

Acts 6:1-7

Introduction

Some people might be prone to think that passage documents the first Baptists... They're already splitting into factions.

Here's what we've been learning in Acts... Christ the King has ascended to Heaven where he is seated, enthroned at God's right hand where he is, by his word, through the power of the Holy Spirit, building his Church, in fulfillment of what he promised in Matthew 16:18. And as Jason pointed out last week, King Jesus has an enemy. Satan's opposition to Christ's church has been manifested from the outside through persecution, from the inside through hypocrisy. And this week we're going to see a new tactic. Satan is going to try the age old tactic of "divide and conquer." And if that doesn't work, he hopes at least to distract the Church from her mission.

Here's what we're going to see: Problems in the Church, if responded to biblically, can actually serve to bless the Church and cause it to grow numerically and in spiritual health.

The Problem

The Church was growing
Hellenists widows were being neglected
The Apostles were being distracted from the ministry of the word

The Solution

The Apostles involve the entire congregation the process
Choose 7 men full of the Spirit and wisdom to handle the business

The Apostles would continue to focus on teaching the word

The Results

The Word of God continued to increase
The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem
Great many of the priests became obedient to the faith

How does all of this apply to us today?

We'd like a perfect Church, wouldn't we?
But there will never be a perfect Church, why? Sin (sins of neglect, and overt sins)

It's not that we get our Church to some type of perfect plateau where we rise above all of the problems of this life.
The real test is how we respond to sin issues when they pop up.

Why is division so damaging to a Church?

Two reasons

1. A Church is meant to function properly when the entire body is connected and each part is contributing its strengths to the whole.
Ephesians 4:15-16 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

2. Church unity is a display of the gospel

John 11:51-52 He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

How do we come to the place in the Church where we can constantly seek the good of the whole as opposed to our own interests?

By nature we are consumers – we invest something of value and we expect something in return

You don't go to Publix and and freely donate your hard earned money and expect nothing in return

We don't need to come to the Church as consumers, we need to come as worshipers.

What does it take to transform (to reengineer) the human heart from consumer to worshiper?

Only seeing the beauty of the gospel

Mark 10:43-45 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Why is vital that a Church not be distracted from the ministry of the word?

The faithful ministry of the word is vital to the health of the Church

It's how disciples are made

It's how we continue to grow

Problems in the Church can lead to greater spiritual health and the growth and flourishing in the Church, but...

It depends on how we respond to problems

Don't think that just because God can use sinful circumstances to bless his Church that he won't deal with those who sin...

Matthew 18:7 "Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!

Proverbs 6:16-19 There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him... one who sows discord among brothers.

Questions for us here at The Road

1. How is Satan working at this moment to divide us and distract us from Christ's mission
2. Are we giving Satan access to our Church?
3. What are our main goals here at The Road?
 - a. Are we here to play Church or have our own special club. Or are we here because Christ the King has conquered our hearts and brought us into kingdom and now our hearts long to worship him and bring other future
4. Have you seen the beauty of King Jesus and his love for you? Have you seen it in such a way that you can say with John the Baptist, "He must increase! I must decrease!"

The Problem

Problems in the Church?

Isn't there a part of you that wants the Church to be perfect?

Something Jesus is a part of...

The reality is that even the best of Christ's churches will always have problems. The closer a Church is to Christ; the more incentive Satan has to harm it from without. Even from inside the safety of the Church, we are all still sinners and we are imperfect. Actually, the closer we get the closer we become the more likely we will offend or neglect each other. And those moments, if handled rightly, are actually opportunities for the gospel shine brightly.

The problem in Acts 6

Church growth led to different types of people in the Church

Hellenists' widows were being neglected.

Hellenists vs. Hebrews

Division – makes enemies of us

Ex. Young vs. old in the Church, Long time members vs. newer members

Why division is such a problem

The Church is an organic body which is designed to be healthy when every part is connected and each part is contributing its strengths and gifts to the rest of the body.

Division also ruins our testimony for the gospel because unity is actually something for which Christ died.

John 11:51-52 He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

This division was leading to another, even deeper problem.

The Apostles (the teachers of the Church) were being distracted from their focus on ministering the word.

The Solution

Problem solving

Ignore, avoid,

The Results

Conclusion

Acts 6:1-7 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit

and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.