

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Acts 6:1-7.**
- B. This passage looks at a problem in the church and how the apostles solved it. Most important is to see the reason for the remedy, so that we can make application.

I. THE PROBLEM.

- A. The church was growing and many people were becoming Xians in Jerusalem after the day of Pentecost (Ac. 6:1).
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.
- B. It is a proven fact that any person or organization cannot have progress without problems. You might have problems w/o progress, but no progress w/o problems.
- C. The problem of Ac. 6 is that some of the widows were being overlooked in the distribution of food.
- D. The complaint was not given by the women themselves but by men concerned over the welfare of the women involved.

II. THE REMEDY.

- A. The apostles recognized that the problem was a real one that needed attention. They did not ignore it as being unimportant.
- B. The solution was to have 7 men selected by the congregation to see to it that the Grecian widows were not overlooked in the daily distribution of food (Ac. 6:2-3).
And 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. 3 "But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task."
- C. These men were chosen to serve and have been referred to as the first deacons in the church. Later, we see one of these men also referred to as being an evangelist (Philip, Ac. 21:8).
- D. Notice that the congregation did the choosing and the apostles then commissioned them to do the work.

III. THE REASON FOR THE REMEDY.

- A. The apostles realized it would not be proper for them to stop their ministry to wait tables.
- B. The ministry of the apostles was in prayer and ministry of the word (Ac. 6:4).
"But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."
- C. The work of waiting on tables was not sinful, but to have the apostles do it would have been. The Twelve did not think it right for them to have to do this work at the expense of their other ministries.
- D. Had the apostles stopped to do this work, the overall growth of the church would have been impaired. They strove to keep first things, first!

IV. LESSONS FOR US.

- A. Keeping first things first. How do we do that?
 - 1. One way is to brow-beat people into submission. That reminds me of the old saying, "the floggings will continue--until morale improves." But that is not the answer.
 - 2. I had written a sermon that if I preached it would have got me fired--and if I preached it the way I wrote it maybe I should be fired. So that is not the answer.
 - 3. Two weeks ago I spoke about commitment. I can talk about commitment, but how can I instill commitment? That's the question!
 - 4. So to try and tackle this issue of priorities and keeping first things first I want to list some passages and then ask some questions that you and I will have to answer.

- B. Matthew 6:33.
 "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."
 How is it possible to seek first the kingdom:
 1. ...and purposely miss worship services?
 2. ...and justify things that border on sinfulness?
- C. Matthew 22:37.
 And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'
 How can we say we supremely love God:
 1. ...and then devote so much time to things that don't matter with God?
 2. ...and fill our minds with that which is on TV, the movies, and etc. (I know what you love by that which you do and that which you talk about.)
- D. Luke 9:62.
 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
 How can we say we are fit for the kingdom:
 1. ...when we allow the things of the world to take precedence over the things of the church? Too many Xians are too busy.
 2. ...and plan our financial future but not our spiritual future?
- E. Ephesians 6:4.
 And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 How can we be doing our job as parents:
 1. ...and not bring our children to Bible class?
 2. ...and not be involved in the youth program of the church?
- F. 1Timothy 4:7-8.
 But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; 8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.
 How can we be disciplined for godliness:
 1. When we can recite more words to secular music than the Bible?
 2. When we have been in the church for years and years and still can't teach someone else how to become a Xian?
- G. Is it time to sit down and list everything that is part of your life and try to, once again, "keep first things first."

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Our scripture text and sermon had four parts:
 1. There was a problem. 3. There was a reason for the remedy.
 2. Then there was a remedy. 4. The application for us.
- B. Let us strive to keep first things first.
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.