



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

## Study 9: THE EXCEPTIONAL GROWTH OF A GODLY CHURCH Acts 6:1-15

***“In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied.”*** Growth and godliness were inseparable in the early Church. Many thousands were saved, steadfast, sanctified and Spirit-filled within a short period of time. Satan tried to afflict the Church with persecution from outside and endeavoured to inflict the Body with the cancer of deception from within. Perseverance and prayer preserved the Church during persecution while purging and purity preserved the Body in holiness, health and power. The Church continued to grow and ***“the number of the disciples was multiplied.”*** However, ***“there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.”*** The Apostles combined the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Church. Some widows complained of being neglected and ***“there arose a murmuring.”*** This sin of murmuring, if not speedily dealt with could have destroyed many in the Church (Numbers 11:1; 14:2,11,12,27-30,36,37; Psalm 106:24-27; 1 Corinthians 10:10-12; Philippians 2:14; Jude 14-16). The Apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to raise seven leaders in the Church to take care of these temporal needs in the Church. This new arrangement released the Apostles to concentrate on the uninterrupted ministry of the Word and the Church continued to grow. ***“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”*** (Acts 6:7).

### THE PRIORITY OF SINGLE-MINDEDNESS IN CHRISTIAN WORK

Acts 6:1-4; Mark 3:14; Luke 24:45-48; Acts 1:8; 5:19,20; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 9:16; Acts 20:24-31; 1 Timothy 4:15,16; 2 Timothy 2:2-4; 4:1-5; Philippians 3:13-17.

The Apostles said, ***“It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.”*** Leaving the preaching of the gospel and becoming involved in secular matters would be a thoughtless departure from the purpose of their calling. Neglecting the saving of souls and shifting attention to ministering to the needs of bodies of men and women would result in the eternal loss of precious souls. It would be sinful for the Apostles to abandon what the Lord had commanded while committing themselves to what He had not specifically commanded them to do. In this century, in Christendom, healing bodies and losing souls, caring for earthly needs and missing heaven is the tragedy of the minister and the ministry. The guilt of labouring for ***“the meat which perisheth”*** (John 6:26,27), the condemnation of being ***“busy here and there”*** (1 Kings 20:39,40) while sinners are dying without salvation and going into an eternal hell will be unbearable.

***“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”*** The Apostles resolved to concentrate on praying and preaching. Private praying preparatory to public preaching was to be their constant engagement. The daily proclamation of the gospel was to be their constant employment. They had been set apart and divinely commissioned by God for the salvation of souls and that was to be their main commitment. Their lives, time, talents, gifts and skills were to be wholly devoted to saving souls, discipling believers, strengthening the Church, maturing Church members, equipping disciples for fruitful evangelism; raising, training and enlisting more pastors and preparing saints for the rapture.

### THE PRECONDITION FOR SELECTING CHRISTIAN WORKERS

Acts 6:3-7; Deuteronomy 1:13; Acts 1:21,22; 1 Timothy 3:6-15; 2 Corinthians 8:21-23; 3 John 1:11,12; Luke 1:15-17; Acts 11:22-24; Job 28:12,28; James 3:13-18; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13; 3:19.

The Apostles, guided by the Holy Ghost (John 14:26; 16:13), decided that seven men should be chosen to be put in charge of food distribution to the needy so they could be released to commit themselves to ***“prayer and ministry of the word.”*** The decision pleased the whole Church and unbroken fellowship with unity continued in the Church. The Apostles gave the qualifications of the “fellowhelpers” to be chosen. They were to be (1) among you, (2) of honest report, (3) full of the Holy Ghost, (4) full of wisdom, (5) approved and appointed by the Apostles. The clarity of the qualifications made partiality impossible. The qualifications were spiritual and moral, not academic or professional. It is important that those who are to be entrusted with the care of a New Testament, saved, sanctified, Spirit-filled Church should be righteous and godly, honest and faithful, saved and sanctified, Spirit-indwelt and Spirit-controlled. No one who is a stranger to Christ and His doctrine, who possesses neither

grace nor godliness, who knows neither honesty nor holiness, can be entrusted with ministry to serve a righteous, rapture-ready Church. To serve and minister to Christ's blood-bought Church, we must have the character traits produced by the resident, indwelling Holy Spirit. Working for God on earth will be of no benefit if we are not qualified to live with Him in heaven.

## **THE POTENTIALS IN SPIRIT-FILLED CHRISTIAN WORKERS**

Acts 6:8-15; 2:17,18; Mark 16:17-20; Luke 10:17-20; Acts 8:5-8; 11:19-24; Matthew 10:19,20; Luke 21:12-15; Ecclesiastes 8:1; 1 Corinthians 2:4; Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:7,8,18.

The Spirit-led organization in the Jerusalem Church yielded immediate and positive results. ***“And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”*** (Acts 6:7). The gospel became more powerful and more extensive in its influence. The conversion and open acceptance of a great number of priests was a striking proof of the power of the proclamation of Christ's resurrection. The gospel, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, has the potential of convicting and converting every class of people.

***“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people”***. Formerly, the miracles, signs and wonders were wrought by the Apostles (Acts 2:43; 4:33; 5:12). Now we read of Stephen, who was not an Apostle, doing ***“great wonders and miracles among the people”***. The Holy Spirit worked mightily and effectively in Stephen's life and ministry. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11). We, too, can be full of faith, full of power, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. In His power and according to His will, we can do exploits for God's glory and lead many souls to salvation in Christ.

Some religious Jews rose up in opposition against Stephen, disputing about Moses, the law and the temple; but ***“they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake”***. They raised up false witnesses and accused him of blasphemy. God's glory was so much upon him ***“and all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel”*** (Acts 6:15).

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