

Learning to Stand in God's Grace

1. Last week the Holy Spirit...defined for us...the difference...between the power of the pure church...in contrast to ...the lying deceiving...spirit of religion
 - a. This week...the Holy Spirit is going to show us...another attack on the church...and more purity...verses...the lying spirit
 - b. I am thankful...that the Bible...and the book of Acts...record for us...the lives of real people...who have real problems
 - c. This week we are going to look at...a situation that comes us in church life
 - d. The first church is growing...teaching...doing signs and wonders...they are bold in evangelism...and their faith is pure
 - e. But this does not make them immune to problems...every church will have problems...the key is...how do they handle the problems
 - f. This all gets started through a new attack from Satan...dissention, murmuring, back biting and division...
 - g. Satan can't stop them from preaching Jesus...so what the next attack...dividing the believers
 - h. Lets look closely at the problem
2. Acts 6:1 But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

- a. In order to put what is going on here...we need some historical background...to understand what verse 1...is describing to us
- b. Many of us know from scripture...that the true Jews...don't care for...the Samaritans...because they are ½ breeds...half Jew and half gentile
- c. The law says...for the Jews people were not intermarry with gentiles...
- d. How these ½ breeds came about...is when the Babylonians concurred Israel...as a method to keep the nation concurred...or subdued
- e. They would take ½ the concurred people back to their home country...and bring people from their home county...to live in Israel
- f. Now...what we are seeing here in the book of Acts is...the Samaritans are dividing again
- g. The ½ breeds...or the Samaritans...who who were taken **to** the foreign land...are now the Greek speaking ½ breeds...being referred to
- h. Who are complaining...that they are being discriminated...by the ½ breed Samaritans who stayed in the land of Israel...the Hebrew speaking
- i. Remember...when Babylonia concurred Israel first...Judah was separated from Israel...as two separate nations...and kings...Jews and Samaritans
- j. This dividing of David's kingdom...proved to be effective
- k. Satan is trying to divide the church...with one group who speaks Hebrew...from the other group that speaks Greek
- l. Notice it doesn't tell us who was right and who was wrong...or even true...all it says is...they felt discriminated against
- m. Our feelings can deceive us...if we are not truth seekers

- n. Both groups belong to the same Jesus...the same salvation...one group reads the Hebrew Bible...the other reads the Septuagint...or Greek Bible
 - o. It is the left twix and the right twix scenario...they are all in the same wrapper...only the application of the caramel is different
 - p. Satan will use the slightest differences...to divide something in the same wrapper...who belong to the same Jesus...same salvation...same church
 - q. Satan's goal is to keep people from the truth of Jesus...religion doesn't bother Satan...but the truth about Jesus...now that bothers Satan
 - r. If we want life...true life...to stay in this church...so we can live out the Bible's message of life
 - s. Then we need to learn to stand all strategies of the devil...so we can stand
 - t. Don't miss the point I am making...learning to stand...when the devil attacks...is were you learn to be an overcomer
3. Eph 6:10-14, 10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.
- a. What does victory look like...standing...not falling to the lies of the devil
 - b. If you continue to read...on your own...later...you will find that the Lord only gives us one weapon...the sword of truth...the word of God

- c. All the rest of the things the Lord gives us...is armor...for protection...so we can do what...stand
 - d. Here is what can happen...when rapid growth happens in the first church
 - e. The people started complaining...causing dissention...back biting...quarreling ...disagreeing...division...and so the Holy Spirit steps in
 - f. The good news...the Holy Spirit has stopped killing people as His means of problem-solving...from chapter 5
4. Acts 6:2 So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, "We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program.
- a. What I want us to see...this morning...every morning is
5. Slide...The Holy Spirit is leading this church
- a. Please see the involvement of the Holy Spirit
 - b. The apostles could have handled the problem...but the Holy Spirit wants them to spend their time...in study and teaching the word
 - c. When the apostles were walking with Jesus...they learned this lesson many times...especially in one of my favorite events...in the feeding of the 5000
 - d. When Jesus asks the disciples...where can we buy bread...to feed all these people
 - e. What Jesus was doing...was testing them...teaching them...to not busying themselves...with being problem fixers
 - f. Jesus wanted to teach the disciples...that fixing people's problems...is not ministry

- g. Jesus showed them...in the feeding of the 5000...that the people only came to Jesus...because they wanted to eat...or get their problem fixed
 - h. There are lots of people...who...when faced with a problem...figure the church will solve it for them...they are not looking for Christ
 - i. We know this...because when Jesus tried to teach the 5000 something that required faith...they left
 - j. They were not looking for Christ...but to have their problem fixed
 - k. Satan wants the ministers of Gods word...to run around...chasing and fixing all the problems that people have
 - l. A good Christian councilor...guides people to Christ...and the word of God...to receive truth...the councilor doesn't fix the problem for them
 - m. But instead...he is to open their eyes to the truth of God's word...then applying the word of God...to their situation...now that's ministry
 - n. It was the Holy Spirit that provided the answer to the church
 - o. I say it was the Holy Spirit...because of who was picked to lead the food program...I will explain more...when we get to that verse
6. Acts 6:3-4, 3 And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. 4 Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word."
- a. I believe it is the Holy Spirit...who is leading the apostles...to create more leaders...so to organize the church feeding program
 - b. There is a lesson here...that I have learned in other church situations

- c. **If** the Holy Spirit is wanting a ministry...or program...then He will provide the leaders to lead it...If there is no leader...then it is not of the Holy Spirit
- d. We hear the term organized religion...and we tend to think...that organized religion is a bad thing
- e. I know from experience...that I would want to be a part of dis-organized religion...when I read my Bible...I find that my God is...very organized
- f. God desires things to be done decently...and orderly
- g. And the more people you have in a church...the more organization is necessary...to maintain a healthy church...and stay a life-giving church
- h. Without organizing an organism...an ugly cancer goes un-checked...
- i. Still on the other hand...you can over organize...to where you lose your flexibility in following the leading of the Holy Spirit
- j. That is why you need leaders to be filled with the Holy Spirit
- k. And again...I will show us...how we can know...it was all the workings of the Holy Spirit...when we get to that verse
- l. Flexibility is a mandatory requirement...which allows the Holy Spirit...the opportunity to change the organization of His church
- m. For example...we out grew our house...thus we are here...this is not permanent...hopefully
- n. Next of the 30th of May...we cannot meet here...so we are having a picnic at soldiers and sailors park...which will be fun
- o. There is a problem within the church...so what does God do

- p. Instead of taking the time from His teachers...or ministers...He raises up other leaders...to lead programs
- 7. Slide...There are 5 qualifications in rising up leaders
- 8. Slide...The 1st qualification is they should be from among the church...according to verse 3
 - a. It seems to be best...if we raise people up...from within the fellowship...so you can see what their heart is like...which takes at least...6 months
- 9. Slide...The 2nd qualification is they were men according to verse 3
 - a. Not to say women can't be leaders...because there are great women Bible teachers and great women leaders
 - b. In this case...it needs to be men...because the Bible says...don't let women lord over men
- 10. Slide...The 3rd qualification is being of a good reputation
 - a. Someone who is not a liar...or thief...or a gossip...or new to the faith...a person who keeps their word...and pays their bills...lives honestly
- 11. Slide...The 4th qualification is that they had to be full of the Holy Spirit
 - a. I think this qualification goes without saying...any leader to be filled with the Holy Spirit
 - b. A person...who puts the kingdom of God...way above...the kingdom of self
- 12. Slide...The 5th qualification is they need to have wisdom
 - a. I know lots of people...who have lots of knowledge...but don't have wisdom

- b. Wisdom...is when the correct application of scriptural knowledge...is applied correctly...with truth...love...and grace...and compassion
- c. So people can receive what God is trying so desperately to teach them
- d. I said earlier...I would tell you...how you know it is a working of the Holy Spirit...verse 5 tells us

13. Acts 6:5 Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith).

14. Slide...All the names are Greek names

- a. Remember...in verse 1...the Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers
- b. The Greek speaking believers...complained that their Greek widows were being discriminated against...in the daily distribution of food
- c. There are no Hebrew names...only Greek names...the complainers
- d. Let this be a lesson...those who complain...because God will often ask you to fix the problem...its happened to me
- e. What is going on...is an amazing lesson in grace...by teaching the Greek speaking people...how to more graceful to others...
- f. I know one thing for sure...you don't want to be a hypocrite in that church
- g. Here the Greek speaking believers...now have the opportunity to practice what they preach...right...go Holy Spirit

15. Acts 6:6-7, 6 These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. 7 So God's message continued to spread. The

number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

- a. In verse 6...we see the apostles confirm the churches decision...by laying on with hands
- b. They laid hands in order to identify them...as being one with the apostles
- c. The second reason to lay on of hands is to confirm their ministries...or rather affirm the calling in their lives
- d. Pastor Chuck Smith would say...God appoints...and man anoints
- e. Be careful to count the cost of leadership...because guess who is coming under the attack..from the enemy

16. Acts 6:8 Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people.

- a. Read that again...I am not as excited about the power...or the miracles and signs...which confirmed the Holy Spirit approved of Stephen
- b. What I am wowed by...is the statement...a man full of God's grace
- c. Maybe...one of the complainers learned what grace truly is
- d. We will see the greatest example of this kind of grace...when we read Stephen's last prayer...shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!"
- e. It was the same prayer of Jesus...while on the cross

17. Acts 6:9-10, 9 But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. 10 None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

18. Slide...Persecution comes when God is working through us

- a. Synagogues were not around until the Babylonian captivity
- b. They were formed...as a way to study God's word and worship God when the Jews were unable to go to the temple
- c. The Sadducees were in charge of the temple...while Pharisees were in charge of the synagogues
- d. The Talmud tells us there were approximately 390 synagogues in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus
- e. This particular synagogue...was made up of...ex-slaves who were freed from slavery in 19BC. by Tiberius Caesar
- f. History tells us that a Roman General named Pomp-pay...
- g. Took enormous amounts of slaves...during his victories in north Africa... including Israel...and Cilicia...a province of Asia
- h. Cilicia has a city in it...called Tarsus...which is where Saul or Paul is from
- i. This synagogue is also made up of ½ breeds...Paul was Jewish and Roman...and born a free roman citizen
- j. It is rumored that this synagogue may have been Paul's synagogue...which is very fascinating...especially when we get to chapter 7
- k. The scripture tells us...that Stephen...who is full of the Holy Spirit...and the grace of God
- l. Was able to show wisdom...so much so...that the Pharisees could not debate against what Stephen was teaching

m. So in keeping with the theme of the book of Acts...what does a lying spirit do...when it can't win...or change you

19. Acts 6:11-12, 11 So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God." 12 This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council.

- a. Notice this is the same spirit of division...dissention...back biting
- b. The apostles were preaching Jesus...in the temple...and the Sadducees were upset...and they arrested the apostles
- c. Now Stephen in getting in the business of the Pharisees...in the synagogue of the freed slaves
- d. They were unable to outwit Stephen...so now they arrest Stephen...place his on trial
- e. Stephen is being accused of the same crimes of Jesus...but don't forget what we learned about Stephen...he was given the grace of God
- f. So as we know...in chapter 7...Stephen is going to die for His faith

20. Acts 6:13-14, 13 The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. 14 We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

- a. Oh no...not the temple...not the customs...not the traditions...you didn't
- b. They claimed to be freed slaves...but...they were still slaves to the tradition of religion...they are slaves to the lying spirit at work here

- c. Stephen was only trying to point them to Jesus...and the truth of scripture...Stephen was doing ministry...and they despised Stephen for it
- d. Instead of desiring the true freedom of Jesus...**they kill...the things that...reminds them...they are not free...but bound to false religion**
- e. It reveals the condition of their heart...it shows...that they have chosen the lying spirit...over truth
- f. Again they know the truth about Jesus...but refuse to come into agreement with the truth...
- g. It's not that they don't know the know the truth...but chose to not apply Christ to their life

21. Acts 6:15 At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.

- a. Stephen's face became bright...God is hoping they would see the truth...and repent...or change...or turn from the lie
- b. Steven held his peace...and said nothing...to defend himself...from all the lying accusations...just Jesus did...a man of the grace of God
- c. Really what else could Stephen say...they knew the truth...but refused to repent...they refused to change...they refused truth
- d. Don't waste your time with people who know the truth...and refuse to repent...
- e. What a section of scripture that defines for us...or reveals a word picture of the grace of God...of what ministry looks like
- f. How the lying spirit penetrates our hearts...the church...and our ministries