

Title: Wanted: Spiritual Men

Text: Acts 6:1-7

Actz chapter 6, please, as we continue our study of this great book. We are beginning with Vs 1 and going through Vs 7. Our subject: WANTED! SPIRITUAL MEN!.

(Read Acts 6:1-7)

Prayer

In our last couple of Sunday mornings together we have been dealing with the matter of the Apostles witness and the fact that they were preaching and teaching in the name of Christ. And the Pharisees were trying to keep them quiet. And we discovered that a basic principle was controlling their life. And that is that we ought to obey God rather than men.

And we have been discussing in our services, here, the importance of going God's way no matter what it cost us. That even tomorrow as we face our world, we are going to be challenged, we are going to be tested as to whether or not we will obey God rather than man.

When our boss down at work tells us to do something that is ~~cond~~ contrary to the Word of God, that is the test of our commitment. When we are forced to lie and be hypocritical and dishonest in our way of life, then we are disobeying God's Word. For it is never right to lie...it is never right to be dishonest.

And then last week we learned something further. We learned that the Apostles were beaten. The word "beaten" is a word coming from the Greek meaning "to skin". They were beaten until their backs were bleeding. And yet, these men walk out of there rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His name's sake. And daily in the Temple, and in the market place of Jersuelem, and in every house they kept on teaching and preaching Jesus Christ.

And it came to us, again, as a congregation into my own heart that we suffer so little for Christ. And probable the basic reason is because we have not determined to obey God rather than men.

And after knowing all this back ground we come to chapter 6, interestly I believe, because in Chapter 6 we are faced with a practical church problem that was eating away at the inside. Persecution from without. And now a problem from within.

Our subject today is: WANTED! SPIRITUAL MEN!

(1)I would like to point out to you at least four reasons behind this need for spiritual men. Four reason that immidiately came to the Apostles attention.

(1) Number one, according to Vs 1, there was an increase in the number of disciples. Vs 1 says, "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number."

Now, how many were there? Conservitive estimates put the number around 20 to 25 thousand disciples by this time. Perhaps a month....perhaps two to three months since the day of Pentecost. No one really knows. But in a short period of time since the day of Pentecost the church has grown to 20 to 25 thousand disciples. Fantastic growth as the message of the resurrected Christ as spread throughout the area. "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing."

So, the need for spiritual men. The more people you have the more need for spiritual men.

(2) A second reason why they saw a need for spritual men was the complaints that came from the Hellenistic Jews. You will notice in Vs 1 it says that, "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."

Now, what was a "Hellenistic Jew"? A Hellenistic Jew was a Jew that was jborn and raised in a land other than Palestine. He was a foreign born Jew. He did not speak the native tongue of Palestine. He spoke Greek and he also read from the Greek translation of the Hebrew O.T. And this was a constant problem between the Hellenistic and the Hebrews.

The Hebrew was the person born in Palestine. He spoke Hebrew or Aramic. He read the Hebrew O.T.

And in the Synagogue we have records outside of the Bible that indicate the tension that existed between the Hellenist and the Hebrew. And now it has come into the church. Naturally so..because they were winning people to Christ from all walks of life. They knew no class distinctions and ~~nation~~ nationalists. For the Bible says whether Jew or Gentile, all are one in Christ. Whether male or female, bond or free. No matter what your nationalite, no matter what the color of your skin is, the Bible says we are all one in Jesus Christ.

And so they had the problem here with the Hellenistic Jews. Jews from foreign lands that did not speak the same language. Think about it. What if we have four or five ~~a~~ languages in this congregation this morning. So, a complaint arose..They were up set. Because the Hellenist ~~id~~ did not feel that the widows they had, widows who had no visible means of support, were receiving an equal share of the food to meet their needs. They felt that the native Hebrews were being favored over the Hellenistic Jews.

There was a problem. And spiritual men are need to handle problems like this.....

(3) And the third reason why spiritual men are needed was a financial need.

The end of Vs 1 says that the "widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of ~~good~~ food.

You see, the Bible teaches the care of widows. You will find this teaching in I Timothy chapter 5. Widows, who have no means of support, are to be cared for by the church. Widows who have no family, who are over 65 years of age, who have lived a life dedicated to Christ and their life has borne fruit. And with that in mind, we are to care for them as a church.

And so were they. And you will remember back in chapter 4 they had pooled all their resources and all their money. And now someone had to watch over this money and see to it that it was distributed according to needs. And with all the multitudes of the disciples, the Hellenist were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. ~~So~~, they need spiritual men to handle the problem.

It is interesting that in Vs 1 the word "Serving" is the word that gives us our English word "Deacon."....Deacon...They were overlooked in the daily service, daily deaconship.

(4) Then we learn that there was a four reason why the Apostles saw the need of spiritual men, and perhaps the most important reason of all. And that was because of the ministry of the Apostles.

Notice, please, Vs 2 and vs 4. In Vs 2 it says, "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.""

Vs 4..."But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."

Now, something interesting in Vs 2. The word "serve" is the same word that I mentioned ~~at~~ at the end of Vs 1....."SERVING"....SERVE"....SAME WORD... DEACON....."It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

Now, what tables?....Some people say, "well, this is the table that was set at the Lord's supper, the Love feast.".....No, I do not believe so. Because the food was ~~bring~~ brought by the participants to those love feast and shared with the needy. It is not those tables.

This is a business term that is used ~~often~~ often. For example: do you remember when Jesus was in the Temple. And he was casting out the money changers. And ~~He~~ He over-turned the tables of money.

The point: when ~~Jesus~~ he said that we should not serve tables, is that we should not be administering the money.....Instead we should serve the Word of God. And not serve tables.

So, we are to find spiritual men in the congregation to handle this matter. Because it is not pleasing to leave the Word of God. IT IS NOT PLEASE TO WHOM?...It is not pleasing to God. And it is not pleasing to people who are hungry to hear the Word of God.

Friends, I hope this text preaches to your hearts this morrow. It ~~preaching~~ certainly preaches to my heart. Because the Bible says PREACH THE WORD....

We get so ~~at~~ tired up in all kinds of responsibilitites. But, our main responsibility, according jto the Bible, is to teach the Word of God. ~~And??~~ ~~can't? believe? this? is? just? referring? to? the? professional? pastor??~~ Because Paul wrote to Timothy, "Study to show thyself ~~a~~ approved unto God, a workmen that needth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Ephesians chapter 4:11 says that God gave gifts unto the church: GIFTED MEN. He gave some Apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers.

WHAT FOR?....."to equip the saints for the work of the ministry." And the word "ministry" again is our idea of "deacon."

The Pastors according to the Word of God are to equip the christians for the work of serving and ministries.....

And, every day I must remaind myself, that I am to ~~give~~^{devote} myself to prayer and the ministry of the Word.

And to the congregation I would say, that whoever is your Pastor, it is your responsibility to see to it that he gives himself continurely to prayer and the ministry of the Word. If ~~you~~ he doesn't, then ~~you~~ you get rid of him. And find someone who is true to the Word of God... Someone who will devote himself to Prayer and the ministry of the word.

Perhaps, dear friends, the greatest revival~~s~~ that could happen to the Churches of American would be among we who call ourselves THE PASTORS. If ~~we~~^{pastor} we would give ourselves to the Ministry of the Word of God and prayer. That is the primary task of the Past~~er~~^{or}, regardless of the sieze of his church.

If you are visiting here today and you are a member of a church, I am not critizing your church. I am critizing myself and every paster. But if your are not in a church where they teach and preach God's Word, then find one The Bible says that Pastor are to teach and preach the Word of God. And to devote yourself to this ministry.

So, this is the basic reason why we need spiritual men to handle the other problems.

(2) Now, I would like you to notice in Vs 3, please, the responsibility in finding and using these men.....WHERE DOES IT LIE?....

Vs 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."

I would ~~you~~ like you to notice three things in this verse.

(1) Number one, regarding our responsibility is that the Pastors must bring the need before the people. "But select from among you,". The Apostles said that!

(2) Secondly, the congregation, the people themselves, are to look among themselves. Literally, "to look upon." You say, "What does that mean?" Does that mean at a given meeting to look around and say, "I wonder if John Doe would be good in this job?" Or, if Jane Doe would be good in this area?"

No! that is not what it means. The idea of "look upon" or "select from" means to "inspect thoroughly"... "to examine with the eyes",,,

It is talking about a congregation of people who will look over their entire congregation, and will inspect, investigate, examine completely as to the quality of people that are there as to who should be in this place of service. It is not to be handled lightly.

(3) And then third, according to Vs 3, the Pastors are to appoint them over this business. And I say to you that if we Pastors fail to do this, then there is no one to blame but ourselves. We are not being good overseers.

It is interesting that the word "task" at the end of Vs 3 is simply the word for "need".

Why should we have people serve in the church in offices and responsibilities? Why? Because of a need. Not just simply to have an office. Not simply to have an organization. But because of a need. If the need exist, then we need spiritual men to meet that need,

(3) Then I would like you to notice in the third place the requirements according to the Bible for spiritual men in a local church. What are the requirements?

(1) In Vs 3 again, the first requirement is that it must be among the congregation/ of disciples. It says, "select from among you, seven men of good reputation."

Why do I point that out? Because it is talking about disciples. Men who have come to know Jesus Christ. Men who have taken Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. We must be believers. Not just anyone will do.

I heard of a church that was doing everything possible to get people from the community to be officers in their church in order to have some effect upon that community. I say to you that that is not Biblical. We are to look among the people of the church, the congregation, the local assembly of believers. And it is there among believers that we select these men. So, number one, they must be believers.

(2) Number two, they must be men of good reputation. Men who are known for their good character. They are honest. They have a witness. They have a reputation among the believers for being "good". Men who have witnessed to the quality of their life.

I think how easy it is to have problems in the church because spiritual men are not selected from the brethren. And folks I believe that when we ask people to serve in this church that we should be careful who we set apart. And this applies to the woman as well as the men. We need to ask ourselves the question: whose life testifies to a good witness of the Word of God? Men who have proven by their testimony that they are men of good reputation...

(3) And third, he must be full of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Spiritual men. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

You read that a lot. You hear it a lot. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FILLED OR FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

In three cases in the N.T. that phrase is used with an ~~ex~~ illustration. It is used in the 2 chapter of Acts....In Luke chapter 1 verse 15...and in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18. The three passages where an illustration is used to show what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And it is used with drunkenness. ~~On the~~

On the day of Pentecost when those men who stood up to ~~prach~~ preach, Peter and the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, it says that these men were full of new wine....

In Like 1:15, speaking of John the Baptist, it says that "he will drink no wine or liquor; but he will be filled with the Holy Spirit." The two are contrasted...

In Ephesians 5:18, Paul says, "Be not drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit."

What does it mean?

Now, I could say that all of you who have been drunk in the past know what this means. But that would be a reflection.....

And we trust that none of you were...But some of you have had experience in the past which you would like to forget.

But, being drunk with wine means being under the control of wine. You lose your sense of ability. It seems to take you over. Rather than you controlling it. ~~The~~

The point is that when a person is under the control of the Holy Spirit, God has taken over his life. There is a firm determination within his heart that God is going to be first in his life. That he is controlled by God's Holy Spirit. Not controlled by his own selfish interest and desires.

And friends, over a period of time you can tell who manifest the fulness of the Holy Spirit, and who manifest a fulness of the flesh.

Now, it is going to be hard to discern in any one moment. But, over a period of time if a person is being witnessed to, you soon come to understand that the person, in spite of his faults and mistakes, the person who is dedicated to God, God is going to be first in his life. And the person who is dedicated to himself and his own interest will also show. And people begin to divide into two camps.

(5) And then the fifth requirement is that he be full of wisdom. And I believe that the word "wisdom" qualifies the meaning of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Because the two words are put together..."FULL OF THE SPIRIT AND OF WISDOM."

The point is that it qualifies and explains...the fulness of the Holy Spirit. The one attribute of the Holy Spirit's control that is most needed is wisdom.

Would you turn, please, to the book of James. James chapter 3... James chapter 3 and beginning at Vs 13. James 3 verse 13.....

(Read James 3:13-18)

What a beautiful text. What is the point? The point is there is a contrast between the wisdom of the man who is not controlled by the Spirit, and the wisdom of the man who is. And the great need in churches today is spiritual men who have spiritual wisdom.

And there are two things that stand out in my mind about Vs 17... Actually each word there is important: pure...peaceable,..gentle..reasonable.. full of mercy...good fruits. But the last two stand out in my mind.... "UNWAVERING" and "without HYPOCRISY."

Spiritual men understand that God is no respecter of persons. Spiritual men are not interested in putting on a front or a show. Spiritual men stand open before God with all of their faults and all of their sins. And they come to God by faith and say, "Oh, God, I need you." "I need you more than anything"

I firmly believe that in my own heart and in the churches as I see them, that one of the great needs is that a lot of us just don't need God anymore. We get to operating as though we don't need Him anymore. We have come to accept Christ in our lives and we believe in him. But we live like we don't need Him. We operate daily as though we are complete sufficient in ourselves. The great need of the hour is for people to come on their knees before God and say, "I NEED YOU! I NEED CHRIST! I NEED GOD'S HELP!"

God never gets tired of us crying out for HELP.....And one of the first ladders, if you please, to spiritual power is to recognize that you need help from God.....SPIRITUAL MEN.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS OF SELECTING THESE SPIRITUAL MEN? I think these are tremendous. Come back, please, to Acts 6... Vs 5....The results.... (1) Number one, the congregation was pleased. You know, when spiritual men are leading the church the congregation is pleased. Vs 5 says that the "statement found approval with the whole congregation". All the Christians found approval. 20 to 25 thousand of them?....YES!!! All gave approval. The whole congregation was happy to have spiritual men leading ~~the~~^{the} church....

Notice, also, that the congregation did the choosing, according to Vs 5. "THEY CHOSE"....The word means "to choose out for oneself." It is used of God choosing us before the foundation of the world. They chose out for themselves.

It is also interesting to me that they chose 7 men all with Greek names. Don't let that one slip by you...

What was the problem in the church? It was a problem between the Hellenistic Jews and the Native Hebrews. Isn't it interesting that they all have Greek names?

Some say that there is no importance to this. But, personally I believe there is. Now, it doesn't mean that they were Greek men. Because we know that many of the Jews had Greek names. Even the apostle, for example, had Greek names. But, it is interesting to me that all 7 had Greek names. They were Hellenistic Jews. And you see, the Spirit of God had led the congregation to choose just the right men, for this job.

The two that are put at the top, Stephen and Philip, will become quite important in the book of Acts. Because they as good deacons are out preaching Christ. They are witnessing as good soul winners. And the testimony of their life in the book of Acts is outstanding.....7 men....

Then.....What else happen? Notice in Vs 6..."The apostles identified with them and prayed for them. It says, "these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them."

Now, what does that mean? Why does somebody lay their hands on somebody? You have seen that happen. It happens at ORDINATION SERVICES.... CONFIRMATION SERVICES....INSTALLATIONS SERVICES.....The laying on of hands... WHY?.....According to my understanding of the O.T. there were three usages of the laying on of hands.

(1) One, was that of offering a blessing. It was a way of demonstration a blessing.

(2) Secondly, it was an expression of identification. When the Priest put his hands on the animal, he was identifying with that animal that was taking his place in the sacrifice. It was all looking to Christ. The one who would die. To be the lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world.

(3) He identified with them. And thirdly, it was used in commissioning someone. Such as a king or a Priest...

It may mean that all three were ~~attended~~ intended. For we know that in the early church they practiced the laying on of hands. Especial in the choosing of Elders and Deacons. They laied their hands on them.

But, here is what I really want to shasre with you. The Apostles identified with those men.

Oh, Pastors, don't ever operate separately from the men who serve with you in the church. Even now and then at a gathering of Pastor's I hear some Pastor say, "I have the toughest Deacon board in the world"....

Oh, don't ever say that! I thank God for the men in our church. But oh how we need spiritual men. And the Pastor and men need to identify together in the work of God. Why? Because we have a task to do. A task that demands all of our abilities and commitment ~~to~~ to Christ. Together we serve. Not as Pastor and deacons. But as men in the body of Christ.

What else happened!. There are three more results that are found in Vs 7...f

(4) It says that "the Word of God kept on spreading". Oh, I like that! It kept on spreading. Why? Because spiritual men were taking over ~~the~~ ^{care} of the task of the Pastors. Pluse the fact that the Word of God was spreading because more were responding to it. Now, that the business was ~~the~~ being taking care of...now that the complaints had stopped.....And so, the Word of God grew and spread.

(5) And fiveth, it says "that the number of disciples continued to increase" The church continued to grow...And you know that is thrilling. Spiritual men...choosen by the congregation to serve.....resulted in the cisciples continuing to increase. People coming to the Lord because they see the testamony and witnesss and the dedication of men serving christ.

And I say to each of the man and ladies of this church that if we would only see the importance of being spiritual people, we would see this church filled and over flowing. Spiritual people living their testamony for Christ.

(6) Then we see a final result which is most interesting at the end of Vs 7

It says that "a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith

And these are the results, the remarks made because 7 men were chosen. Spiritual men....And think about that? The religious leaders of the day were converted to Christ. A great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.....PRAISE GOD.....To be that is thrilling.

Laymen...Spiritual...full of wisdom....And the result is that religious leaders were converted to Christ. A great company of priests turned to the Lord and were obedient to the faith.

I don't know where you stand today. You may be here without Jesus Christ. You have never come to a personal relationship with Him. You have never seen the one who died on the cross for your sins. You have never said, "LORD! I NEED YOU AS MY SAVIOUR AND MY LORD.!" You have never opened your heart to him

The Bible says that Christ is standing at the door of your life and he is knocking. And if any man would hear his voice and open the door and invite Jesus to come in, he said: "I WILL COME IN".....

Jesus said, that he who comes to him, he will not cast out.

If you have never received Christ, we invite you to do that ~~do~~ today.

My message has been centered in Christian people. People who know Christ. And I have two things in mind for the Christians.

(1) One, that we recognize our responsibility of having spiritual men serving us in the church.

(2) The second thing that I have in mind is that all of us have an impact in our community that if we only knew it would change the course of our lives. If we knew what people say about us. If we knew how much of a testimony we have or we don't have. If we knew the effect of a little compromise here or a little dishonesty here, a little lie there...if we only knew.

May I say that more important than all of that, God knows. And we cannot fool him. God knows where we stand. And the great need of the hour is for people to commit themselves, 100% to God. To say, "NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE BE DONE.".....WE OUGHT TO OBEY GOD, RATHER THAN MEN...

LET US CLOSE IN PRAYER