

Theme: Ministry *in* the church is as important as the ministry *of* the church. God raises up servants to lead in providing for the “feeding” and care of the church and to preserve the unity of the church.

Introduction: The church will always be under attack – either inwardly or outwardly. God provides leaders/servants to see that difficulties and differences don’t become divisions.

I. A Church Divided – Its Unity Is Threatened

A. Language Barriers – complaint by the Hellenists

- Greek vs Hebrew/Aramaic
- Meeting in 100 or more “house churches”

B. Backgrounds/Cultures (Hellenists/Hebrews)

- Both groups were Jewish in heritage and faith (and to a greater or lesser degree, in genealogical descent)
- All had to deal with the culture
- We have to deal with culture, too.

C. Physical Needs

- Beauty of richer caring for poorer
- But not being done evenly

D. Prejudices?

- Complaint specifically against the Hebrews –
- May be well founded – but maybe not

NOTE: Are we always ready to think the worst of another brother/sister? Or to give judgment of charity until we are proved wrong in our judgment of grace and peace?

E. Ministry Needs – Two legitimate areas

- Serve tables (diakonein 6:2) verb
- service of the word (diakonia 6:4) noun

NOTE: Both are the work of servants! Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 4:10-11

II. A Church United – Its Unity Preserved and Protected

A. A Legitimate Concern

1. A Worldly Concern - widows are going hungry
2. A Spiritual Concern - can’t forget our calling/task – preach the word, prayer!

B. A Divine Solution

1. Look for Men “of good repute and full of the Spirit and of wisdom.”
2. Let the Lord lead you in choosing
 - The Lord chooses servants
 - Through the church itself.
 - Different methods – but still the Lord’s choosing
 - The church “selects” and the Apostles “appoint”NOTE: This is the heart of the Presbyterian form of government.
3. Those who would serve – Who was picked?
 - 1st on the list? Man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit – Stephen
 - Last – a *proselyte* from Antioch
 - Godly men, men of courage and steeped in the Word.
4. Example of service to the whole church
 - Their main task is *in the church*.
 - Their task outside the body? *Preach the truth!*

III. A Healthy Church – Growing in Faith and Number

- v. 1 They were increasing in number.
- They hit a pothole.
- v.7 And the word continued to increase.

IV. The Church Today – United or Divided? **IMPORTANT:** Unity of the church – in the church - really matters! It is the Lord Jesus who not only builds the church, but he provides it with all it needs to grow.

- A. Unity – not Uniformity!
- B. Resisting Homogeneity
- C. Unity in Diversity of Gifts

God can put together all the jagged pieces that are gathered in the name of Christ – into a body, *the church*. He can overcome culture, custom, preference, language, fear, distrust – by the power and work of the Holy Spirit, showing His faithful, self-sacrificing love in wisdom and grace.

Questions For Thought/Discussion:

- How is church divided today? /What kinds of issues divide the church today?
- Where do we see disparity in the churches? Needs being met?
- What kind of prejudices do we carry into the church?
- Do we see the beauty/power of the “offices” of the church?
- Why is the issue of character foremost in selection?