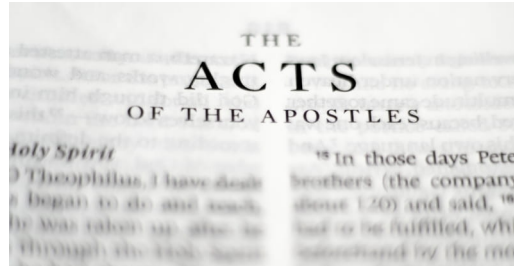


Dr. Edward O. Williamson, Pastor-teacher
Bible Study and Discussion Group
Topic: The Book of Acts



Handout #2 – The Early Church Grows: Chapters 6-8

Key verse: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Outline (from The Knowledge Bible Commentary – NT Volume):

- I. The Witness in Jerusalem (1:1-6:7)
- II. The Witness in all Judea and Samaria (6:8-9:31)**
- III. The Witness to the End of the Earth (9:32-28:31)

Chapter 6-8

- I. Administration In The Church -- The Seven Chosen (Acts 6:1-7)
 - a. The complaint concerning the widows – v. 1
 - i. The Grecian Jews (Hellenist)
 - ii. The Aramaic Jews (Hebrews)
 - iii. Complaints of favoritism and prejudice in the early church
 - iv. In general widows were cared for by the Jews
 - b. The first church meeting – vs. 2-6
 - i. The dilemma – ministry of the word vs. ministry of the table
 - ii. The solution – vs. 3-4
 - 1. Choose from among you seven good men that we may appoint over this business
 - 2. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word
 - 3. Important principle for church today: “God calls all his people to ministry, that he calls different people to different ministries, and that those called to prayer and the ministry of the word must on no account allow themselves

to be distracted from their priorities. (John Stott, *The Message of Acts*)

4. Stott states, “The work of the Twelve and the work of the Seven are alike called diakonia, ministry or service. Neither ministry is superior to the other. Both ministries are ways of serving God and his people. Both require spiritual people, ‘full of the Spirit’, to exercise them. And both can be full-time Christian ministries. The only difference between them lies in the form the ministry takes, requiring different gifts and different callings...

“Diakonia is a generic word for service; it lacks specificity until a descriptive adjective is added, whether ‘pastoral’, ‘social’, ‘political’, ‘medical’, or another. All Christians without exception, being followers of him who came ‘not to be served but to serve’, are themselves called to ministry, indeed to give their lives in ministry...We need to recover this vision of the wide diversity of ministries to which God calls his people...It is vital for the health and growth of the church that pastors and people in the local congregation learn this lesson.”

- c. The result – vs. 5-6
 - i. The people are pleased
 - ii. The seven are chosen (they appear to have Greek names)
 - iii. They are set before the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them (this was an act of commissioning and setting apart for specific service)
- d. The church continues to grow – v. 7

II. The Ministry of Stephen: The First Christian Martyr – vs. 6:8-7:60

- a. The arrest and trial are similar to Jesus – vs. 6:8-15
 - i. Stephen was full of faith and power, and did great signs and wonders
 - ii. The actions of the Synagogue of the Freedmen
 1. Disputed with Stephen
 2. Unable to the wisdom and Spirit by which he (Stephen) spoke
 - iii. Used false witnesses and stirred up the people to bring Stephen before the Jewish court (Sanhedrin)

- b. Stephen's Address – vs. 7:2-53
 - i. Three ideas
 - 1. There is progress and change in God's program
 - 2. The blessings of God are not limited to the land and the temple area
 - 3. Israel in its past always evidenced a pattern of opposition to God's plan and His men
- c. The Attack on Stephen – v. 7:54-8:3
 - i. The response to Stephen's message – vs. 7:54
 - ii. Stephen's vision – 7:55-56
 - iii. Stephen's martyr – 7:57—8:2
 - iv. Introduction to Saul (Paul) & Persecution of the Church – 7:58, 8:1,3)

III. The Word Is Preached In Samaria – 8:4-40

- a. Philip preaches in Samaria – vs. 1-8
- b. Simon the Sorcerer – vs. 9-13
- c. The Sorcerer's Sin – vs. 14-25

IV. Philip Teaches The Ethiopian Eunuch – 8:26-40

- a. An angel of the Lord spoke to Philip – v. 26
- b. The Ethiopian Eunuch – vs. 27-28
- c. The Eunuch was reading scripture – vs. 29-35
- d. The Eunuch believes and is baptized – vs. 36-40

Concluding Questions & Comments:

Closing prayer

Reading:

Lent Guide for 2023: Lent-The Road Less Traveled

Commentary suggestion: The Message of Acts by John Stott