

**LESSONS THIS QUARTER**

- 1) 6 March 2016..... Acts 1 ..... Entrusted
- 2) 13 March..... Acts 2 ..... Empowered and Unified
- 3) 20 March..... Acts 3 ..... Benevolent
- 4) 27 March..... Luke 24 ..... Resurrected!
- 5) 3 April..... Acts 4 ..... Courageous
- 6) 10 April..... Acts 5 ..... Integrity & Faithful
- 7) 17 April..... Acts 6 ..... Selfless**
- 8) 24 April..... Acts 7 ..... Forgiving
- 9) 1 May..... Acts 8 ..... Obedient
- 10) 8 May..... Acts 9 ..... Converted & Bold
- 11) 15 May..... Acts 10 ..... Accepting
- 12) 22 May..... Acts 11 ..... Engaging
- 13) 29 May..... Acts 12 ..... Extraordinary

**INTRODUCTION**

- Every church is only 1 generation away from apostasy & collapse
- Problems within the early church had to be quickly resolved for it to continue growing in the right direction – spiritually and numerically
- What are some key attributes of a healthy growing church of God?
  - Number of Baptisms |  Numerical Growth |  Attendance
  - Number of Programs |  Number of workers/contributors
  - Spiritual Growth (How would you judge this?)
  - Healthy Bank Account (all bills paid plus reserve)
  - Other attributes: \_\_\_\_\_
- What are some top concerns churches need to resolve before they undermine and even destroy unity and ministry?
  - Facility issues, such as the color of the new carpet
  - Doctrinal issues, such as the acceptance of same-sex unions
  - Financial issues, such as salary raises of staff vs fix the boiler
  - Practical issues, such as taking care of weaker members
  - Ministry issues, such as reaching out to another culture
  - Relational issues, such as quarrels among members
  - None of the above |  Some of the above |  All of the above
  - Other issues: \_\_\_\_\_

| Passage | Comments   |
|---------|--|
|         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What makes a church successful is spiritually qualified and mature leaders (elders) who rely on God to help them biblically guide, protect, train, and serve the flock; and humbled followers who willingly support and submit themselves to those in an overseeing role</li> <li>• <b>Remember this.</b> A church is only as strong as its leaders, and yet, a bad populace leads God to remove good leaders from them..... <a href="#">Jer 3:14-15</a></li> </ul>   |
| 6:5-6   | <p><b>Special Men are Selected to Serve Widows</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can only assume these 7 men were the church's first set of deacons, but the word for deacon "διακονος diakonos" is never used in Acts or of these men</li> <li>• Why men to minister to widows? Wouldn't women be better?</li> <li>• What does a man "full of faith &amp; of the Holy Spirit" look like? Can we point out any examples of such men today?</li> <li>• Notice the process for Deacon selection: 1) Apostles give the congregation mandate to select the right men; 2) the congregation then present these men to the Apostles; 3) and the Apostles commission the men (This is evidence of an elder-rule, not elder-led or congregation-led church)</li> </ul>  |
| 6:7     | <p><b>Church Problems Fixed – Church Growth Continues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We must always be aware of "big" issues in church that need immediate and direct attention. To let such issues linger and fester does not promote church unity or church growth</li> <li>• Notice that "a large number of priests became believers"                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ We can impact the most hard-hearted people with God's word told in a loving way backed up with godly behavior</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |
| 6:8-15  | <p><b>Stephen Performs Great Signs and Wonders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stephen was not only full of faith and the Holy Spirit, but he was also full of God's grace and power. He was uniquely endowed to work "great wonders &amp; miraculous signs"</li> <li>• We may not be able to work signs and wonders today, but we can still pray to speak in such a way to baffle and even to convert the critics – and yes, possibly even to get martyred                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ When signs &amp; wonders stopped (<a href="#">Heb 2:3-4</a>) Paul asked for prayers that God would open doors and that he and others would speak boldly, and make it clear in the way they ought to speak (with salt)..... <a href="#">Eph 6:19-20</a>; <a href="#">Col 4:3-4</a></li> <li>➔ <b>If Paul prayed this way, so should we, but do we?</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

**CONCLUSION / APPLICATIONS**

- Church problems are not always a bad thing. If Satan is attacking it, this could mean the church is marching in the right direction.
- External persecution actually promotes church growth, and we should expect it if we are truly doing ministry God's way
- Internal persecution (what we cause ourselves) such as relational, money, and ministry issues, should be of short duration and have very minimal impact because the Bible gives us instructions on how to resolve or endure those problems (2 Tim 3:16-17)

**NEXT WEEK: Acts 7.** The first church martyr, Stephen, is a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. God is not partial to anyone, so what keeps us from being full of faith and of the Holy Spirit?



PREACHER, IF THINGS DON'T PICK UP PRETTY SOON, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO PRAY ABOUT IT

| Passage   | Comments  |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| Acts 6:1-4  | <p><b>Know Your Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• v1. Expect problems, "...when the number of the disciples was multiplied there arose a murmuring..." – Having problems in a growing church is a good sign. We get to see Biblical principles put into action as God's people rise to the occasion (<a href="#">1Cor 11:19</a>). Problems get fixed, God gets the glory, &amp; the church grows</li> <li>• vv2,4. "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God... [we must] give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Why is praying and teaching God's word so critical to church health and growth? Not music, not programs, not even evangelization mattered as much.</li> <li>♦ <b>Consider this.</b> Praying empowers us, and accurately conveying God's word both saves and matures the congregation to do the work of the ministry ..... <a href="#">2Tim 3:15-16</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |   |  |
| <b>Major Types of Church Polity (governing style)</b>   |   |   |  |
| Elder-Rule. Elders govern the church with congregational support (example, Deacon selection, buy in for church relocation, etc.)  | Elder-Led. Elders lead with congregational oversight (example, Elders make recommendations with congregational approval)  | Congregation-Rule. Elders are basically paid staff, and church is often run as a business model with committees making policy |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any of these models can successfully fulfill God's desired will, and any of these models can fall prey to unscrupulous behavior such as churches being manipulated by a few members who either have the charisma, money, or the majority of voting members on their side</li> <li>• Even if the churches listed in Revelation 2-3 started off on the right foot with the right church polity, 5 out of 7 of them fell victim to corruption. Sardis became a dead church; Ephesus had truth, but no love; Pergamum held to false doctrines; Thyatira tolerated immorality; and Laodicea had wealth but no zeal; – Yet, Christ acknowledged them as His Church, and He applauded the true believers who were in them for hanging tough and remaining faithful</li> </ul> |   |   |  |