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Discrimination & Division (Acts 6:1-7)

The early church encountered a problem that we still have today...

Acts 6:1, In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

- Hebraic Jewish Christians embraced the Jewish culture (they were the majority group) & Hellenistic Jewish Christians embraced the Greek culture (they were the minority group).
- Satan is trying to divide the church with the sin of discrimination which is rooted in the sin of racism.
- Galatians 3:26-29, 26 *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
- God cares so much about unity that Jesus was sent to die to unite the Jews & Gentiles. This is a core gospel issue:
 - The gospel brings different people together.
 - The gospel tears down superficial barriers by highlighting our deepest similarity: sin & separation from God.
 - If we want to exalt Jesus then we must lower the differences we have with others below the common ground we have in Him!

- If we want to exalt Jesus we must prove how powerful the gospel is to unite diverse neighbors on the common ground at the cross.

How did the apostles respond to this complaint?

Acts 6:2-4, 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

- The church must be willing to call any division caused by racism, discrimination, or prejudice a spiritual problem, not a political problem.
- The solution for the discrimination required people full of the Spirit & wisdom!
- They (1) lovingly listened to the complaint, (2) acknowledged it, and (3) acted by making sensitive cultural adjustments.

A solution existed that had spiritual & practical steps:

Acts 6:5, This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

- The 7 men all had Greek names, and they were likely all Hellenists. In this, the apostles showed great cultural sensitivity.
- When problems are solved spiritually and practically, everyone can be happy, not just one group.

How does God respond when there is true unity?

Acts 6:7, So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

- He blessed His church when it became a truer gospel witness.
- A lack of unity is a direct contradiction of the goal to “make disciples of all nations”, and it negatively impacts Christ’s mission.

Spiritual & Practical Steps We Can Take Today:

- LEARN: Visit @go2cornerstone on Instagram to see a list of black pastors & ministries that our staff appreciates, and then follow their accounts.
- DISCUSS: By joining a *Race & The Gospel* life group this fall. You can sign up today at Go2Cornerstone.com/groups.
- READ & EAT: This afternoon you’re invited to read a short 10-minute booklet: *A Compassionate Call to Counter Culture in a World of Racism* by David Platt (grab it in the lobby on your way out). Then at 4:30 today come to my house (address is in the book) for dinner and a discussion about racism with myself and my friend Alfonso Kirk. It’ll be a safe place to ask questions, stretch our perspectives, and pray together for unity.