

**Acts 6:1 ¶ And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.**

As the church continued to grow, it didn't take long for fighting to occur among its members. Throughout the Old Testament scripture, the Lord had carefully provided instructions concerning taking care of widows and orphans—a teaching fully embraced by this body of Jewish believers. I think the reference to Grecians and Hebrews identify the different origins and language of the types of Jews in the early church. It seems that the Grecians, those not native to Israel, felt their widows were not being fairly treated in comparison to the Hebrews, those native to Israel.

**Acts 6:2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.**

**Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.**

**Acts 6:4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.**

The twelve apostles decided to call the body of believers together for a business meeting. They rightly determined that the focus of their ministry should be given to prayer and teaching and preaching of the word; they were uniquely qualified for these ministries because of the personal time they had spent with the Lord Jesus hearing Him teach. They proposed that a committee of seven men be chosen as overseers to ensure that all the widows were treated justly. These seven men should have reputations as honest men that were full of the Holy Spirit and known for their wisdom.

I think this decision was probably based on the example in scripture of Moses choosing out leaders among the people to assist him in providing righteous leadership for the people.

*Deuteronomy 1:9–17 “And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone: The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude....Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you....And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother....Ye shall not respect persons in judgment...for the judgment is God's....”*

It's also significant that the apostles immediately addressed the problem so as to avoid further infighting. Scripture provides a pertinent object lesson by observing that it only takes a little leaven to leaven the whole lump. What at this time was a small problem that needed rectified could have grown into a much bigger problem that would have negatively affected the spiritual growth of the church had it been ignored.

The Greek for the word “tables” makes reference not only to a use for food, but also as a counter for money. So it is possible that the distribution to the widows included money as well as food. If so, this would be an even bigger reason for ensuring equitable treatment. Scripture is very clear in declaring “the love of money” to be the root of all evil.

**Acts 6:5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:  
Acts 6:6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.**

It seems that this plan pleased everyone. The seven men chosen were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte (convert to Judaism) of Antioch (in Syria about 300 miles north of Jerusalem). Stephen was singled out as having the reputation of a man of strong faith and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. I think this distinction is made because of events that will follow.

Though I cannot distinguish the difference, I am sure that this committee included a fair representation of Grecians and Hebrews; since Nicolas was a Gentile, maybe he was chosen as a tiebreaker, so to speak. Much to my surprise, the NIV Commentary declares that all these names are Greek; but if they were presented to the apostles as chosen by the whole body of believers, that should have negated any thoughts of favoritism. If this were the case, it would show a willingness to ensure that the cause for the complaint had not resulted from intended mistreatment.

Once the committee was chosen, the men were presented to the apostles who then prayed over them and laid hands on them commissioning them for the appointed task.

**Acts 6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.**

As the teaching for the word of God continued to spread, the body of believers continued to experience great growth. Even a large number of priests became obedient followers of Jesus. Burton Coffman notes, “...the conversion of a vast number of Pharisees would account for the savage persecution of the church by that same party, which persecution Luke was in the act of narrating. The defection of many of their own group fired the hatred of the remnant against the gospel.”

**Acts 6:8 ¶ And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.**

**Acts 6:9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.**

**Acts 6:10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.**

Now we see why Stephen was singled out previously. He was known as being “full of the Holy Ghost” because he performed great wonders and miracles that gave evidence to the strength and power of his faith, his moral conviction that he was declaring the truth. Some translations use “grace and power” instead of “faith and power.” I believe both are true. Stephen’s faith was a work of the grace of God in his life—the divine influence on his heart.

I liked the CJB translation of verses 9-10: “But opposition arose from members of the Synagogue of the Freed Slaves (as it was called), composed of Cyrenians, Alexandrians and people from Cilicia and the province of Asia—Grecian Jews. They argued with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by which he spoke.”

**Acts 6:11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.**

**Acts 6:12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,**

**Acts 6:13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:**

**Acts 6:14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.**

Just like the religious leaders who wanted to kill the apostles (cf 5:33), the men of this synagogue were so angry at Stephen that they plotted with some other men (through bribery?) to accuse him of speaking blasphemy against Moses and against God. It was significant to me that they listed Moses first. I think it testified to the truth that they actually revered the law (which they had corrupted) more than God.

Isn’t it interesting that the religious leaders of that day were ready to accomplish their own purposes no matter what it took? They were ready to kill or lie; they weren’t concerned that they were breaking God’s law in the process. Doesn’t that mirror the expressed mantras of our day? “It’s all about me.” “The end justifies the means.”

These false accusations accomplished the intended purpose, and a great crowd of people, elders and scribes caught hold of Stephen and took him to the council. The false witnesses repeated their charge—this time not even mentioning blasphemy against God. I think they knew the council would respond more aggressively to charges of blasphemy against the temple and the law. Remember, they prided themselves on how they kept the law, and they certainly cherished their positions of leadership and the influence it gave them over the masses. The false accusers went on to testify that they had heard Stephen declare that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple and change the laws that had been established and passed down to them from Moses.

**Acts 6:15 And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.**

Throughout his court appearance Stephen's face reflected the peace and confidence of an angel. In other words, he knew he was innocent. He trusted in God to be with him through this process and knew that he would be delivered in some way. I am reminded again of my life verse.

*Isaiah 26:3 "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."*