

The Living Church

Acts 6:1-7

Introduction

The church of Jesus Christ is a *living* thing.

The Church, strictly speaking, is a living *organism*, not an organization.

“organism” ‘an organized body, consisting of mutually connected and dependent parts constituted to share a common life.’

An *organism* by definition is an organized, living thing.

An *organism* is “any highly complex thing or structure with parts so integrated that their relation to one another is governed by their relation to the whole” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dict.).

A living organism must be protected from harm. It must be nourished so that it can grow.

The ‘dead’ church

Revelation 3:1-3

I. The Situation (1-2)

II. The Solution (vv3-4)

III. The Selection (vv5-6)

IV. The Summary (v7)

I. The Situation (vv1-2)

From *Deception* to *Dissension* – the Enemy continues his onslaught against the newborn Church.

First, with the deception of Ananias and Sapphira, Satan hoped to sow *doubt*.

Through dissension Satan hopes to sow *discord* within the Church leading to *division*.

Grumblers, complainers, malcontents, bitter, critical-spirited gossips drain the lifeblood out of a church.

II. The Solution (vv3-4)

Threefold criterion for choosing men to serve:

1. **Men of *good reputation*** (good character; above reproach, i.e., no valid claims against them)
2. **Men *filled with the Holy Spirit*** (being kept filled through biblical means; walking by the Spirit)
3. **Men *full of wisdom*** (knowledge of and practice in effectively applying biblical principles to life)

“devote” ‘intense persevering in a thing,’ or, ‘unwearied effort in it.’

“It means that the apostles designed to make this their constant and main object, undistracted by the cares of life and even by attention to the temporal needs of the church” (Barnes).

“to prayer”

...in order to summon the power of God in the transformation of souls; to give voice to praise, adoration, and to seek the Lord’s help in all matters confronting the church.

“...and to the ministry of the word”

Gk *diakonia*; service toward a master, or to guests in hospitality, ministrations, distribution.

The preacher is a *servant*, firstly to his Master the Lord, and secondly to the congregation that he serves.

Gk *diakonia tou logou*: minister/servant of the Word.

It is not the pastor’s primary business to engage in the daily ministrations of practical needs of the church.

Ephesians 4:11-13

The call to preach and teach the Word of God is not limited to a pulpit. It is a full time, lifetime calling.

Peter and the apostles:

“And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” Acts 5:42

Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders:

Acts 20:20-21

III. The Selection (5-6)

“And what they said pleased the whole gathering” (v5).

The apostolic suggestion met with approval and seven Greek men were selected.

This is wise given the linguistic and cultural differences between the two Jewish groups.

Our church is *elder led with congregational input and approval*.

IV. The Summary (v7)

“the word of God continued to increase”

It is the Word of God that continues to advance through time. Its messengers come and go, its defenders raised up, its detractors brought low.

“a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”

There were some 5,000 to 8,000 priests in Jerusalem at the time.