Theme: Ministry *in* the church is as important as the ministry *of* the church. God raises up servants to lead in providing for the "feeding" and care of the church and to preserve the unity of the church.

Introduction: The church will always be under attack – either inwardly or outwardly. God provides leaders/servants to see that difficulties and differences don't become divisions.

# I. A Church Divided – Its Unity Is Threatened

- A. Language Barriers complaint by the Hellenists
  - Greek vs Hebrew/Aramaic
  - Meeting in 100 or more "house churches"
- B. Backgrounds/Cultures (Hellenists/Hebrews)
  - Both groups were Jewish in heritage and faith (and to a greater or lesser degree, in genealogical descent)
  - All had to deal with the culture
  - We have to deal with culture, too.

# C. Physical Needs

- Beauty of richer caring for poorer
- But not being done evenly

## D. Prejudices?

- Complaint specifically against the Hebrews –
- May be well founded but maybe not

NOTE: Are we always ready to think the worst of another brother/sister? Or to give judgment of charity until we are proved wrong in our judgment of grace and peace?

- E. Ministry Needs Two legitimate areas
  - Serve tables (diakonein 6:2) verb
  - service of the word (diakonia 6:4) noun

NOTE: Both are the work of servants! Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 4:10-11

### II. A Church United – Its Unity Preserved and Protected

### A. A Legitimate Concern

- 1. A Worldly Concern widows are going hungry
- 2. A Spiritual Concern can't forget our calling/task preach the word, prayer!

#### B. A Divine Solution

- 1. Look for Men "of good repute and full of the Spirit and of wisdom."
- 2. Let the Lord lead you in choosing
  - The Lord chooses servants
  - Through the church itself.
  - Different methods but still the Lord's choosing
  - The church "selects" and the Apostles "appoint"

NOTE: This is the heart of the Presbyterian form of government.

- 3. Those who would serve Who was picked?
  - 1<sup>st</sup> on the list? Man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit Stephen
  - Last a *proselyte* from Antioch
  - Godly men, men of courage and steeped in the Word.
- 4. Example of service to the whole church
  - Their main task is in the church.
  - Their task outside the body? *Preach the truth!*

# III. A Healthy Church – Growing in Faith and Number

- v. 1 They were increasing in number.
- They hit a pothole.
- v.7 And the word continued to increase.
- **IV.** The Church Today United or Divided? IMPORTANT: Unity of the church in the church really matters! It is the Lord Jesus who not only builds the church, but he provides it with all it needs to grow.
  - A. Unity not Uniformity!
  - B. Resisting Homogeneity
  - C. Unity in Diversity of Gifts

God can put together all the jagged pieces that are gathered in the name of Christ – into a body, *the church*. He can overcome culture, custom, preference, language, fear, distrust – by the power and work of the Holy Spirit, showing His faithful, self-sacrificing love in wisdom and grace.

## Questions For Thought/Discussion:

How is church divided today? /What kinds of issues divide the church today?

Where do we see disparity in the churches? Needs being met?

What kind of prejudices do we carry into the church?

Do we see the beauty/power of the "offices" of the church?

Why is the issue of character foremost in selection?