

Handling Dissension

Ray Stedman

I. Introduction.

A. Text: Acts 6:1-8.

B. Jesus predicted that the devil would sow among His crop. (Matthew 13)

C. In Acts we see the fulfillment of this—God’s people are sown among the world with tremendous impact and power, but the evil sowing of the devil appears around the church with the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira.

D. Death results the minute that we pretend to be something that we are not.

II. The devil’s deceit through dissension among the people of God.

A. There was murmuring among the Greek speaking Christians among themselves because the food was not being evenly distributed.

B. The devil’s favorite trick is to get people to murmur and complain about a problem among themselves.

C. Murmuring is always deadly and a mark of a discontented spirit—it causes dissension from within the congregation.

III. The Apostles’ response.

A. They devoted themselves to prayer and the Word and delegated the task of distribution.

B. They were rightly aware of the diversity of the Spirit’s gifts among the Body of Christ.

C. The Apostles knew that they were to devote themselves to their particular gift and calling.

D. There were also gifts of helps, and Apostles elected men with these gifts with the following qualifications:

1. They were to be men.

2. They were to be believers.

3. They were to be men of good repute.

4. They were to be spiritual, depending upon God for everything.

5. They had to have the gift of wisdom—applying Scriptural knowledge to a practical situation.

E. All of the servants were probably chosen from the very group that was issuing the complaint, leaving the responsibility on them.

F. The Apostles laid hands on the servants identifying with them—each gift is necessary for the function of the body.

1. Amazing things happen when the gifts function rightly in the body.

2. The body life of the church is the key to society—societal wrongs are the result of the church not being right.

IV. The results.

A. The Word of God increased—the Word was proclaimed wider.

B. Disciples multiplied.

C. A great number of priests were obedient to the faith—they were discovering that Jesus was the key to their ritual. (Hebrews)

D. Stephen full of grace and power did great wonders and signs among the people.

1. The signs were the signs of the Apostles.

2. They were for the confirmation of new things happening in the church.

3. God continues to do works today, but they are no longer of this confirmatory character.

Application questions:

1. How can complaining be so destructive within the church?

2. What was clever about the Apostles choosing the Greek speakers to deal with the problem of the unequal distribution?

3. What results can we expect when the whole church is using their gifts to build up the church? How can you better use your gifts to contribute to results like the early church experienced in Acts 6?
