

July 10–16. Acts 6–9: “What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?”

Seven Appointed to Address Temporal Needs

The apostles needed to find a way to meet the temporal needs of the church

Acts 6:1-6

[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 ministrations.

[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.

[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.

[4] But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

[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:

[6] Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

Just as our day, one of the primary purposes of the Church is to care for the needy

Russell M. Nelson

“The Church in New Testament times also had a binding obligation to care for the poor....

“Few, if any, of the Lord’s instructions are stated more often, or given greater emphasis, than the commandment to care for the poor and the needy. Our dispensation is no exception.” (CR, April 1986)

How was the issue of meeting the temporal needs of the church addressed?

(look ye out among you seven men..., whom we may appoint over this business)

Howard W. Hunter

"In December 1978, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve made a similar determination that it was no longer advisable for the Twelve to occupy their time in the details of administration of the many Church departments. They delegated seven men, designated as the presidents of the First Quorum of the Seventy, to give supervision to these details so that the Twelve could devote their full energies to the overall direction of the work, and, as directed by the Doctrine and Covenants, "To build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations.'" ("All Are Alike unto God", BYU Devotional, Feb 4, 1979)

The Stoning of Stephen

Stephen taught the people great authority and power. The Jewish leaders were not able to “resist the wisdom and the spirit” of Stephen so they arrested him for blasphemy and brought him before their council.

Stephen gives the council brief history of the Jewish people to emphasize how all the prophets were persecuted by their ancestors. But he stated that they had done much worse for they had murdered Christ himself

Acts 7:51-60

51 ¶ Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

[54] When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

[55] But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

[56] And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

[57] Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

[58] And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

[59] And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

[60] And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

What did Stephen say that that caused the leaders to be “cut to the heart”?

(ye do always resist the Holy Ghost
as your fathers did, so do ye

Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted
he Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:
Who have received the law by... angels, and have not kept it)

What do we learn from Stephen’s vision and his actions?

Christ has been resected

Spencer W. Kimball

“It is significant to read the words and the testimony of Stephen, a holy

martyr, who gave his life for his faith.

“Stephen ‘said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.’

“Stephen was a martyr and will inherit eternal life. His testimony reveals that Christ was not dead, but was still living, and was in an exalted, glorified condition with his Father.” (CR, April 1969)

The Godhead

Joseph Smith

"Peter and Stephen testify that they saw the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Any person that had seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens who hold the keys of power, and one presides over all." (TPJS, pg. 312)

The importance and power of forgiveness

George Q. Cannon

“They treated [Stephen] most cruelly for his belief. He had declared to them the Gospel; but they stoned him to death. Before he died he said—and it's the spirit which every man of God, who comprehends the purposes of God, and the plan of salvation will cherish and always give utterance to under all circumstances—‘Father, forgive them; they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34)... They did not know what they were doing. They did it ignorantly. This was proved by the fact that the young man [Saul] at whose feet lay the clothes of those who committed this bloody deed, afterwards became a flaming light in the Church and Kingdom of God.” (JD, 26:77)

Note verse 58: “... the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

Philip – One of the Seven

Stephen was one of the 7 chosen by the 12 to help with the affairs of the Church. Let's read some of the teachings and works another one of the 7 - Philip

Acts 8:5-8

[5] Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

[6] And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

[7] For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

[8] And there was great joy in that city.

Simon was able to deceive the people of Samaria by using sorcery

Acts 8:9-13

[9] But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

[10] To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

[11] And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

[12] But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

[13] Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

What did Simon lead the people of Samaria to believe about him?

(giving out that himself was some great one)

As a result, what did the people think of Simon?

(To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God)

What did Simon do that made the people think he had great power from God?

(used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria)

He was baptized after hearing Philip teach the gospel.

Let's read how he reacts when he witnesses the gift of the Holy Ghost being given

Acts 8:14-24

[14] Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

[15] Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

[16] (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

[17] Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

[18] And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

[19] Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

[20] But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

[21] Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight

of God.

[22] Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

[23] For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

[24] Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

Why do you think Simon was willing to pay to be able to give the gift of the Holy Ghost?

Maybe he thought that he could use it to increase the number of people who believed and followed him?

Orson Pratt

“[Simon] came to the Apostle Peter and offering money to him, said, ‘Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.’ He was evidently convinced that there was a power made manifest on that occasion, and as he had been a sorcerer, and had deluded and deceived the people in former times, and had evidently come into the Church with a corrupt heart, he no doubt wished to obtain this increased power to aid him in his future operations.” (JD, 16:284)

Even though Simon appears to be penitent we will see that he draws people away from the Church and continues to practice priestcraft

James E. Faust

“This greatest of all powers, the priesthood power, is not accessed the way power is used in the world. It cannot be bought or sold.... Worldly power often is employed ruthlessly. However, priesthood power is invoked only through those principles of righteousness by which the priesthood is governed” (CR, April 1997)

Philip and the Ethiopian

Acts 8:26-31

[26] And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

[27] And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

[28] Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

[29] Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

[30] And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

[31] And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

What can we learn from the experience of the Ethiopian striving to understand Isaiah?

(How can I, except some man should guide me)

Ulisses Soares

"The question asked by this Ethiopian man is a reminder of the divine mandate we all have to seek to learn and to teach one another the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, in the context of learning and teaching the gospel, we are sometimes like the Ethiopian—we need the help of a faithful and inspired teacher; and we are sometimes like Philip—we need to teach and strengthen others in their conversion." (CR, April, 2019)

Philip was able to explain Isaiah to the Ethiopian

Acts 8:32-35

[32] The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

[33] In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

[34] And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

[35] Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

What can we learn from Philip's ability and willingness to teach this passage that refers to Christ?

Thomas S. Monson

"The deep yearning of countless numbers is expressed in the plea of one who spoke to Philip of old: 'How can I [find my way], except some man should guide me?'

"Brethren of the priesthood, the world is in need of your help. There are feet to steady, hands to grasp, minds to encourage, hearts to inspire, and souls to save. The harvest truly is great. Let there be no mistake about it; the missionary opportunity of a lifetime is yours. The blessings of eternity await you. Yours is the privilege to be not spectators but participants on the stage of priesthood service." (CR, April 1995)

As a result of Philip's ability to teach and testify of Christ...

Acts 8:36-38

[36] And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

[37] And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

[38] And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

The Conversion of Saul

Saul is referenced a couple of times earlier in this lesson
He held the coats of those who persecuted Stephen

Acts 7:58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

He had personally gone from house to house and brought men and women before the tribunals which condemned them to prison or imposed the sentence of death.
Because of him, many had left their homes and fled

Acts.8

[1] And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

[3] As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Now we will see how he repents and is converted to the gospel of Christ

Acts 9:1-6

[1] And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

[2] And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

[3] And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

[4] And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

[5] And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

[6] And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Why do you think someone who was committing such evil against the Church of Christ would receive a visitation from Christ himself?

Maybe after the experience with Stephen he was questioning his actions and truly wanted to do what was right.

Howard W. Hunter

"Some have said it was the long journey from Jerusalem to Damascus which gave him time to think and contemplate during the days of travel upon the recent events of the persecution. Paul had been present at the stoning of Stephen and had seen him die. He heard him ask in his last words that those who had dragged him from the Sanhedrin and stoned him in defiance of the law might be forgiven for their acts. This must have made a lasting impression on the mind of Paul. He had personally gone from house to house and brought men and women before the tribunals which condemned them to prison or imposed the sentence of death... Could it be that these things commenced to weigh heavily upon his conscience?" (CR, Oct. 1964)

Unlike Alma, who was willfully rebelling against the truth, Paul was not overcome by the sins he had committed

Like Joseph Smith, who was sincerely searching for the truth, he responded to the visitation with the question, "what wilt thou have me to do?"

Ezra Taft Benson

"A man can ask no more important question in his life than that which Paul asked: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" A man can take no greater action than to pursue a course that will bring to him the answer to that question and then to carry out that answer." (CR, Oct. 1972)

The account in Acts 26 includes the instructions from the Lord

Acts 26:16-18

[16] But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

[17] Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

[18] To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

According to the Lord, what was His purpose in visiting Saul?

(I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness)

Ananias administers to Paul and he regains his sight

Acts 9:10-15

[10] And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said

the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

[11] And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

[12] And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

[13] Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

[14] And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

[15] But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

What authority had Saul received from the Jewish leaders?

(he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name)

But what had the Lord chosen Saul to do?

(he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel)

Robert L. Millet

"It is given to but few to wield a more powerful influence over Christian history than to Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor who became a prophet, the Pharisee who became the apostle to the Gentiles. The life and teachings of the Apostle Paul stand as bright reminders of the power of Christ to transform the souls of men and women, to remake the human heart, and to refocus one's misdirected zeal into the way of the Master....

"[Paul] taught with a power, a persuasion, and a holy zeal known only to those who, like Alma and the sons of Mosiah, have gone from darkness to light and whose whole soul yearns to lead others to that same light."

(Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet: Gospel Scholars Series, pg. 69)

Paul immediately began to preach that Jesus was the Christ. He had such a strong influence that the Jewish leaders tried to put him to death

Acts 9:19-23

[19] And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

[20] And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

[21] But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

[22] But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt

at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

[23] And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

Henry D. Moyle

“Neither need our conversion be as miraculous as was Paul's. Nonetheless each person's conversion is bound to be peculiarly personal. Every investigator seeking the truth in his own way can obtain the testimony of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ. Finally, each real conversion, no matter how wrought, brings to all the same testimony of the divine mission of our Lord and Savior. When we receive this testimony, we can all proclaim as is written of Paul, ‘... straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.’” (CR, Oct. 1962)

Peter Ministers in Lydda

[32] And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

[33] And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

[34] And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

[35] And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

Peter uses the priesthood of God to raise Tabitha from the dead

[36] Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

[37] And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

[38] And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

[39] Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

[40] But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

[41] And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

[42] And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

[43] And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.