

# Acts of the Apostles: **Image or Integrity?**

August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010

## The Church Complains

**Acts 6:1** But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

## Let's Get Organized

**Acts 6:2-4** So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, "We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. <sup>3</sup> And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. <sup>4</sup> Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word."

## Responsibility & Accountability

**1 Timothy 3:8-13** In the same way, deacons must be well respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money. <sup>9</sup> They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons. <sup>11</sup> In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do. <sup>12</sup> A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well. <sup>13</sup> Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

## Unity Among Believers

**Acts 6:5-7** Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). <sup>6</sup> These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. <sup>7</sup> So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

## More Power

**Acts 6:8-10** Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup> But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. <sup>10</sup> None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

## More Persecution

**Acts 6:11-15** So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God." <sup>12</sup> This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council. <sup>13</sup> The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. <sup>14</sup> We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us." <sup>15</sup> At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.

## Be Wise and Innocent

**Matthew 10:16** "Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.

## Do Not Be Ashamed of the Gospel

**2 Timothy 2:8-10** Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. <sup>9</sup> And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. <sup>10</sup> So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.