

Power for Problems

Sermon Series: "Living in the Power of God"

Sermon 2: "Power for Problems"

Scripture: Acts 6:1-7

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We are in the book of Acts exploring what it means to live in the power of God. Last week we talked about plugging into God's power by inviting His presence into our lives. If you will invite the presence of God into your life then He will give you everything that you need to walk in step with the Spirit of God. Life is good when you are walking in step with the Spirit of God.

However, I can't fully express that claim until I first address a very important matter. It's a question that every Christian must face at some point in their walk with God. The question is this: "Does walking in step with the Spirit of God keep you from experiencing problems?"

One of the things that I appreciate about the book of Acts is that Luke does not hide the fact that Christians will experience problems. The good news is that God's Holy Spirit always gives us the power that we need to effectively navigate those problems in a way that brings glory and honor to Him. So what I would like to focus on this morning are the ways that the Holy Spirit helps us when we are experiencing problems.

Turn with me to Acts 6:1-7;

"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them."

⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Problems can come to us in a variety of ways. In this particular situation it's a problem that has risen among the believers. The Hellenistic Jews were complaining against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily food distribution. The

intensity of the problem could have easily been elevated by the fact that those doing the food distribution were the Hebraic Jews. The Hebraic Jews could have been accused of giving preferential treatment to their own widows.

What is amazing to me is how

The Holy Spirit helped them to almost immediately push past the problem so that they could identify and address the need.

It's like God took the heavenly spotlight and said, "Right here is the need." Sometimes the need is not what we first think it is. Sometimes God has to first shine His light through the darkness. That's the power of God's Spirit at work in our lives.

God not only showed them the need, but He also gave them all a heart of love and compassion for others and a willingness to meet the need. God often uses the problems we face to teach us some valuable lessons. Those lessons help us to know how to better serve others and we often find that the best way to move past our problems is to focus on how God wants to use us to help other people in need. That is what the believers decided to do. It's through this example that we are shown an incredible spirit of caring and compassion for others.

The Holy Spirit helped the believers identify and address the need and through their faith in God they believed that God was going to give them everything they needed to meet the need.

The believers leaned heavily on their faith in this passage. They never allowed the problem to become bigger to them than their faith in God. To them it was like a penny compared to the sun. If you put a penny up next to your eye then it becomes bigger than the sun. But when you keep it in the right perspective there is no doubt which one is bigger. God is bigger than any problem we might have and the believers never doubted God's ability to show them what needed to be done. They had the faith they needed to rest in the fact that God already prepared the way for them to overcome.

When the people of God looked at the situation that they were faced with, and all the people involved, they didn't look at through the lens of worry or fear or fret. The Holy Spirit gave them a different perspective.

The Holy Spirit gave them a faith perspective.

So the question for them was never, "What can God do?" They already believed that God can move mountains. For them, the question instead was "What has God already done?" They began to look at where God was already working and they saw that God had already put the right people in the right place to help them to move past the problem. God had seven people who were ready to do what needed to be done. They were reputable men. They were full of the Holy Spirit. They had the wisdom they needed. The point is that God had already equipped them to do what needed to be done.

In verse five we see this inspiring picture of God's people coming together in a spirit of unit and love. It's an inspiring picture that God's people need to let soak into their hearts and lives. God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, gave them the unity that they needed to press on. As they pressed through the problem,

The Holy Spirit showed them how to truly live as a people of hope and love.

I don't always understand why God allows certain problems to take place in our lives. But there is one thing that I have found that God will always do in the midst of our problems. God will always use our problems to teach us how to love Him more and He will always use our problems to show us how to better love others.

Sometimes we can love others more fully and freely because we've already been down the road that someone else is on. God walked with us down a similar path and now we have a deeper understanding of how to be there for others. Sometimes we go through problems to learn how to be a little more patient with people, especially the difficult ones. I'm sure that principle doesn't apply to any of us today though. You wouldn't know anyone who can sometimes be hard to love now would you? The point is that God uses our problems to give us the power that we need to love others with a Christlike love. That is the kind of love that Holy Spirit gave to the believers in this passage. The Holy Spirit showed them how to love each other with a Christlike love.

The Holy Spirit also showed them how to pray for one another.

There is no doubt, when you study the book of Acts that the people of God believed in the power of prayer. The things that they did would always begin and end with prayer. But allow me to point out something that I believe is extremely crucial to the understanding of what is going on in this passage. It's the fact that prayer was not just one thing they did; it was the main thing they did. The disciples chose seven men to meet the need of distribution so that they could tend to their primary responsibility of the ministry of God's Word and prayer. They knew the importance of the ministry of prayer.

There is power in the ministry of prayer. It's the power we need to push past our problems and meet the needs that exists in our lives. Every time I study the book of Acts I'm convicted by the need to seat everything I do into the context of prayer. The power to move past our problems is not found in a new policy or program or plan. Now don't misunderstand me here; I would never say those things are not useful, but the power to break through our problems is always found in prayer.

Prayer is what helps God's people persist in things that are important to God. Prayer keeps our priorities aligned. Prayer is what bolsters our faith. Prayer is what gives us the strength to press on. The more we pray, the more we are inviting God to do His work in and through our lives.

At the end of the day,

The Holy Spirit helped them share who God is and what He has done.

In verse seven, Luke tells us;

*“So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly,
and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”*

(Acts 6:7)

The word “So” at the beginning of this verse is very telling. It is as if Luke is saying, “As a result of what happened.” He is saying, “Once they moved past all of this.” God gave them the freedom that they needed to share His goodness with others.

Even the priest, who stood on good works and the deeds that we do for others, they abandoned their good works religion because they realized that what they did was powerless without the fruit of the Spirit and the presence of God. The Holy Spirit changed their lives as they put their hope and faith in God.

As we close out our worship time this morning, I want to invite you to place your faith in Him. Trust God to move you past the problem. Take it out of your hands and place it in His. Invite the Holy Spirit to move in and through your life. If you can testify this morning to a life that is problem free then thank God for moving you past the problems. Then open your eyes to the possibility that you may have something to give to others. Let us pray for God’s presence and invite the Holy Spirit into our lives this morning. Let us thank Him for moving in and through our lives.