

## SERMON OUTLINE

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| <b>SERMON TITLE:</b>      | How to Turn Your Problems into Possibilities |
| <b>SERMON REFERENCE:</b>  | Acts 6:1-7                                   |
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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) In this message, we will see how to turn our problems into possibilities.
  - i) We will find this to be a Biblical truth.
- b) Pessimists see difficulty in every opportunity, but a Bible Christian sees an opportunity in every difficulty.
  - i) Difficulties are just opportunities in reverse, if we see them through the eyes of God.
- c) Every difficulty that came to the early church was used of God as a springboard to cause them to grow for the Lord Jesus Christ.
- d) Acts 6:1-7
  - i) The problems they were having were growing pains.
    - (1) They were in the process of maturing and growing.
- e) When someone is first saved, they think that they will never have another problem.
  - i) But then, the Bible says, “*That you may grow thereby.*”
    - (1) 1 Peter 2:2
    - ii) The same kind of growing pains that we have in the physical world, we also have in the spiritual world.
- f) Any new Christian knows what it is to have growing pains.
  - i) They know what it is to stumble and to hurt.
- g) A growing church has growing pains.
  - i) This is what happened to this early church.
    - (1) There was great growth, and as result, there were some problems.
- h) Today’s message will share four basic facts about growing pains that can be applied to the church, as well as to our personal lives and families.

2) WHERE THERE IS LIFE, THERE IS GROWTH (ACTS 6:1)

- a) “*Those days*” were days of revival and days of life.
  - i) There was growth; there was multiplication.
    - (1) Acts 2:47
      - (a) “*The Lord added.*”
      - (2) No longer was it addition; it was multiplication.
      - (3) They were growing by thousands.
- b) Every church that is surrounded by lost people should be a growing church.
  - i) There is nothing wrong with a small church, and there is nothing so necessarily great about a big church.
  - ii) But there is something wrong with a church that is not growing if it is surrounded by lost people.
  - iii) Our mission is to reach souls for the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - (1) If we are not reaching them, then we are not doing what we are told to do.
- c) A dead church is a church that is not multiplying.
  - i) A church will glow and grow, or it will dry and die.
  - ii) It will evangelize or fossilize, but it will not stand still.

- d) Growth is not easy, and growth is not automatic.
    - i) We have to plan, pray, and work for it.
      - (1) We have to cultivate and water something if we want it to grow.
    - ii) Still, God must give the increase.
      - (1) Spiritual growth is the product of spiritual life.
      - (2) Numerical growth is the product of spiritual growth.
  - e) God's plan for any church is to be fruitful and multiply.
    - i) Some people will say that they don't believe in numbers, but God is interested in numbers.
      - (1) Acts 6:1
      - (2) Some people will say this to excuse their lack of spirituality or their laziness.
    - ii) Where there is healthy life, there is growth.
- 3) WHERE THERE IS GROWTH, THERE ARE PROBLEMS (ACTS 6:1)
- a) Acts 6:1
    - i) Murmuring follows multiplication.
  - b) The people were murmuring over some who felt neglected in the church.
    - i) There were two categories of widows in the church:
      - (1) The Hebrew widows
      - (2) The Grecian widows
        - (a) Even the Grecian widows were Hebrews.
          - (i) They were called Hellenist Jews.
            - 1. They were Jews who spoke the Greek language.
    - ii) The Greek-speaking Jews felt that they had been overlooked and neglected.
      - (1) They were being taken care of by the church, but they had their feelings hurt.
    - iii) There was nothing wrong with seeking to have their needs met, and there may have indeed been a problem.
      - (1) But the problem happened because the church was growing so fast.
      - (2) No one intentionally meant to do harm, but the problem was real.
  - c) How they handled the problem was terrible; they began to murmur.
    - i) When God sets out to multiply, the devil sets out to divide.
      - (1) When the devil sees a growing church, he will try to divide that church anyway he can.
      - (2) The devil began to try to divide this church by murmuring.
    - ii) Don't murmur.
      - (1) Philippians 2:14
        - (a) Murmurings lead to disputings.
        - (b) Disputings lead to division.
  - d) When we murmur, we are really speaking against God.
    - i) 1 Thessalonians 5:18
      - (1) We cannot murmur and give thanks at the same time.

- ii) Psalm 34:1
    - (1) Murmurers and praisers are not made of the same thing.
  - iii) Murmuring is a half-uttered and half-concealed complaint.
    - (1) This is not a person saying to the right person at the right time in the right spirit for the right reason that something needs to be done.
      - (a) It is always good when a person comes in the right spirit at the right time to the right person for the right motive.
  - iv) Philippians 2:14
  - v) Exodus 16:8
    - (1) The people had been murmuring in Moses' time.
    - (2) Their murmuring was not against Moses but against the Lord.
  - vi) If kids murmur against their parents, then they are really murmuring against God.
  - vii) If we murmur against our employer or pastor, then we are murmuring against God.
    - (1) This doesn't mean that any of these people are perfect.
    - (2) This simply means that murmuring is never a way to address a problem.
      - (a) Murmuring is the devil's way.
  - viii) 1 Corinthians 10:7-10
    - (1) Murmuring is ranked with idolatry, fornication, and tempting God.
    - (2) God destroyed them for murmuring.
  - e) In this early church, they may have had a legitimate complaint, but the devil used them to try to do a right thing in the wrong way.
    - i) Philippians 2:14
  - f) Where there is growth, there are problems.
    - i) When people and progress are put together, there will be problems.
  - g) The problem in this early church was not doctrinal; the problem was functional.
    - i) It was not primary; it was over a petty thing.
      - (1) The devil can divide us more over incidentals than fundamental things.
    - ii) The problem was over who was getting served the best and first.
      - (1) It was about who was being neglected and who wasn't.
  - h) Anything that moves makes friction, and anything that grows has pains.
    - i) A church that doesn't have any real difficulties is dead.
- 4) WHERE THERE ARE PROBLEMS, THERE ARE SOLUTIONS (ACTS 6:2-5)
- a) God always has a solution to every problem.
  - b) Acts 6:2-3
    - i) The solution was a reasonable one.
      - (1) A good Christian will be two things:
        - (a) Deeply spiritual
        - (b) Intensely practical

- ii) Here were very spiritual men who said that what they had been doing didn't make sense.
- c) Up until this time, the apostles had been spending time ministering to the widows, waiting on tables, and distributing food.
  - i) They were getting behind in their Bible study, sermon preparations, prayer life, and soul winning.
    - (1) They were getting behind in the ministry of the Word of God.
    - (2) They were standing up to preach when they were not ready to preach.
  - ii) They were so busy doing good things that they neglected the best thing.
    - (1) In life, the choice is not between good and bad, but between good and best.
  - iii) They needed a plan.
    - (1) God gave them a wonderful plan.
- d) The plan was to get better organized.
  - i) Some people don't believe in organization.
    - (1) But a lack of organization and disorder are carnality.
    - (2) 1 Corinthians 14:40
      - (a) There was disorder in the Corinthian church because of their carnality.
  - ii) When we see the Holy Spirit of God move, we will see things function with order.
    - (1) The first time we see the Holy Spirit in the Bible, He is moving upon the face of the deep.
      - (a) He was bringing order out of disorder; turning a chaos into a cosmos.
      - (b) Genesis 1:2
    - (2) The Holy Spirit of God is the one who engineers the church machinery and who oils the church machinery.
  - iii) The Holy Spirit of God told them something reasonable to do.
    - (1) It was two-fold:
      - (a) There was to be a scriptural ministry.
      - (b) There was to be a practical ministry.
- e) The scriptural ministry of feeding the Word:
  - i) Acts 6:2
  - ii) It was not that the apostles were too good to serve tables.
    - (1) They had been doing it up until now.
  - iii) It was not that they wanted to be freed from work; they wanted to be free to work.
    - (1) Acts 6:4
  - iv) The best thing a pastor can do is to be prepared to preach.
    - (1) A wise man said once that a preacher who is always available is not worth much when he is available.
    - (2) He has to be alone with God in the Word of God, studying and pouring out his heart to God in prayer for his people.

- (a) He has to get a word from God for his people.
  - (3) There are ministers who have all kinds of programs for their people, but their people are not being fed.
    - (a) Activity is no substitute for the Word of God.
- v) Acts 6:4
  - (1) They would be preaching the Word of God.
- vi) 1 Peter 2:2
- vii) Any church will be strong to the degree that we maximize and emphasize the ministry of the Word of God.
  - (1) Not just from the pulpit, but in our classrooms and homes as well.
- f) The practical ministry of feeding the widows:
  - i) They chose men to wait on tables.
  - ii) Acts 6:3
  - iii) They had to be men of honest report.
    - (1) They had to have an impeccable character.
    - (2) No one could point blame at them.
      - (a) Deacons are to be blameless.
        - (i) 1 Timothy 3:8-10
        - (ii) These may have been the first deacons.
    - (3) They were men of service.
      - (a) They didn't choose just anyone.
    - (4) They were not inferior men.
      - (a) They were superior men to wait on tables.
  - iv) They had to be men filled with the Holy Spirit.
    - (1) We should be filled with the Holy Spirit when we do anything for Jesus.
    - (2) There is not any type of ministry that we can do in our own power.
      - (a) Without Him, we can do nothing.
        - (i) John 15:5
      - (b) The problem is that there are many people who think that a job is so small that they can do it by themselves.
        - (i) They think that they don't need the Holy Spirit of God in them to do it.
        - (ii) But no matter if we are typing a letter, vacuuming a floor, or teaching a class, we are to do it in the power of the Spirit of God.
  - v) They had to be full of wisdom.
    - (1) Wisdom is not knowledge.
    - (2) Sometimes a church will look for a deacon who is a doctor, lawyer, banker, or financier.
      - (a) They think that he would be able to show them how to run the church, but he might show them how to ruin the church instead.
        - (i) He might try to administrate the church as he would a business, but it is God's business.
          - 1. It is different from any other business.

- (b) If he is not filled with wisdom, then he will do more damage than good.
    - (3) There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom.
      - (a) Wisdom is the ability to use knowledge from God's point of view.
      - (b) Knowledge may be proud that it knows so much, but wisdom is humble that it knows no more.
      - (c) Not everyone can have knowledge, but everyone can have wisdom.
        - (i) James 1:5-8
    - vi) These standards are not just for these men, but they are standards for all servants of the Lord.
    - g) Acts 6:5
      - i) Among those that they chose were Stephen and Philip.
        - (1) Stephen preached one of the greatest sermons ever heard in the Bible.
          - (a) He was a miracle worker, and yet, he waited on tables.
        - (2) Philip was the man who won the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ and opened up all of North Africa to the Gospel.
        - (3) Stephen was the first Christian martyr, and Philip was the first Christian missionary.
          - (a) And they were chosen to wait on tables.
      - h) God took some great men, and they showed that they were like the Lord Jesus Christ.
        - i) They were willing to minister in the small things and in the mundane things.
      - i) This church went forward for the Lord Jesus Christ because there was the spiritual ministry to feed the Word and the practical ministry to feed the widows.
        - i) Everyone did what God had called them to do.
          - (1) It was not that some were inferior, and others were superior.
          - (2) It was not that some were too good to do what the others would not do.
          - (3) But each did what God assigned them to do.
        - ii) The church began to grow, and the murmuring stopped.
- 5) WHERE THERE IS A GOD-GIVEN SOLUTION, THERE IS EVEN GREATER GROWTH (ACTS 6:7)
  - a) Acts 6:1 states that they were multiplied.
    - i) Now in Acts 6:7, it says that they were multiplied greatly.
      - (1) They were growing even greater than they grew before.
  - b) They met a problem and solved that problem in the name of Jesus.
    - i) The problem was caused by growth, but when the problem was solved, there was even greater growth.
      - (1) Problems are opportunities in reverse.
  - c) Psalm 4:1
    - i) Do you want to be enlarged? Do you want to grow?

- (1) Then, you are going to be in distress.
  - (a) God will stretch you.
  - (b) There is no easy growth.
- d) Every problem that is met in the name of Jesus and solved in the power of God causes us to grow.
  - i) If we never had a problem, then we would not know that He could solve them.
  - ii) A growing Christian carries the problem to the Lord and gets His solution.
    - (1) While in distress, God causes them to grow.
  - iii) Don't be pessimistic, don't take counsel of your peers, and don't let problems cause you to cave in.
- e) The early church grew because every time the devil attacked, they went to God, and God counter-attacked.
  - i) Their problems became a springboard for greater growth.
  - ii) Hell can't stop a church that will keep its eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 6) CONCLUSION
  - a) Where there is life, there is growth.
  - b) Where there is growth, there are problems.
  - c) Where there are problems, there are solutions.
  - d) Where there are solutions, there is greater growth.
  - e) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
  - f) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
    - i) Romans 3:23
    - ii) Romans 10:9-10
    - iii) Romans 10:13
    - iv) Acts 16:31
    - v) John 3:16