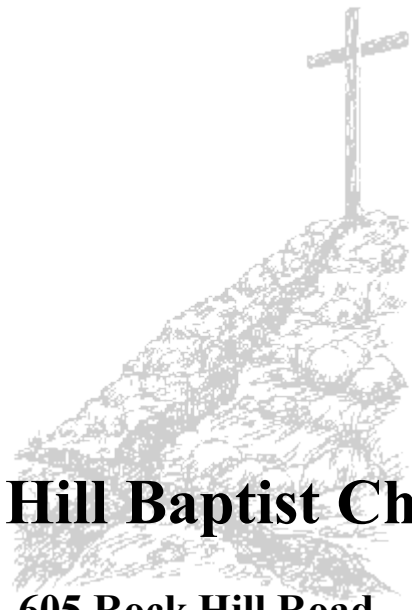


# What's Filling You?

Acts 6:1-8




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 **Acts 6:1-8 (KJV) "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 ministration. {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. {7} And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. {8} And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people."**

What hinders the Church of Christ? What helps the Church of Christ? Are you willing to be a hindrance, or a helper, to this great work of the Kingdom of God? These are the questions we want to answer today.


## 1. Murmuring: The Greatest Enemy of God's Work

God needs each one of you to be *full of the Holy Ghost* because the work of God, that work we are engaged in, cannot be accomplished by our own human power. We are engaged in a *supernatural work* that requires *supernatural means* because we fight against *supernatural enemies*. Who are our enemies? Well, our text tells us that the early Church was growing by leaps and bounds. Things were going well, and looking really good. On the *first day* the doors of the Church opened, *three thousand* joined with Christ - and the Church had yet to build a building:

**Acts 2:41 (KJV) "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."**

Even though the Apostles had been jailed twice, *five thousand* came into the fold of the faithful under Peter and John's preaching at the Temple:

**Acts 4:4 (KJV) "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."**


 Now we read in our focal text in **Acts 6:1**:  
**"And in those days, when the number of the**

**disciples was multiplied<sup>1</sup> ..."**

The Church was going great! Yes, there was persecution from the Temple authorities, but things were wonderful. **Though these Apostles had never read the *Purpose Driven Church*, God bless them, and though they had no *Power Point displays* or fancy overhead projections, the Church was growing at a dramatic rate. God was working! God can use technology, Beloved, but He doesn't need it.** Where God is, **power is.**

1. Though these Apostles had never read the *Purpose Driven Church*, God bless them, and though they had no *Power Point displays* or fancy overhead projections, the Church \_\_\_\_\_.  
God was working! God can use \_\_\_\_\_,  
Beloved, but He doesn't need it. (**Acts 2:41; 4:4**)

And God was all over the Apostles, and all over the Church. And just when things were going great, what happened? Look at this:

 **Acts 6:1 (KJV) "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring<sup>2</sup> of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.**

That word *murmuring* is a very interesting one. Let me see if I can explain it. In the Church there were

- 1 Present Active Participle plethuno {pronounced play-thoo'-no}, kept on increasing, kept on getting greater and greater
- 2 goggusmos {pronounced gong-goos-mos'}, a secret displeasure not openly avowed

predominantly two types of Israelites at this time. There were the Israelites who were of *the old school*, the older generation of believers. These are called **Hebrews** in our text because these older believers still spoke that ancient language *Hebrew*. But you have to remember that Israel had been under Roman control for many years. Before Israel was under Roman control most of its people spoke Hebrew, but after a few generations of Israel remained under Rome their children ceased learning Hebrew and began to learn *Koine Greek* and *Latin*. These Jews were known as *Hellenistic Jews* or, as our text calls them, **Grecians** because they spoke Greek, not Hebrew. The **Grecian Jews** were the younger crowd of believers.

So what you have is this. You have the *old school Believers*, the Hebrew speaking Christians and the younger crowd, the Greek speaking Christians. And the

2. You have the *old school Believers*, the \_\_\_\_\_ speaking Christians and the younger crowd, the \_\_\_\_\_ speaking Christians.

Greek speaking Christians began to *murmur* against the Hebrew speaking Christians, because the younger crowd began to feel that the older crowd was getting more attention from the Apostles.

What is the greatest enemy of the Church? Is it Satan? Well, yes, Satan is our enemy. In fact, the Bible says:

**1 Peter 5:8 (KJV) "Be sober, be vigilant; because**

**your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about<sup>3</sup>, seeking whom he may devour:"**

Satan is a *very real* enemy, and he is constantly occupied with looking for ways to overthrow the work of Christ. But we've studied on Sunday night that Jesus Christ is *greater than any angel*, so He is certainly greater than Satan! Satan is not the *greatest enemy* of the Church.

**Hebrews 1:4 (KJV) "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."**

The greatest enemy of the Church is not *people* either. The Bible says:

**Ephesians 6:12 (KJV) "For we wrestle<sup>4</sup> not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."**

People are not the *greatest* enemy of the Church, nor is Satan the *greatest* enemy of the Church. People have been enemies of the Church, and Satan is an enemy of

3 Present Active Indicative peripateo {pronounced per-ee-pat-eh'-o}, to be occupied with, keeps on looking for ways to, to make due use of opportunities, lives one's life to do

4 pale {pronounced pal'-ay}, wrestling (a contest between two in which each endeavours to throw the other, and which is decided when the victor is able to hold his opponent down with his hand upon his neck), the term is transferred to the Christian's struggle with the power of evil

the Church, but these are not its greatest enemies. In fact, even *death* is not a great enemy to the Church. Jesus Christ said:

**Matthew 16:18 (KJV) "... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell<sup>5</sup> shall not prevail against it."**

No, my friends - the *greatest enemy of God's Church* is summed up in that one word MURMURING. That word MURMURING means *to secretly voice displeasure*

3. People are not the *greatest* enemy of the Church, nor is Satan the *greatest* enemy of the Church. People have been enemies of the Church, and Satan is an enemy of the Church, but these are not its greatest enemies. In fact, even *death* is not a great enemy to the Church. The *greatest enemy of God's Church* is summed up in that one word \_\_\_\_\_.  
**(1 Peter 5:8; Hebrews 1:4; Ephesians 6:12; Matthew 16:18)**

*against another*. The Grecian speaking believers began to secretly complain to one another about how the Hebrew speaking believers were being better treated.

The greatest enemy of the Church comes when a bunch of believers *allow Satan and not God* to fill them up. When I begin to consider myself to be greater than you. When pride and MEISM comes and replaces THEISM.

When I allow Satan, that old deceiver, to come into my heart and allow me to think I'm something - when I'm really nothing.

The greatest threat to the work of Christ and His Church is the *murmuring*, secretly complaining, griping believer. The bitter believer who finds fault with everyone and everything. The believer who allows his or her tongue to bring division into the Church of Jesus Christ. The believer for whom bitterness is a way of life. Satan uses that believer, and looks for opportunities to inflame that believer and set on fire the work of God.

Each one of us has a choice as to what we fill our lives with. You can fill your life with Jesus, with love, with care for one another - or you can fill your life with self, with pride, with the pre-Cross attitude of Peter who told Jesus "I'll never betray You, Lord, nor will I allow You to go to the Cross!". Beware of what you fill your life with, Beloved, for when MURMURING begins, death and division soon follows. That old Devil looks for discontent, for those who are dissatisfied, for the complainers, for the MURMURERS, and gives them reasons to backbite and get upset. He looks for the prideful, those who want to be better than others, the arrogant - and gives them ammunition for the battle. The devil used MURMURING among God's Old Testament Saints to *destroy that first generation of Israel*. God's indictment against the first generation was:

**Hebrews 3:7-11 (KJV) "Wherefore (as the Holy**

<sup>5</sup> hades {hah'-dace}, the grave, death

Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, {8} Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: {9} When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. {10} Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. {11} So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) "

What defeated these believers? What kept them from entering the Promised Land? What kept them from defeating their enemies? Their own attitude to God, their

4. That old Devil looks for \_\_\_\_\_, for those who are dissatisfied, for the complainers, for the MURMURERS, and gives them reasons to backbite and get upset. He looks for the \_\_\_\_\_, those who want to be better than others, the arrogant - and gives them ammunition for the battle. (**Hebrews 3:7-8**)

own willingness to *be filled with self* instead of being *filled with faith*. Our Lord Jesus Christ *jumped all over the self righteous*, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the people who *knew* the Word of God but *never applied it*. The greatest enemy of the Church is *devil directed division*, that *secret griping* and complaining, backbiting and division, schisms and superiorities.

The Church is not YOU and I, not THEM and WE, but the Church of Jesus Christ is a *blood bought Body*, where each member is *equally important*. You are important, but no more so than your brother and sister in Jesus. The

Bible says:

**Romans 12:5 (KJV)** "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

**Ephesians 4:25 (KJV)** "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another."

Say that phrase with me: "**every one members one of another**". If you are in Christ, you are part of His Body. If you are part of His Body, you are important - but no more so than the other parts. The devil began to work in the early Church by getting that MURMURING going.

5. The Church is not YOU and I, not THEM and WE, but the Church of Jesus Christ is a \_\_\_\_\_, where each member is \_\_\_\_\_. You are important, but no more so than your brother and sister in Jesus. (**Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25**)

The devil, by the way, is a creature of habit. What worked before, he will try again. The devil's never had an original thought in his life, I don't think, but like most created beings has learned by *trial and error*. Murmuring and division worked in ancient Israel:

**Exodus 15:24 (KJV)** "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?"

**Exodus 16:2 (KJV) "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:"**

**Numbers 14:29 (KJV) "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against Me"**

so Satan figured, "Why not try it in the Church?" And it started to work. So how did the Apostles fix the situation?

## **2. Oneness: The Greatest Blessing To God's Church**

The greatest enemy to God's Work - the Church - is devilish division, but the greatest blessing to the work of God is a *Spirit filled* unity or oneness. Look how the early Apostles corrected the problem of murmuring:


**Acts 6:1 (KJV) "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring<sup>6</sup> of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.**

<sup>6</sup> goggusmos {pronounced gong-goos-mos'}, a secret displeasure not openly avowed

First of all I want you to notice that *they didn't entirely discount* the source of the murmuring. If someone's complaining, there may be a valid reason for the complain. Now let me make this clear: there is NEVER a reason for murmuring - this is sinful - but complaints should be carefully considered and corrected. The Apostles didn't just *poo poo* what was said, but they recognized there may have been a problem. When my left leg hurts, and it hurts a lot (from an old injury), I

6. Now let me make this clear: there is NEVER a reason for \_\_\_\_\_ - this is sinful - but \_\_\_\_\_ should be carefully considered and corrected. The Apostles didn't just *poo poo* what was said, but they recognized there may have been a problem. (Exodus 15:24; 16:2; Numbers 14:29)

don't just dismiss the hurt. But on the other hand, when my leg hurts it doesn't *secretly tell my other leg* about it. When my leg hurts, it tells my brain, who informs the whole body. Then I put a bandage on the leg, rub it with liniment, or do something to relieve the pain. That's the difference between MURMURING and LEGITIMATE COMPLAINTS. The latter is valid, and Godly in many instances. The former is ALWAYS SINFUL! The Apostles realized there was a problem. How did they handle it?

 **Acts 6:2-4 (KJV) "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.**

The Church had its *first business meeting* and recognized something. The Apostles said, "You know, this thing here we are in is A BODY, and it's the BODY of CHRIST. We can't do this by ourselves. We're given the job of prayer and preaching the Word of God. But you know something, we don't have to do this by ourselves, because *we're the Body of Christ*. Seven's a Holy number, Brothers, so how about picking out

**seven men of honest report,  
full<sup>7</sup> of the Holy Ghost and wisdom**

we don't need more MURMURERS, Brothers, but we need people FULL OF JESUS, Full of that Spirit of God, Full of the Word of God. We need seven men that want to be men. We need Holy Ghost people for this Holy Ghost work!"

**Yeah, that's what we need!**

I want you to notice that these people were not picked out to do what the world would call *an important job*.

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<sup>7</sup> pleres {pronounced play'-race}, adjective, full in every part, filled up with, covered with until you can't see it or them

They weren't given fancy titles. They weren't *vice apostles*, or *shepherds shepherds*. They weren't given a nice office, but they were given a job description. They were to **serve tables**, to wait on others. Now I'm going to tell you, I don't know many people who go to college for years to graduate and **wait on tables**. To the mind of the world this is the lowest job you can have, to *waitress* or *waiter* on tables. No worldly people need apply, for worldly minds are more suited to **murmuring** rather than **waiting**.

The Apostles told the early Church to *look among themselves* for people *covered with the Holy Ghost*. People so full of God that you couldn't see them anymore. Oh Jesus, fill our Church with people full of the Holy Ghost! Oh Jesus, fill our Assembly with people submitted to You! The work of Christ cannot be done with murmurers, but it can be done with *waiters*. The God Who made *fishermen* into *Apostles*, and Who made *Luke, a doctor*, the servant of *Apostles who were no more than common men*, is the same God Who empowers believers to greatness.

And listen, Beloved: your greatness as a Christian does not come from whether your name is on a sign out front - but it comes from your willingness to *surrender* to the *Spirit of Christ*. To wait in tables in the House of Christ is an honor that many shun, but it is a honor that Christ

7. The Apostles told the early Church to *look among themselves* for people \_\_\_\_\_.  
People so full of God that you couldn't see them anymore. (Matthew 23:10-12; Luke 22:25-27)

demands we seek. We are a society of servants, as Jesus taught us.

**Matthew 23:10-12 (KJV) "Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. {11} But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. {12} And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."**

When you humble yourself to the needs of God and His Body, you will be exalted in due time. Perhaps not in this life - but exaltation will come.

There are so many who profess the cause of Christ that have fallen to sin and pride, forgetting that Christ has called each member of His Body to serve. We are a society of people who exist because *Our Lord and Master served tables*, and the Table He set with His own Body and Blood. Jesus taught us:

**Luke 22:25-27 (KJV) "And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. {26} But ye shall not be so: but he that is**

**greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. {27} For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth."**

MEISM has no place in the Church of Christ. It's not about me, and it's not about you. It's about Christ, and the WE in the Christ. This is the Kingdom, and this is what we seek.

We may one day have a bigger building, but only when we serve a bigger Christ. When we realize that we are One in Him, and NO ONE of us deserves what Jesus did for us, then the Spirit of God can cloak our work.

### **3. The Spirit Filled Life Is Your Greatest Blessing**

**Acts 6:5, 7-8 (KJV) "...and they chose Stephen, a man full<sup>8</sup> of faith and of the Holy Ghost ... {7} And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. {8} And Stephen, full<sup>8</sup> of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people."**

What can God do with a *surrendered life*? Quite a bit, actually. There are many people who point out, quite correctly, that signs and wonders followed the Apostles

<sup>8</sup> pleres {pronounced play'-race}, adjective, full of, covered up with

as they worked in the early Church. But **wonders and miracles** followed a table waiter named Stephen as well. Stephen was **full<sup>8</sup> of faith and of the Holy Ghost**. He wasn't full of himself, full of pride, or full of murmuring. He was fully submitted to Christ's Spirit. Because he was *pleres*, filled up or covered with faith and the Spirit, I want you to notice that verse 8 says that he was **full<sup>9</sup> of faith and power**. Note that the *exact same word* is used. Where God's Holy Spirit is, God's Power is! Stephen wasn't ashamed to wait on tables for Jesus, wasn't ashamed to submit himself for the cause of Christ. And here's a principle you need to heed, Beloved. If you *submit to God*, God will *empower you*. Here's a truth that you need to hear:

**Anything with two heads is a freak!**

If you are in Christ, you need to submit to Christ. You will never be happy as a Christian until you decide to surrender fully to the Spirit of God. To wait on tables, even *wash feet* as Jesus did. To *serve Christ* you must *serve as He served*, submitting yourself to God and to one another. This verse is not politically correct, but its Bible:

**Ephesians 5:23-24 (KJV) "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body. {24}**

**Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."**

Christ is the Head of the Body. When we submit to the Head, the Lord blesses that submission, and will lead us to greatness. What was Stephen's greatness? Here's the plain Scripture:

**Acts 6:8 (KJV) "... Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders<sup>9</sup> and miracles<sup>10</sup> among the people."**

Stephen surrendered his life to God's Spirit, and God used him in a mighty way. In fact, though Stephen would die a martyr's death later on, Stephen's death would be instrumental in *leading Saul of Tarsus* to Christ. And Saul, by the way, became the Apostle Paul, the man instrumental in offering the salvation of the Cross to we who are Gentiles. That's YOU, by the way!

8. If you are in Christ, you need to \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ. You will never be happy as a Christian until you decide to \_\_\_\_\_ fully to the Spirit of God. To wait on tables, even *wash feet* as Jesus did. To *serve Christ* you must \_\_\_\_\_, submitting yourself to God and to one another. (**Ephesians 5:23-24; Acts 6:8**)

God can use a life surrendered to Him in a miraculous way. Jesus can use the Church surrendered to Him, to His precious Spirit. We must surrender our lives to Him if we wish to be blessed.

9 teras {pronounced ter'-as}, miracles. Used of God in Acts 2:19, 22 - things that are *supernatural*.

10 semeion {pronounced say-mi'-on}, tokens, signs, marks, portents. Same use as in footnote 10, above.