

Social or Spiritual Welfare?

Acts 6:1-6 (Topical Message)



1 Corinthians 15:22a (NASB)

²² For as **in Adam** all die

Man doesn't have to do anything to be "in Adam". **He is born "In Adam"**. Paul says that if you're In Adam, your dead (spiritually dead) – all die! There consequences of this condition that are devastating to man's life and the root cause of all the problems & issues in man's life:

- a. *Spiritual Deadness (Being in Sin) – Separated from God*
- b. *No Power over Sin*
- c. *No Power over Demonic Influences*
- d. *Seeking to be Loved, Accepted, have Value, Worth & Significance in things of the world that will never satisfy (Trying to fill the hole in one's heart)*
- e. *Being Controlled by the Flesh*
- f. *No Joy, Peace, Purpose, Contentment or Satisfaction in Life*
- g. *Conflicts, Quarrels and never-ending Disputes with fellow man*
- h. *Self-Dependence- Self Reliance – Self Effort*

So, man seeks worldly wisdom, education, philosophies, and even religion (religious activities), etc. in an attempt to get some relief:

Worldly wisdom to overcome these issues is not the answer and will never provide the spiritual relief man needs because of his condition of being In Adam.

James 3:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

James says worldly wisdom is earthly, natural and demonic. ***The demonic influences in worldly wisdom divert man away from the spiritual answer to man's spiritual problem:***

The spiritual answer is belief in the Gospel message:

Jesus tells us in John 5:24

John 5:24 (NASB)

²⁴ "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

Belief in the Gospel transfers man out of spiritual death, and into spiritual life.

After man believes man is now "In Christ" and made alive. Amen!

1 Corinthians 15:22b (NASB)

²² so also in Christ all will be made alive.

This is why the Gospel message is so important to preach to spiritually dead lost man!

Man becomes spiritually alive, his sins are forgiven, he is risen to newness of life and has a new source from which to live his life. He now has Christ as his source of life and has a new purpose in his life and can experience Joy, Peace and Contentment.

Man gets a new heart and is changed from the inside out – Amen!

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NASB)

²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

A new heart is the only way to be made spiritually alive and be able to live in the ways of God. Amen!

This is why preaching the Gospel is so important! Amen!

In the book of Acts after Jesus ascended into heaven, He told the Apostles they would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and they will be Jesus's witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the remotest parts of the earth.

The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and immediately Peter started preaching the Gospel message (Understood why the Gospel was so important to Preach).

Acts 3:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

A time of refreshing comes from belief in the Gospel message and man has access to the presence of the Lord:

Peter Preached the Gospel and many were saved:

Acts 2:41 (NASB)

⁴¹ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about **three thousand** souls.

Acts 4:4 (NASB)

⁴ But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about **five thousand**.

Acts 5:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ And all the more believers in the Lord, **multitudes** of men and women, were constantly added to *their number*,

Acts 6:7a (NASB)

⁷ The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the **disciples continued to increase** greatly in Jerusalem

Looking at these scriptures in a few weeks following Peter preaching the Gospel at least 8000 + were saved. Amen. We don't know how much more except the word of God says multitudes and disciples increased.

This was a wonderful and a great work of the Spirit. ***But all these new converts presented an issue to the Church.*** The issue was who would work and help provide food for the local widows:

In otherwards, who would provide for the bodily need of hunger to widows (Social Welfare) in the church and local community. The Apostles gathered and devised a plan for the 1st church and that was to select the 1st deacons to tend to this need: But the Apostles wanted to make it a point that there was a higher need of the church to engage in. And that need was (Spiritual Welfare) to the community:

So today I want to look at Acts 6:1-6 and expound on man's physical needs, and a man's greater spiritual need: Thus, the title of my message **"Social or Spiritual Welfare?"**.

Need

- 1. Social Welfare**
- 2. Spiritual Welfare**

Acts 6:1-6 (NASB)

¹ Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*. ² So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. ³ "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. ⁴ "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵ The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. ⁶ And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

Need – 1 Social Welfare

What is Social Welfare?

Definition of Social Welfare (Merriam – Websters) - organized public or private social services for the assistance of disadvantaged groups.

Organized public or private social services are the Federal and Local Government(s), Churches, Non-Profits, Ministries, Corporations, LLC's etc.

Disadvantaged Groups – Poor, Disabled, Handicapped, Uneducated, Homeless, etc.

Acts 6:1 (NASB)

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A complaint arose on the part of Hellenistic Jews against native Hebrews. The Hellenistic Jews widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

Hellenistic Jews – Greek speaking Jews

Native Hebrews – Native Jews, Hebrew speaking Jews

It seems that the Native Jews were distributing the daily food supply of all the believers (Sold their possessions) 1st to their native community, and neglecting the Greek speaking Jews (not from their community) that migrated to Jerusalem from Gentile areas.

Solution:

Acts 6:2a,3,5-6 (NASB)

² So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples ³ "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. ⁵ The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. ⁶ And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

Brothers & Sisters – These 7 men were the 1st deacons selected in the church. The word “Deacon” comes from the Greek “diakonos” which means servant or minister. It is interesting to note that the Seven were not referred to in title by the early church as “Deacons” but as “The Seven”. Deacon as an official title did not develop until much later. The qualifications of a deacon are outlined in 1st Tim 3:8-13.

The Seven Deacons tended to the widows that were being neglected and made sure they received the daily supply of food. Amen!

This was an important function of the early church to care for widows.

The Apostles recognized and addressed this specific issue by establishing deacons.

Today the church is involved in many social programs to help the needy, and this church model of Deacons has been adopted by many churches. It's interesting that even today, our church every once in a while, get a phone call from a person who is in need of rent, food or housing. Of course, these calls are vetted to make sure that they are legitimate.

But the Apostles new that there was a greater need of man. And that need wasn't a physical one, but a spiritual one.

The spiritual need of man is greater than the physical need of man!

Need 2 - Spiritual Welfare

Acts 6:2b,4 (NASB)

2^b"It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 4"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

The Apostles say that it is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables at the end of verse 2.

Acts 6:2b (ESV)

2^b It is not right that we should **give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.**

Acts 6:2b (AMP)

2^b is not seemly or desirable or right that **we should have to give up or neglect [preaching] the Word of God in order to attend to serving at tables *and* superintending the distribution of food.**

The Apostles make it very clear here:

Its more important for them to preach the Word of God, than to attend to serving tables and superintending the distribution of food:

Wow – That is a very impactful statement!

The highest priority of the Apostles in the 1st church was to preach and teach the word of God and not serve like a deacon.

In otherwards, their priority was that of the Spiritual Welfare of man, versus the Social Welfare of man.

Now both are important – Amen!

But the higher priority according to the Apostles in the 1st church was to teach and preach the word of God. To preach the Gospel message:

Why do you think this is the case?

Because man's problem is a spiritual one. He is in need of spiritual life that is only found in Christ. Christ will meet all of man's spiritual needs in life, and all his physical needs. Amen!

Welfare Priorities Upside Down!

The church and many Christians are engaged in helping fellow man in ministries by providing needed assistance (Social Welfare). This is wonderful work - Amen! But does someone from these churches or ministries ever share or explain the Gospel message to those in need?

I would say most times the answer to this question is No!

Many of us have forgotten that:

Man's Spiritual Welfare is more important than Man's Social Welfare!

Brothers & Sisters – Someone has to share the word of God, and the Gospel message.

Why not that person be you?

Social or Spiritual Welfare?

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