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**Great Awakening**

**Acts 6:1-7**

Everything black and white vs. everything grey

Increasing hostility toward Bible-believing Jesus-followers

Writer John Dickerson says this:

Why is the wealthiest church in history declining in both size and cultural influence? Why, in spite of many new churches being planted, is the lostness of our culture increasingly, and the church is not keeping pace?

Somewhere along the way, unintentionally and gradually, we moved the source of our faith away from desperate dependence on Jesus. We believe things in our doctrinal statement, but we do not believe those same things in our lives.

3 Options:

1. ignore the evidence and continue with business as usual. Continue losing generations of people, decline as a percentage of the population, and fail to be ambassadors who being the good news of Jesus to the pagan culture.
2. Acknowledge the fact but despair and complain about our sad situation, for lack of faith.
3. Acknowledge the facts and turn to God in desperate faith.

Daniel Henderson, Great Awakening:

Sufficiency and supernatural power of the Holy Spirit

Hear and apply the Scriptures with ruthless authenticity

To the seriousness of sin, leading to new and powerful repentance

Beauty and blessing of prevailing prayer

Tragic heartbreak of the lost condition of relatives, friends, neighbors and work

Associates

In short, awakened to Jesus Christ – the supremacy of His power, the obligation of His purposes, and the potency of His promises and His indwelling presence to accomplish all of the above

Acts 6:1-3 *Now in those days when the disciples were increasing* in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching and the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

Hellenists: spoke Greek and their native language, but not Hebrew

Likely “proselytes” (Gentile converts to Judaism, later became

Christians)

Hebrews: spoke Aramaic and Greek

This division was already a part of the Jewish world, now brought into

The church

Division/Disunity in us:

Looking for the next new thing, looking for an upgrade

Unresolved conflict, unwillingness to love each other

Assuming the worse, instead of hoping for the best

Unwillingness to be made uncomfortable, held to commitments

Aversion to change

Unwillingness to repent of sin

Don’t really know or love Jesus

Three qualifications: Full of the Holy Spirit

Full of wisdom

Be known for these things (good reputation)

Why not faith? Belief is the means of being filled by the

Holy Spirit

Acts 6:4 “*But we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.”*

Not a new program, but a return to the old program

This old program comes with a warning: Any time we pray for God's kingdom to come we are praying for our kingdom to fall.

Acts 6:5-6 *And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.*

Prayer was not an escape from the difficult predicaments of ministry and life together; prayer was an engagement with the One who alone had the wisdom, direction, power and unifying grace to enable to apostles to address these concerns as opportunities – opportunities for Christ’s glory, as they manifested His strength through their human weakness.

Acts 6:7 *And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly and Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

Here, the number of disciples wasn’t increasing, it was now multiplying

Disciples who were making disciples who were making disciples

No longer limited to the twelve apostles’ evangelistic effort

Jewish priests, opponents to the gospel, who were now believing the

Gospel

How can this happen in our lifetimes?

Humility

Self-abandon

God-dependence

The power of the Church has never been within its measure of attendance, but always in its measure of the Holy Spirit

Gamaliel to the Pharisees who wanted to stop the growth and influence of the Church in its first years:

Acts 5:38-39 *So, in the present case I tell you, keep away fro these men and let them alone, for it this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!*

If my activity is human powered, it will fail

If my activity is initiated and powered by God, nobody will be able to stop it

King Solomon, dedicating the Temple to God:

2 Chronicles 7:14 *if my people whoa re called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land*