

18b ACTS

We're ready now to resume our study in Acts chapter 6. We have seen the early signs of humanity cropping up in the church. It's one of those too-good-to-last, too-good-to-be-true situations, where all are of one mind and so on. And they divide on this basis of language, of culture.

The Hellenists not only spoke Greek, but had bought into, if you will, the Greek culture and the Greek civilization. And they were Hellenized. They were modern.

Where the Hebrews, speaking Aramaic and staying in the land of Israel, were more traditionalists. So the Greeks... And you see this kind of tension in the same cultures I mentioned earlier, whether it's Asian or you have people who are saying, well, we want you to remember the old ways. We don't want you to lose our traditions and our cultural identity, even though we're here in the United States.

Well, inevitably, there's going to be a tension and there's going to be a loss. And sometimes there will be a divide. You see this in Israel.

You've got your Hasidic Jews, your ultra-conservative Jews, who think that they are closest to keeping the original law. And then you've got the progressive ones who say, hey, it's a modern age. Let's embrace technology.

Let's embrace progress. Let's embrace change. And we can't be stuck in a rut.

And this creates tension and creates a feeling of superiority on whichever side you happen to be. You say, well, you're a stick in the mud. Or if you're in the stick in the mud side, you say, well, you're losing everything that's valuable you sold out.

Well, this is a part of the foreshadowing of a much greater and more significant divide that will exist in the church. Think about it. Right now, everyone in the church is A, in Jerusalem, and B, they're all Jewish.

What's going to happen once the church begins to spread across the land and outside the borders of the land? Particularly, what is going to happen? We know in hindsight that it's going to eventually include Gentiles. And if you think that Jews of two different kinds can get upset with each other, what's going to happen when you've got a completely different what is the Jewish attitude toward the Gentiles? You go back to Jonathan talking to his armor bearer. These uncircumcised Philistines were going to... The Jewish attitude didn't change much.

Look at the way they treated the Samaritans who were sort of half Jews. Well, when you get out there to the complete Gentile community starting to come into the church, this is really going to cause a rift. If they can solve this problem and learn this principle now, and the charge of the mosquito, they will be much better equipped for the charge of the

elephant that is coming a few years down the road.

Right? If they can learn this principle, I should not count myself superior on the basis of some imagined advantage that I have. But it requires some things that do not come to us by nature. It requires humility.

It requires looking at life from a divine perspective. From God's point of view, is God impressed with the fact that you can speak Aramaic? He's really not. Well, this is solved in an interesting way.

We want to see the way that this is dealt with. The first principle I pointed out last time is, you notice that the apostles, the twelve, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit do not go back and try to figure out who shot John. They don't call in all of the administrators of the tables, of the distribution, and say, all right, which of you guys has been shortchanging the Greek widows? Come up here, you.

We're going to make an example of you, and we're going to pass a policy, and you've got to turn in a report, and we're going to have a quota system, and bookkeeping, and try to solve this with some human policy. What do they do? Well, the first thing is, the Hellenistic Jews did the right thing. We could just as easily be reading chapter 6, and it would say, and behold, fighting broke out.

Nicanor took a swing at Thaddeus because his mother didn't get the distribution. What did they do? When they perceived this problem, they went to the proper authority. They didn't go to the secular authorities.

They didn't go down to the synagogue. They didn't start throwing hands at each other. They went to the twelve, and they said, this is a problem.

You all need to solve it for us. You are the leadership in this assembly. They did the right thing.

They took it to the right place, and they abided by the decision that was made. You didn't get a bunch of ruckus and second-guessing, and I've got a better plan. We need twelve, not seven.

When the apostles said to the disciples, choose you seven men, they chose them. They blessed them. They put them in charge.

We hear no more about inequality in the distribution. One of the things we see here is, this may not have been an ideal or a perfect solution. The question that came up on the break, well, how come they're all Greek? Shouldn't it have been a mix? Wouldn't it have been better to make an ecumenical council here of some Hebrews and some? But notice, the criteria was, if you choose men who are full of the Holy Spirit, the fact that they're all from the Hellenistic side ought to reassure everyone that the Hellenistic widows... If

anybody has a complaint that a Hellenistic widow isn't getting her fair share of the distribution, well, nobody can make the claim of prejudice because you're talking to your own people here.

They're the ones in charge of it now. So this is going to forever put an end to someone saying, your distribution is not fair on the basis of discrimination. They've eliminated that.

Well, you say, well, what about reverse discrimination? What if these guys err in the opposite direction? The Twelve assure that that will not happen because they say, we're only going to approve candidates that you bring to us who are full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom. The Holy Spirit really solves this problem. If you put fair men in charge, make them all Greek so there's no question of impropriety.

Do not let your good be spoken of as evil. Avoid even the appearance of evil. We'll make it impossible for that charge to be brought again.

At the same time, we will ensure fairness by making sure we only lay hands on the qualified, on those who have demonstrated that they are susceptible and are receptive to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. And so these men come, and you've got men like Stephen and men like Philip and these others who no one questions their integrity, no one questions their commitment and their status in terms of being under the ministry of the Spirit. We appoint them over this business.

We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. Now, this is not only general prayer, but they're also going to be praying and ministering the Word in such a way that these problems, you know, when you minister the Word, it's not the abstract theology. They're not over there discussing the Levitical offerings forever.

The ministry of the Word ought to be practical. If you come away from Bible class and you don't have something in your soul that helps you get through your day, why did you go? If you don't come away from Bible class with something that orients us to God and His plan and the future and the judgment and who we are and why we're here, we're in the wrong Bible class. We need to be in a place where we are learning and growing and where the Word of God makes a difference in our lives.

When these men are praying and ministering the Word, this addresses itself to the kind of toe-stomping that needs to take place when Hebrews start thinking they're better than Hellenized Jews or when Hellenized Jews start thinking they're more modern and progressive than the old stick-in-the-mud Hebrews. The ministry of the Word is another antidote, another remedy to quell and squash and eliminate this division and this root of evil that is trying to spring up in the church. You can't just appoint a committee.

It is the power of the Holy Spirit. It's the power of God's Word. That is what heals a group

just like it heals an individual.

We have families. We have schisms and we have tensions and we have pushes and pulls in our families. All of us do.

No one is exempt from that just like the early church was not exempt from it. What heals our group? What heals our family? What heals our relationships in any area? It's not just a resolve to do better. It's not just the passing of a new policy.

It is the ministry of God's Spirit. It is the power of God's Word. There is no healing apart from the Word and the Spirit in the life of a believer.

You cannot heal. You can do a cosmetic makeover. You can put on a mask.

You can wrap it up where it doesn't show. You can hide it. You can do a fan dance.

But you cannot heal without the Spirit and the Word. And you'll notice that those two are in close juxtaposition. Men full of the Holy Spirit are going to address this issue.

The leadership is going to give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. That is what heals this breach. The saying pleased the whole multitude.

They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. This is twice now that we are told that Stephen is full of wisdom slash faith and the Holy Spirit. Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicholas, a proselyte from Antioch.

Notice, he is originally a Gentile who came to Israel, got circumcised, is a Jew by choice, like Uriah the Hittite. And they set them before the apostles. The apostles prayed and laid hands on them.

I was tempted to do a study on laying on of hands. But we did that not too long ago in our fundamentals. You can go to Hebrews chapter 6. Not laying again the foundation of change of mind away from dead works and of faith toward God.

Baptisms, laying on of hands. If you want to know about laying on of hands, get that tape. We are not going to lay that foundation again.

So, then we have our summary statement. Now, I don't want to give this short shrift. But these seven, why is it seven men? It's a good question.

Seven is the number of completeness. It is a number of fullness, perfection. People say, well, why weren't there more? This was judged to be enough.

It was good in the sight of the people. So, whatever the relative fraction was between Hebrews and Hellenized Jews, this fit the bill. Then, the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.

You will notice that healthy growth follows healing of this breach. This problem could have escalated into something that divided and diminished and even destroyed the church in Jerusalem. But because it was handled prayerfully, because it was handled in the power of the spirit, because it was handled with the word of God, because people were respectful of authority, God-given authority, this breach was healed and the church prospered as a result.

And that is a model for any group, any breach involving believers. There is always authority. You will never find yourself in a situation where there is not some authority that applies.

We need to respect it. We need to respect its divine origin. We need to respect it is as though God has laid hands.

It doesn't matter if they are the worst godless pagan savage that you ever saw. Their authority is from God. You don't have to respect the person, but you have to respect the authority and the one who gave it.

Obey those that have the rule over you. It doesn't say obey the ones you like. It doesn't say obey the ones you agree with.

It doesn't say obey the ones that are in your same party. It says those who have the rule over you, obey them. So that is the antidote.

It is the acknowledgement of authority operating within the authority umbrella that God has established. Power of God's spirit, the power of God's word, faith and obedience. And instead of splitting and disintegrating, the church prospers and the number of disciples multiplies greatly in Jerusalem.

And notice a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. Now, this is something of an afterthought, and yet it's quite a surprising statement. I thought it was the priests who were calling up Peter and John and bringing them before the council.

But who heard these daily Bible classes that were being done in Solomon's porch? The priests, 24 courses of priests. They were under the same system as back in the days of the birth of John the Baptist with Zacharias, 24 courses. There is an estimate that there were anywhere from 8,000 to 12,000 priests in Jerusalem.

This is a pretty big community. And a lot of them had to rotate through down there at the temple. And you have Peter and John having Bible class every day down there.

And these men would hear it and they would consider. They would talk to one another. They said, you know, you think about those sacrifices that we perform, these things that we've been trained in since childhood.

This really lines up. This really makes sense. I can find no fault with the nature of this fulfillment.

Look at these miraculous wonders that God is confirming. We've never seen anything like this. We didn't see this in the days of Theodos and Judas of Galilee.

These men look like the real deal and they are claiming that this Christ has been raised from the dead. I've got to make a decision about this. And many of them decided that it was valid and they responded and joined the church.

Well, that verse 7 is the summary, the end of the Jerusalem section of Acts. We are now going to begin a new section that is going to cover the expansion of the message beyond Jerusalem. You remember, Jesus told the disciples, you will be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, the nation of Israel.

Well, this is about to expand. So it says, Stephen, this man that was chosen to help with the distribution, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people, which is equivalent of saying he's full of the Holy Spirit. This is a threefold witness to the faith, the wisdom, the power, the Holy Spirit presence with Stephen.

Then there arose some from what is called the synagogue of the freedmen, Cyrenians, Alexandrians and those from Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. Now, where is Cyrene? Remember Simon of Cyrene, who was involved in the carrying of the cross when the Lord was crucified? Alexandria, where's Alexandria? Down south in Egypt. You've got Cilicia and Asia.

This is Asia Minor. This is up around. What kind of Jews are these? Hebrews? No, these are from the Hellenized.

These are the outsiders. Synagogue of the freedmen. This is one of these Greek synagogues disputing with Stephen.

They are the progressives. They're the forward thinkers. They're the cutting edge people.

They disputed with Stephen. They were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke. So they decided to attack him.

This puts me in mind of, and I don't ordinarily bring up anything. I try not to bring up anything that's very political, but you're well aware that our favorite radio commentator got raked over the coals for making a very blasé remark that was not racist. It was racial.

It wasn't racist. There's a huge difference in that. Of course, Nightline covered it and completely failed to point out that two weeks earlier, he did a complete long monologue coming to the defense of black coaches who were being denigrated and made tokens by a stupid rule in the NFL.

Anyway, when they have been lying in wait, they have just been biding their time waiting for the first issue they could seize upon. And you'll notice Rush Limbaugh made this comment on Sunday night on ESPN. Nothing was said in the press.

The two black commentators on the set didn't react that he was speaking to at the time. They didn't find it offensive. They didn't recoil in horror.

He continued talking about the relative merits of McNabb, the quarterback. Rush said he's overrated, which everybody says quarterbacks are overrated. They're always overrated, usually by their local press.

And he said, I think the reason this particular guy is overrated in Philadelphia is because the media has a desire to see a black quarterback succeed. And so they're pumping him up and giving him credit for things that his teammates are actually doing. Well, it has ever been thus, and that's an opinion.

And so what? Well, the black guys in the room talking to Rush didn't find anything offensive. They just kept talking about, no, I think he is a pretty good quarterback on and on. Next day, nothing.

Tuesday, nothing. Wednesday, the Philadelphia press, who are the guilty as charged, they are the ones that have been inflating McNabb above and beyond his abilities. They publish stories.

They sent stuff over the wire. They said, oh, look at this terrible, racist, unconscionable thing that this person has said. And they blew it all out of proportion.

They created this firestorm. And Rush just said, look, I'll quit. Hey, you know, it's just a job.

I got my radio show. It's not like the end of the world. But he didn't retract his statement because it's an opinion.

There's nothing wrong with it. It wasn't. He didn't say anything bad about McNabb, except that he's overrated.

Well, what quarterback has not had that charge made against him? And he didn't say something like Jimmy the Greek said, well, the reason they're good athletes, you know, I mean, gracious sakes, now there's a thing to get a guy off your program for. But he didn't say anything of the kind. But they were lying in wait.

This is what's happening here. It's the same kind of thing. This is another common failing of humanity that we as believers need to try to expel and expunge from our life.

We can do this our own selves. We can react to someone. We can decide that somebody is in the No Goodnik camp.

They are a member of the Dirty Bird Party, and they haven't done anything yet. But we're just going to wait. We'll just watch them pretty soon.

They'll do something that we can rake them over the coals for. And then we just take delight in drawing and quartering them, usually in conversation with others. And it drags us down into the gutter.

It takes us out of the realm of grace. It takes us out of the realm of the Holy Spirit. This is what these guys do.

The church has bent over backward to take care of the Hellenized Jews' widows. They are running a huge charity for the Hellenized Jews. Anybody can come.

They don't say, are you a member? Have you been baptized? Speak in tongues and we'll give you a sandwich. They don't do any of that. They just say, fine, if you have a need, we'll try to help you.

These men probably have mothers and aunts and widows in their community that are being benefited by the church, but they just can't stand something. There's something that really gets their goat. We're going to see what it is.

They couldn't resist the wisdom by which he spoke. He makes arguments from Scripture. They can't refute it.

So you have not convinced a man because you have silenced him. So what do you do? Well, you find another way to attack him. You do character assassination.

You make something up, blow something out of proportion. If you need to unseat someone because you think they're doing you damage, you know, humanity, our human fallen nature, will just find whatever we can to tear them down. So they get false witnesses.

They induce men to say we heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God. Well, there is a grain of truth in this charge. And this is why we have a division here in Acts.

This is why we're moving into section two. Not only is the realm expanding where the gospel is being preached and where the church is operating, but there's about to be a change. So far with the death of Christ and he's in the Jewish officials' minds off the scene, little do they know the disciples are only guilty of saying he was the Messiah.

He's been raised from the dead. The officials look around and say, well, I don't see him walking around. So we think you're wrong.

We'll give you 39 licks and turn you loose. But there is about to be a change. That message in and of itself does not threaten the structure.

It doesn't threaten the religious hierarchy. If you start saying someone is no longer objective in their press coverage, this jeopardizes their job. And so they're going to get rid of you because you are a threat.

You speak the truth. You shine light in dark places. We don't like to hear that.

So we will get Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson and the NAACP and all the rest of them to call for your resignation. That's what happens here. The message of Stephen.

Stephen is full of wisdom. He is advancing. He's teaching the advanced Bible class now at the church.

And he says, listen, folks, there's more going on here than just the fulfillment of the Messiah promises. We are entering a new age. Christ fulfilled the law and we are rapidly coming to the place where we're not going to be tied to ritual worship in Jerusalem.

We're not going to be tied to temple worship and to Levitical sacrifices. Stephen figured it out under the ministry of the Spirit. And he says, you know what? This is a whole new thing.

Christ is going to be calling home his bride and his body. God the Father is calling them out in this generation and he's going to build a group of people who belong exclusively to Christ. It's going to be his bride and all of the previous Jewish believers, all of the Israelites, all of the Old Testament saints are going to be the friend of the bridegroom.

And he starts talking about the parables of Christ at the wedding feast and the marriage supper of the lamb and this kind of thing. And he starts saying, you know what? You need to prepare yourself for a change in the way God deals with us. National Israel is not going to be able to contain this new thing that God is doing.

Well, these are fighting words. If you're sitting there in the catbird seat, you are the religious leader. You're drawing a nice salary and you're getting adulation and holding big feasts and everyone looks up to you and someone says, hey, you know, you're about to be retired.

Your job is about to go out the window. We're not going to need you anymore. Well, we've got to get rid of that guy.

So it starts, oddly enough, with the progressives, with the liberals, with the forward thinkers. Or as Dr. Griswold said, you know, it's become an appropriate epithet to be called a liberal. So now we call ourselves moderates.

And he says, a skunk by any other name still stinks. But these are the progressives. See, these are the Hellenists.

They're the cutting edge, latest, greatest. We're in the culture. We're wearing the latest

fashions.

We're forward thinking. And you would think, well, these would be the ones to be receptive and say, hey, there's a new thing coming. And oddly enough, the people who say that they are the most flexible and they are the most caring and the most compassionate and they are the most modern wind up being the big status quo, I will kill you if you don't agree with me types.

We see that in our modern culture, just as it is here in the ancient culture. And the first ones to raise the red flag of battle with the new Christian movement are the liberals, the Hellenists, the Cyrenians, the Alexandrians, the Silesians, the ones who ought to realize they are the ones that have been maltreated because they were something new. They came back with a new language and new customs and new clothing, new ideas back into the land.

If anyone ought to understand something new, it would be the Hellenists. And how hypocritical can you get that the very thing that you have railed against in your own case, you turn right around and do to someone else? That's the very definition of hypocrisy. The first external opposition that is going to result in death for the church will not be the Sanhedrin.

It's going to be these guys. They are the ones that are going to whip it up. The Sanhedrin said, well, you're not a threat to us.

You just believe that this guy was raised from the dead. We don't think so. We're concerned.

We want you to stop preaching in this name. They didn't kill Peter. They didn't kill John.

Stephen is going to be the first martyr, and it's going to be because he is a threat to these who claim to be progressive but are, in fact, the kings of the status quo. We've heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. He's saying maybe the law of Moses is on its way out.

They stirred up the people. They stirred up the elders. They stirred up the scribes, and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.

So now they are doing to Stephen what an earlier group, just a few months earlier, did to the Lord Jesus. False witnesses. We'll trump up a charge.

Same charge that was brought against Jesus. Speaking against the law, speaking against God, blasphemy. They set up false witnesses who said, this man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law.

We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the

customs which Moses delivered to us. Is God in the process of changing the customs which Moses delivered to us? Yes, he is. Is this a true thing? Yes, it is.

Is it being trumped up and misconstrued and treated as a crime when in fact it is a message from God? Yes, it is. So, all who sat in the council, this is the Sanhedrin, looking steadfastly at him saw his face as the face of an angel. He has just got a faint glow.

And this ought to be a sign of divine approval, of divine authority, of divine presence. If you are truly a person sensitive to the power of God and the witness of God and the word of God in this generation, and you see people being healed right and left, what is Stephen noted for? Verse 8, he did great wonders and signs among the people. These priests have seen it.

How many witnesses could they call in and say, Stephen healed a leper? Stephen healed a blind man? Stephen healed a deaf man? Stephen healed a lame man? Great signs and wonders have been done by this man. The like of which we have never seen in Israel except until this Jesus started coming around and his disciples. This guy is one of them.

You would think this needs to be taken seriously. Don't care anything about it. God lights him up with a holy glow and they still ignore it.

Don't know what it is he has been eating. Maybe he has been swimming in those seas off the coast of Thailand or something. Got that phosphorescence going.

We can't explain it, but I'll be darned if I'm going to change my mind. You know, don't bother me with the facts. My mind is made up.

So, they saw his face as though it were the face of an angel. That ends chapter 6. Chapter 7, the high priest said, Are these things so? And he said, Brethren and fathers, listen. Why can he say brethren and fathers? He is a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

He is a Hellenist of the Hellenists. Stephen, like Paul, can speak both ways. He's not speaking Greek here.

He's speaking Aramaic. He is full of wisdom. He is full of power.

He's full of grace, full of the Holy Spirit. He says, Brethren and fathers, listen. Now he is going to give his speech.

And it's a long one. And we don't have time to go through all of the details tonight. And we're not going to go word by word through it even later.

But here's the thing to watch for. When you look at the speech of Stephen, he starts with Abraham back in Ur of the Chaldees. And he brings Abraham through Haran and down into Canaan.

He talks about Jacob going down into Egypt and coming out. But what is the thrust of his argument? I'll tell you what to watch for as we go through this. He's saying, look, in the history of our people, it has ever been thus.

From time to time, God does a new thing. There was a family in Ur of the Chaldees. And God came into that situation and pulled Abraham out and said, I'm going to do something new with you.

And sent him out of his land to do something new. They were in Canaan, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Sent them down into Egypt.

I'm going to do something new with you. You're going to go down there and be oppressed. 400 years are going to go by before you're going to emerge.

From being kicked from pillar to post in Canaan and going down into Egypt, 215 years up north, 215 years down south. You're going to come out again and God is going to do a new thing. He's going to make a nation.

They weren't a nation before that. Now they are. The essence of the argument that Stephen makes is, why are you surprised that God is once again doing something new? Why are you resisting something new when our entire history is a string of new things? New somethings.

God is always progressing. God is building. God is creating.

God is doing new things. Why are you shocked? Why do you think that we have suddenly solidified and gelled into something that can never change? Look at your Bible, Stephen says. Look at your own history.

You're throwing rocks at me because I'm telling you that something is about to change with the law of Moses. We have got 4,000 years of history of change. When did you decide that it would never change again? What is the matter with you that you can't see the hand of God? Every time God has made a change, he's posted miraculous signs around it.

Look around you. Miraculous signs. What do you think is going on? What's the matter with you? Well, this is what's the matter with them.

They are invested. This is what we want to watch for. Are we too invested in our lives for change? Because if you can't accommodate change, you can't accommodate growth.

Growth is change. And there are things about us that we need to change. We need to get rid of basing our self-worth on comparison with others.

We need to get away from pulling ourselves up by pushing others down. We need to get away from the idea that there's something about me that I can claim, which is what's

been going on in these earlier chapters. We need a change.

We need a growth. And we should be looking for the signs of God's hand. His word.

His spirit. His transforming power ought to be at work and things ought to be changing. It's always a little unsettling.

We can lose a little bit of security when things change. But if it is the will of God, if it is the plan of God, if it is the power of God, it's a good thing. We need to be looking for the places where God is trying to make a change.

Where God is equipping us. Where God is preparing us. Where God is supplying us for that change.

These men are completely ossified. They are petrified. They are calcified.

They are completely unable to move and to change and to accommodate a movement of God. When the rock of salvation comes, you can either fall on it and be broken and changed into something new or it is going to fall on us and crush us to powder. One or the other.

These men are going to end up getting crushed to powder. They think they will succeed when they kill Stephen. Quite the opposite.

It is just the opposite. They have assassinated all of their hopes for the future when they do this. What do we take away when we look at Stephen? He is full of faith.

He's full of power. People in his generation might have declared him a failure. Well, he wasn't very tactful.

Look at what happened to him. He should have been more kind. He should have been more accommodating.

He should have eased up to his message. He should have put some sugar coating on this bitter pill. He didn't have to go up there and just antagonize people.

Why did he have to say that the law of Moses was going to go away? If he had just left that part out, why did Rush have to say that the press is blowing the guy up because he's black? If he had just left that part out, well, you find out when you strike the nerve by the reaction. Dan knows this. In the dentist chair, you hit the nerve, you get a reaction.

Stephen is going to strike a nerve here because his speech, his sermon that we're going to study next time is all about the way God progresses and the way God changes. People are saying, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. If things change, I'm going to lose my seat.

I'm going to lose my place in line here. Can't have that. You've got to go.

We don't want to hear this message of change. We're going to label you as a blasphemer and we're going to assassinate you. And this is going to be the seal of death on them, both now and in the age to come.

We want to be ready when God works a change in us. Be transformed, it says in Romans 12, by the renewing of your mind. Transformation and renewal is what Israel needs.

Transformation and renewal is what's going on in the early church. Transformation and renewal is what God requires of you and of me each and every day. It's a challenge, but we have the Spirit.

We have the Word. We have the authority structure that God has set up. The same things that healed the church can heal us individually and as a group.

Let's close here in a word of prayer and we'll pick up next time in chapter 7. Father, thank you for the privilege of living in this age of being granted insight and perception into the forward movement of your plan. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts so that we will be motivated and we will be encouraged and strengthened and transformed and changed into that which you would have us to be. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.