

## A Company of One heart and One Soul

Acts 4:32 – 37; 6:1

- I. In Acts 6:1, we come across the first note of social problems in the Christian church: Hellenists are complaining that their widows are not receiving a fair share of the materials being distributed by the church. (Here you can expand on (a) the human tendency to complain, (b) the human tendency to not distribute goods fairly, and (c) that we cannot know whether or not the complaints were justified, but simply that complaints were made and the writer of Acts records them.)
- II. Background for the incident is found in Acts 4:32-37. The apostles were appointed to distribute the goods that all followers of the resurrected Christ were giving. (Expand here on the Holy Spirit's moving the people to give all their material things to the central point.) The principle of material wealth may be this: Giving of all to the central point, then the righteous at first, for the passage states that in the church there are no needy people.
- III. This task of material distribution may be seen as the first task of the apostles (John 21:15-17: "Feed my sheep").
- IV. Further background: Who were the Hellenists and the Hebrews? The Hellenists were Jews in Palestine who had adopted the Greco-Roman (Hellenic) culture – probably including language, dress, giving up various Jewish rituals and laws, having commerce with the foreign Roman powers. Paul was a Hellenist. The Hellenist Jews tended to be the more liberal Jews, more worldly, cosmopolitan. The Hebrews tended to be more conservative, nationalistic, parochial, traditional. They did not allow relationship with the dominant, Gentile culture. The tension between the two groups is an ever-present tension between cultures. At first, the church was able to transcend and overcome this tension. But later the tension caused problems, even splitting the early church.
- V. It is apparent that the basis for unity was the fair distribution of wealth to all. The cause for complaint and dissension was unequal distribution. Thus a primary foundation for the church to achieve its goal of an agape love community is social

justice. And yet, there must be an internal basis upon which the social justice can take shape and endure.

- VI. This internal base is found in 4:32 – “the company...were of one heart and soul.” (Expand: an internal foundation is necessary for external peace and prosperity. Fundamental point is to be of “one heart and one soul.”)
- VII. By chapter 6 verse 1, the internal unity was becoming a problem. (Expand: this is a fundamental problem for the church, which has never been overcome.) Separation of race, culture, nation, sect – even these people were all Jewish, but just different classes of Jews. And they couldn’t unite. Was that the will of Jesus?
- VIII. The lesson is that poverty exists because people do not share one heart and one soul. Poverty exists because of social separation, discrimination, bigotry. If we solve bigotry and separation, we can solve poverty. Therefore, NCCSA exists not only to effect fair distribution of goods, but to advocate unity, to advocate Christians becoming a company of one heart and one soul.