

Introduction:

Today we're going to conclude our look at *the growth of the church*.

Things we will look at in this lesson:

Part One: The Powerful Church

Part Two: The Persistent Church

Part One: The Powerful Church:

01. Without the context of Acts 5:12-16, what might one assume the apostles were imprisoned for?

02. What kind of atmosphere should a church have in which God can perform His acts among us?

03. What is it that every individual believer senses in any dynamic advance of the church?

04. What will a church of committed believers accomplish?

Part Two: The Persistent Church:

Article 1)

Ways Satan May Attack Christians:

Satan is predictable; God is not. The strategies used against the church in Acts are the same today. Three satanic strategies against the church are as follows:

(1) Satan tries to defeat the church (or the Christian) by causing doubt, fear, despair, or sin. Satan also tries to cause the Christian to blame God or others.

(2) Satan tries to defeat the church by causing division. Often this is done through the selfishness of individuals. Many times he uses doctrinal issues to divide the church.

(3) Satan tries to defeat the church or individual through persecution or seduction. Actually persecution and seduction are two sides of the same coin. The seduction of material gain often weakens a Christian's faith. Persecution often increases his or her faith.

In Acts, we do not see Satan using seduction to any great degree. That comes later in church history. Every time the church faces an attack, the Holy Spirit moves to guide and protect the church, ensuring victory.

05. What can we say about divine intervention or the lack of it?

06. What must Christian's learn when it comes to trusting God?

07. What is not the common pattern in the book of Acts?

08. What characteristics do we see displayed in the apostles even though they were in danger?

09. What were the Sanhedrin ready to do with those who spoke of Jesus?

10. Where does the test of the genuineness of a movement lie?

11. What did Gamaliel's intervention do in regard to the Sanhedrin?

Persecution of believers in Acts 1–7				
Acts	Source of Persecution	Reason for Persecution	Description of Persecution	Result of Persecution
1:3; 2:23–41	Unbelieving Jewish leaders	Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and the Messiah. The masses believed Him.	They nailed Him to a cross.	He died, but rose from the dead. He ascended and sent the promised gift of the Spirit. Millions follow Him.
4:1–31	Sadducees	The apostles healed a crippled man and preached the resurrection of the dead through Jesus.	They put Peter and John in jail. The Sanhedrin threatened them.	The disciples prayed for boldness. All were filled with the Holy Spirit.
5:17–41	Jewish high priest and Sadducees	Some Jewish leaders were jealous over the success of the apostles.	The Sanhedrin jailed the apostles and later beat them.	An angel released them. They rejoiced for being worthy of suffering for the Name.
6:9–8:1, 4	Unbelieving Jews and the Sanhedrin	By the Spirit, Stephen did great wonders and miraculous signs and spoke with wisdom about Jesus.	They brought him to the Sanhedrin, produced false witnesses, and stoned him.	In Jerusalem, great persecution broke out. All except the apostles were scattered, preaching wherever they went.
Persecution of believers in Acts 8–28				
Acts	Source of Persecution	Reason for Persecution	Description of Persecution	Result of Persecution
8:1,5,11	Unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem	They were jealous (5:17), angry (7:57), and did not believe in Jesus (1 Tim. 1:13).	They beat, killed, or imprisoned believers. Sometimes they took their property (Heb. 10:34).	Philip went to a city of Samaria and preached. Many believed.
8:3–4	Saul	He thought he was serving God!	He began to destroy the church, house to house. Believers were beaten, imprisoned, or killed (Acts 9:1–2; 22:4, 19; 26:10–11).	Believers were scattered. They preached the Word wherever they went.
9:23–25	Unbelieving Jews in Damascus	Saul was proving that Jesus was the Messiah.	They planned to kill him.	His followers lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. He went to Jerusalem.
11:19–21	See 8:1 above.	See 8:1 above.	See 8:1 above.	Those scattered told the good news in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch.
12:1–17,24	King Herod	Herod desired to please the unbelieving Jews.	He had James' head cut off; later he put Peter in prison.	Believers were encouraged when God freed Peter from prison. The Word of God continued to increase and spread.

Persecution of believers in Acts 8–28 (continued)				
Acts	Source of Persecution	Reason for Persecution	Description of Persecution	Result of Persecution
13:44–49	Unbelieving Jews in Antioch of Pisidia	Jealousy over the crowds that gathered to hear the Word of the Lord from Paul	They talked badly against what Paul was saying.	The apostles turned to the Gentiles. Many believed. God's Word spread throughout the whole region.
13:50–52	Unbelieving Jews in Antioch of Pisidia	Jealousy over the Jewish crowds and Gentile believers	They used God-fearing women with influence and leading men to stir up persecution. They expelled the apostles.	The apostles shook the dust from their feet as a protest (See Luke 9:5). The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.
14:1–7	Jews who refused to believe at Iconium	Unbelief	They stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds. They planned to stone the apostles.	They fled to Lystra and Derbe and continued to preach the good news.
14:19–22	Jews from Iconium and Antioch	Unbelief and jealousy over the crowds	They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city.	The disciples prayed for him. Paul got up and went back into the city. Later, he taught that we must go through hardships to enter God's kingdom.
17:1–10	Unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica	Jealousy	They formed a mob and started a riot.	Paul and Silas escaped to Berea.
17:13–15	Unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica	Jealousy	They stirred up the crowd.	Paul and Silas escaped to Athens.
18:1–17	Unbelieving Jews of Corinth	Unbelief	Jews opposed Paul and became abusive. Later, they united and took him to court.	He shook out his clothes and turned to the Gentiles. Many Corinthians believed. Gallio threw the case out of court.
19:8–10, 20	Unbelieving Jews in Ephesus	They refused to believe.	They publicly slandered the Way.	Paul left the synagogue. He taught beside it for 2 years. Many Jews and Greeks believed.
19:23–20:1	Demetrius, a silversmith	He was losing money. People were not buying the idols of Artemis that he made.	They started a riot and rushed into the theater.	The city clerk dismissed the case. Paul encouraged the disciples and left for Macedonia.
20:3	Unbelieving Jews of Greece	Unbelief	They made a plot against Paul.	He changed his plans and returned to Macedonia.
21:27–23:35	Unbelieving Jews	Unbelief; Paul's ministry to the Gentiles	They seized Paul and incited the crowd. They ousted him from the temple and tried to kill him. At least 40 men vowed to kill him.	The Romans moved Paul to a prison in Caesarea, in Herod's palace.

Persecution of believers in Acts 8–28 (continued)				
Acts	Source of Persecution	Reason for Persecution	Description of Persecution	Result of Persecution
24	The high priest and some elders	Preaching Jesus	They accused Paul with a lawyer before Governor Felix.	Paul testified to the governor and others. He was bound for 2 years.
25–26	Chief priests and Jewish leaders	Preaching Jesus	They made serious charges that they could not prove. Paul was put in chains.	Paul testified to Festus. Then he appealed to Caesar. A few days later Paul testified to King Agrippa and city leaders.
27	Chief priests and Jewish leaders	Preaching Jesus	Paul was taken as a prisoner to Rome. The ship was lost to a great storm.	Paul became a friend with Julius, the centurion. Also, all 276 survived the storm because of Paul.
28:1–10	Chief priests and Jewish leaders	Preaching Jesus	Paul continued his journey to Rome as a prisoner.	Paul healed the sick on the island of Malta.
28:11–31	Chief priests and Jewish leaders	Preaching Jesus	Paul was chained and guarded for 2 years.	Boldly and without hindrance, he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.
God's response to persecuted believers in Acts				
Reference	Who was involved?	What circumstances?	Divine intervention?	
Acts 4:1–23	Peter and John	Before the Sanhedrin after healing the lame beggar	no	
Acts 5:17–21	All the apostles	Before the Sanhedrin after doing many miracles	yes	
Acts 5:40				
Acts 7:54–8:1				
Acts 8:3				
Acts 12:1–2				
Acts 12:3–17				
Acts 14:19				
Acts 16:19–34				
Acts 21:30–23:30				
Acts 23:31–26:32				
Acts 27:1–28:6				
Acts 28:14–31				