



## WEEK 2: The Church—it's not a country club!

### 1. Persecution Realized: Part I (4:1-31)

- Miraculous healing of lame man (3:1-11)
- Peter publicly proclaims gospel (3:12-26)
- Sadducees upset (4:1-2), Apostles arrested (4:3)
- Apostles brought before Council, questioned (4:5-7)
- Apostles respond by sharing the gospel with Council (4:8-12)
- Council disregards miraculous healing, conspires to stop Apostles (4:13-17)
- Evangelism prohibited (4:18)
- Peter and John reject Council's demands (4:19-20)
- Apostles threatened, released (4:21-22)
- Praying in dependence for boldness (4:23-30)
- Powerful proclamation of gospel (4:31, 33)

### 2. Purity Jeopardized (5:1-11)

- Sin committed (5:1-2)
- Sin recognized, Ananias confronted (5:3-4)
- Consequence of sin: Ananias' death (5:5-6)
- Sapphira confronted/questioned (5:7-8a)
- Sapphira continues lying (5:8b)
- Consequence of sin: Sapphira's death (5:9-10)
- Congregation fearful b/c of consequences of sin (5:11)

### 3. Persecution Realized: Part II (5:12-42)

- Apostles' authority demonstrated by signs and wonders, many new believers (5:12-16)
- Sadducees jealous (5:17)
- Apostles arrested (5:18)
- Apostles escape (5:19-20), Evangelism continues (5:21a)
- Council disregards miraculous escape (5:21b-25)
- Apostles brought back, questioned (5:26-28)

- Apostles again reject Council’s demands (5:29)
- Apostles respond by sharing the gospel with Council (5:30-32)
- Council infuriated (5:33)
- Gamaliel gives some good advice (5:34-39)
- Apostles flogged, threatened, released (5:40)
- Apostles rejoiced (5:41)
- Apostles continued teaching and preaching gospel (5:42)

#### 4. **Problems Recognized (6:1-6)**

- Sacrificing to meet all needs in congregation (4:34-35)
- Unmet needs of certain widows are recognized (6:1)
- Apostles respond with a plan (6:2-4)
- Congregation agrees with the plan (6:5)
- Apostles commission “deacons” to serve/oversee food distribution (6:6)

#### 5. **Church Growth and Health Emphasized**

- Growth (2:41)
- Health (2:42-47)
- Growth (4:4)
- Health (4:32-37)
- Growth (5:14)
- Growth (6:1a)
- Growth (6:7)

#### **APPLICATION:**

*What did the Apostles expect concerning their lives as Christians?*

- The Apostles expected trials and tribulations (see Mark 13:9; Luke 10:3; John 15:18-20).
- As they responded to these situations with God’s wisdom, in God’s power, and for God’s glory, the Church was purified and kept pure.

*What do we expect as followers of Christ in His Church today?*

- Difficulties are inevitable in our personal lives and in the life of the Church.
- Do our expectations of the Church suggest that we are treating it like a country club? Do we expect the Church to provide us with amenities, entertainment, comfort, and convenience? Or, do we expect the Church to help us become more Christ-like?
- As members of a country club, we would seek to minimize the difficulties and hardships.
- As members of the Church, we should capitalize on difficulties for the related purposes of glorifying God, making and equipping mature disciples, and increasing purity in our own lives and in the life of the Church.
- Do we put a high priority on purity in the Church and in our own personal lives?



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*But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates ... and they were filled with jealousy.* – Acts 5:17 NASB

There's a false understanding of Christianity that has infected churches all over the world, but especially in the United States. Years of prosperity and religious freedom have lulled many of us into a "comfortable Christianity." This brings with it the idea that God's highest priority is to keep us all happy. Therefore, the Church itself becomes a God-given implement for our own fulfillment, pleasure, and, ultimately, our happiness. Such a Church has no business holding us accountable to biblical standards. It has no real authority to dictate how we live our lives. We are autonomous in that respect. The Church simply exists to meet my expectations and to help me feel better about myself by allowing me to believe that, by having a semblance of 'religion,' I'm somehow a better person, and thus, able to lead a more fulfilling and happier life. Our shallow theologies leave no place for trials, tribulations, testing and suffering. Such things are foreign and, frankly, unwelcome. Pain in our lives leaves us confused and oftentimes angry at God; or, at the very least, frustrated with His supposedly sovereign reign. This perspective is anything but biblical, so turn off the televangelists and open your Bibles to the Book of Acts. If the problems and persecutions of the Early Church tell us anything, it's that we can expect difficulties, but we can also trust that God is sovereign and that all will ultimately work out for our good and His glory.

- WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY?

**Acts 3:1—6:7**

- Public Miracle and Proclamation (3:1-26)
- Persecution Realized (4:1-22)
- Prayer (4:23-31)
- Provision (4:32-37)
- Purity Issues (5:1-11)
- Public Proclamation / Persecution Persists (5:12-42)
- Problems Addressed (6:1-6)
- *Summary* (6:7)

- WHAT DID YOU HEAR BEN SAY?

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- WHAT DO YOU HEAR GOD SAYING?

As you listen to the lecture and spend time in discussion with the men around your table, try and listen to what God may be trying to say to you. Write down those verses or thoughts that encourage or possibly convict you, so that you can remember them.

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- WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PRAY FOR?

If you heard God speaking to you today, it's vitally important that you take action. Maybe you need to confess. You might need God to clarify what He said or give you further direction. It could be that you simply need to express thanks to Him. During your prayer time around the table, be sure and provide one another with the opportunity to share a prayer request and to pray for them together.

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- WHAT TO READ FOR NEXT WEEK?

- Acts 6:8—9:31