

ACTS 6

1. When Satan cannot defeat us with the attacks of non-Christians, what does he do?

-He causes Christians to fight one another.

2. Why did the apostles say that they themselves would not be giving food to the widows?

-Because Jesus gave the apostles the work of teaching God's Word and praying for the Church.

3. What was the name of one of the seven men chosen as deacons who was later stoned to death?

-Stephen.

4. Whom did Stephen see standing at God the Father's right hand?

-Jesus.

5. Why is Jesus happy to welcome His children in heaven?

-Because He loves us and He wants us to be with Him in heaven.

-Chapter 8 of the Acts of the Apostles begins with the story of a Jewish man named Saul.

-Saul took care of the coats of the men who stoned Stephen to death.

Let's read Acts 8:1-3

1-And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

2-Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

3-But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

-Saul did not believe that Jesus was the Savior, the Son of God.

-Saul believed that Jesus had blasphemed God when He said that He was the Son of God.

-Saul did not believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

-Saul believed that Jesus was a liar.

-Saul also believed that Christians were liars.

-Saul thought that only he and other Jews who did not believe in Jesus were following the God of the Bible.

-Saul also thought that it was his duty to punish and kill the followers of Jesus.

-Therefore, Saul put Christians into prison, and greatly persecuted the Church.

-Because Saul's persecution of the Church was great, many Christians were forced to leave.

Let's read Acts 8:4

4-Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

-For the Christians who fled Jerusalem to get away from the persecution of Saul, what did they do?

-They went everywhere, and taught others about Jesus.

-Why did God allow this persecution in Jerusalem?

-God allowed the persecution to send Christians to many towns and cities to teach the Word of God.

-One of the Christians who left Jerusalem at this time was Philip.

-Philip was one of the seven men chosen with Stephen to serve the church.

Let's read Acts 8:5

5-Philip went down to a city in Samaria and

proclaimed the Christ there.

-To whom did God send Philip to teach of Christ?

-To the people of Samaria.

-Before Jesus returned to heaven, He told the apostles that they would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

-Do you remember who the Samaritans were?

-When the Assyrians defeated the northern kingdom of Israel, they took many Jews back to Assyria.

-Then, the Assyrians sent foreigners who worshiped idols to live in this part of Israel called Samaria.

-The foreigners intermarried with the Jews who remained and they accepted the religion of the Jews.

-These Samaritans built their own temple instead of going to the temple in Jerusalem.

-Because of this, the Jews from the other parts of Israel thought that the Samaritan Jews were not Jews at all.

-These Jews never accepted the Samaritan Jews.

-These Jews refused to even go near them.

-But Philip obeyed Jesus' command to teach the Word of

God in Samaria.

-Philip taught the Samaritans that they could become children of God through faith in Jesus.

-Here is what happened in Samaria:

Let's read Acts 8:6-8

6-When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.

7-With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.

8-So there was great joy in that city.

-Did God want to save the Samaritans?

-Yes.

-God wants to save all people.

-Were many people saved in Samaria?

-Yes.

-Many who were crippled and many who had demons were all healed.

-Yet in Jerusalem, Saul continued to persecute the Christians.

-In Jerusalem, Saul learned that many Christians had fled to other towns and cities to tell people about Jesus.

-Therefore, Saul decided to follow them, arrest them, and bring them back to Jerusalem to be punished.

Let's read Acts 9:1-2

1-Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest

2-and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

-Do you think that Saul was an evil man?

-Do you think that God could save such an evil man?

-One day, when Saul was on the road to Damascus, here is what happened:

Let's read Acts 9:3-9

3-As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

4-He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

5-"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

6-“Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

7-The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone.

8-Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus.

9-For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

-Why was Saul going to Damascus?

-He was going to arrest Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem to be punished.

-What happened to Saul on the road to Damascus?
-He saw the Lord Jesus Christ.

-The Christians in Jerusalem would not have thought that God could save Saul.

-Yet, God wants to save even those who persecute the Church.

-What is the lesson here?

-We must not be afraid to witness to those who do not believe God, and even to those who do us harm.

-If God is able to save Saul who persecuted the early

Christians, then God is able to save anyone.

-When Saul saw Jesus, what happened to him?
-He became blind.

-Why did Saul become blind?

-Because Saul saw Jesus whose face shone brighter than the sun.

-Before Jesus died on the cross, He took three of His disciples up to a mountain.

-What happened to Jesus as they were watching?

-His face began to shine like the sun and His clothing became as white as light.

-Why did that happen to Jesus when he was on earth?

-Because God in Him began to shine out through His human body.

-But when did Saul see Jesus?

-After Jesus had died, raised from the dead, and returned to His Father in heaven.

-When the God in Jesus shone out to Saul, it shone with all of its strength, even brighter than the sun.

-The sight of Jesus blinded Saul, but it also changed his life.

-Saul was now different from the proud boastful man who left Jerusalem.

-Let's read what happened next.

Let's read Acts 9:10-14

10-In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.

11-The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

12-In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

13-"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.

14-And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

-Why was Ananias afraid?

-Because Ananias knew that Saul was imprisoning Christians.

-When Jesus spoke to Ananias, Ananias did not yet know that Saul had met Jesus on the road to Damascus.

-But this is what Jesus told Ananias:

Let's read Acts 9:15-16

15-But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.

16-I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

-What did the Lord Jesus tell Ananias?

-That He had chosen Saul to send him to the Gentiles, to kings, and also to the Jews.

-Saul would become one of Jesus' greatest and most useful apostles.

-Did Ananias obey the Lord and go to Saul?

-Yes.

Let's read Acts 9:17-19

17-Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here-has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18-Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was

baptized,

19-and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

-What happened when Ananias prayed for Saul?

-The Lord Jesus gave back to Saul his sight.

-Like Ananias, we may be afraid to do something God wants us to do.

-Even if we are afraid, we should trust in God and obey Him.

-Was Ananias happy that he obeyed God?

-Yes.

-After the Lord Jesus gave back to Saul his sight, what did Saul do?

Let's read Acts 9:20-22

20-At once [Saul] began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

21-All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

22-Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

-At once, Saul taught the Jews in Damascus and proved to them from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Savior.

-Saul also began to witness to his former friends who still did not believe and hated Christians.

-Saul knew the Old Testament very well.

-Before Saul believed in Jesus, he studied with a man who was considered to be the best teacher.

-Saul himself had also been a teacher of the Old Testament.

-Saul reminded the Jews in Damascus of that which the prophets had said about the Savior in the Old Testament.

-Saul explained to them that all these prophecies were fulfilled through Jesus of Nazareth.

-How do you think Satan felt about this?

-Satan was very angry.

-Before, Saul was on Satan's side.

-Now, Saul was fighting against Satan.

-So, Satan stirred up the people to kill Saul.

Let's read Acts 9:23-25

23-After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him,
24-but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him.
25-But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

-Because the Jews wanted to kill Saul, the Christians helped Saul to escape.

-How did Saul escape from Damascus?
-He was lowered in a basket over the city wall.

-During that time, the cities had large stone walls surrounding them, and houses were built on top of the walls.

-Saul was lowered out through a window in a house built on top of the city wall.

-When Saul left Damascus, he went back to Jerusalem.

-Saul left Jerusalem a child of Satan.
-Saul returned to Jerusalem a child of God.

-Saul left Jerusalem an enemy of Jesus and His Church.

-Saul returned to Jerusalem a servant of Jesus and a

brother to all the members of the Church.

Let's read Acts 9:26-28

26-When [Saul] came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

27-But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus.

28-So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

-Who became Saul's friend in Jerusalem?

-Barnabas.

-Barnabas was from the island of Cyprus where his Jewish forefathers had settled.

-We will learn more about Barnabas later in the story of Saul.

-Was Saul safe in Jerusalem?

-No.

Let's read Acts 9:29

29-[Saul] talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him.

-The unbelieving Jews who had stoned Stephen also planned to kill Saul.

-The men with whom Saul debated were the same ones who had stoned Stephen.

-Saul had agreed to Stephen's death and held the coats of those who killed him.

-But now Saul was preaching the very same things which Stephen had taught.

-Those who had killed Stephen now planned to kill Saul and, once again, Saul had to flee.

Let's read Acts 9:30

30-When the brothers learned of this, they took [Saul] down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

-In Jerusalem, to where did the Christians help Saul escape?

-To Tarsus.

-Tarsus was Saul's hometown.

-Saul used to be the leader in the persecution of the

Church, but now he had become a servant of the Lord Jesus.

-After Saul believed in Christ, what was the change for the churches in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee?

Let's read Acts 9:31

31-Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

-The Christians were free from persecution for a time.

-The Christians grew in their understanding of God.

-The Christians' faith in God was strengthened.

-The Christians obeyed God.

-They obeyed the Lord out of reverence for Him.

-They were encouraged and strengthened by the Holy Spirit who was living in them.

-Many more people believed in Jesus as their Savior, were baptized, and joined the Church.