

Stress in the Early Church
Acts 6:1-7; 28:28-31

0.0 Introduction

- 0.1 This past year has affected our churches deeply
- 0.2 Many such seasons in history – and they can advise us

1.0 Stresses in the New Testament Church

- 1.1 Persecution (Ac.3-4, etc.)
- 1.2 (Presumably) struggle for power or influence (Ac.5)
- 1.3 Ethnic-cultural distrust & conflict (Ac.6; Ac.10→15)
- 1.4 Heresy and cultic leaders (Ac.8:9-24 – Simon + ?Gnosticism)
- 1.5 Extended persecution (Ac.9) – and suspicion over Paul’s conversion (vv.26-30)
- 1.6 Controversy of the Judaizers (Gal.3 – Judaizers)
- 1.7 Nevertheless - progress reports (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31)

2.0 Stresses in the Early Church

- 2.1 Persecution under Nero (AD 60s) and then Domitian (AD 81-96)
- 2.2 Cerinthus’ heresy (cf. I Jn.4:2)
- 2.3 Marcion’s heresy (2ndC)
- 2.4 The Novation Controversy (3rdC) – can lapsed believers be received back?
- 2.5 The Donatist Controversy (4th-6thC) – North Africa, and purity of clergy
- 2.6 Tensions over culture & language, doctrine & status, flow across church history, and American RP tensions included Rev War, slavery/Civil War) and WWI

3.0 Stress Lessons from Church History

- 3.1 The Word (and Spirit) of God always advance despite our distractions & roadblocks
- 3.2 Successful churches push through controversy, worship, and love insistently
- 3.3 Fellowships can strengthen in the wake of such struggles

August 8 – The Spirit of God in the Early Church
August 15 – Lk.4 and the Synagogue @ Nazareth